

GEDE PRAMA



*The Inner
Symphony*

Turning anger into flower

The Inner Symphony
Transforming Anger into Flower

GEDE PRAMA

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*To Bali Island, from where
The Symphony is Echoed*

Acknowledgement

Like any of its kind, not a single piece of work might stand alone without being related to the others. All are results of a sequence of interactions completing each other. Thus, let this book expresses the deepest gratitude to the following:

1. In most spiritual life, guru is the most important thing. For that reason, I would like to thank all my guru, especially HH Dalai Dalama XIV, Ven. Sri Pannavaro Mahathera. It is hard to imagine, how spiritual journey will be without the guidance of gurus.
2. As humans, we all are indebted to our parents (in broader sense). There are Father and Mother who are parts of our creation, the nature that sustains our life, teachers that grant us knowledge, other writers that dedicate their life to share, and countless hands of kindness that guide us to the present day.
3. As husbands and parents, we are also obliged to our wife and children. Without them, there are a lot of things those are impossible.
4. And there are certainly a lot of individuals that can not be mentioned one by one here, to whom I have nothing to provide save profound prayers and gratitude.

Their hands have so benevolently guided the spirits of this book. And may this work be a blessing not to Gede Prama alone but to all of them as well. Without hands of kindness

abundant in nature, are we not merely powerless beings? Therefore, a master once bestowed a message: *If I have to choose between religion and compassion, I will choose compassion.* Kindness is that important in life thus the master prefers it to religion. May countless friends obtain the light of kindheartedness the nature provides in this book.

Deep bow,

gede prama

The Front Gate

Conducting the Orchestra of Life

*Greatness and perfection might as well be found
on the summit of the inner mountain.*

Conducting the Orchestra of Life

Welcome to the lodge of meanings. Time does fly like an arrow that now there have been many dwellings constructed by this body and mind. Among them, some are the same while some others are different. Nevertheless, the significance does not lay on the sameness nor the differences but rather on the opportunity to grow and to serve fellow travelers in this grand journey of life. That is the only source from where gratefulness worth to emerge.

People undergo various motives and ways in order to discover the crocheted meanings once flowed through this mind. And, whatever the motives and the ways are, such encounter in one scene within the extensive sequence of mind journey is certainly not a coincidence. There has to be a long wandering behind.

Realizing the significance of this wonderful meeting, may these tasks of servicing be permitted to flow, performing their cycle of time. There are not many things to be promised, only sincerity to always serve and serve.

As experienced by any soul undertakes journey into him/her self, some things do not stick in the arrangement. Those matters can not be planned nor expected to come as our wish. The case is the same with this book You are reading. Like in knitting, the sequence of writings in this book was being done thread by thread in years, influenced by different environments, moments, moods, temptations, and tribulations.

However, it was sincerity which then guided to entitle this book *The Inner Symphony: Transforming Anger into Flower*. A lot of things had happened in this life, as well as in yours. The bitter and the sweet, the acknowledgment as a genuine and the attribution as a hypocrite, the taste of divinity and the feel of impurity. At the starting point in the early age, greed was an unavoidable dictating force demanded nothing but the pleasant, successful, and sacred things. Nevertheless, no matter how great its authoritative power over life is, it is defenseless against time.

It fails to withstand the moment of sadness and unable to prevent the time of admonishment. And when greed is getting exhausted by its incapability to bring only the positive things, there rises the dawn of a different meaning: the devotion to be gratefully receptive before the wheel of time.

This book is wholeheartedly guided by the particular light and the word “symphony” is being used as the representative for several reasons. Firstly, a symphony is formed by various elements. Secondly, the diversity is not expelled nor suspended. Thirdly, the different sounds are neatly orchestrated into a lovely composition.

As what we have been experiencing together, life is indeed full of differences. Some symbolize this fact as the ever flowing water in the river, nights and days, male and female, and so on. We even know that each day is unique, and there is no river exactly the same with another. Resisting this law will only cause suffering thus diversity, together with all of its dynamics, will be embraced intimately by this book.

It is impossible to get rid of diversity in the way we can easily dispose wastes, clothes, leaves, and other outer or physical matters. In the journey of life failure and misfortune will be our guests at their time. By the particular law this book learns to compose diversity (not throwing it away) so it might become something beautiful. Water provides a marvelous example for this and it might be the cause why all religions use water in their rites. Chemically, water is formed by hydrogen (which is very closely related to fire) and oxygen (which brings possibility for a blaze). Nevertheless, when both elements are appropriately combined, the result is the cool, mild, and comforting water. Therefore, this book has been subtitled "*Transforming Anger into Flower*". In other words, this book is about converting the blazing anger into colourful and beautiful flower.

Another interesting symbolism is that human's life is very similar to tailoring an outfit. Some people are fortunate since they are given a piece of qualified fabric (born in a wealthy family, blessed by caring parents, experience only a few sufferings), but there are also those who are given torn material (born in a poor family, uneducated, surrounded with violence, etc.). Nevertheless, the first assembly's garment is not always

The matter highlighted in this book is not the materials (the things happen in life), but the way to make them beautiful

the better in the end.

Barrack Obama is a wonderful story. He was born in an ill-fated circumstance by the divorce of his parents and adopted by a stepfather in a faraway land before returning to the United States on his early days of maturity. Even so, his ability in “knitting” the fabric of life is so amazing that he is now one among the important world figures.

Therefore, the underlined factor in this book is not the materials (the things happen in one’s life) but how to make them beautiful. This is similar to a symphony. Not only the musical elements are various but there are also different kinds of players. Those who are skillful in manufacturing life materials (success – failure, praise – scorn, up – down, healthy – sickness, etc.) will understand that all kinds of inferno (anger, problem, ordeal, temptation) might be turned into flower (grateful embrace to all things in life).

Therefore, this book is divided into two compositions: the first is entitled “Handling the Wastes of Life” and the second “A Lovely Bouquet of Life”. Like wastes in a garden, not all junks can be transformed and a gardener needs to do a tidy selection in this case. Afterward, the gardener requires strong perseverance to turn the selected ones into beautiful flowers of life.

Among the rubbishes, some are not transformed into flowers. However, the beauty of the inner symphony is that even those leftovers will later have their own meanings as long as the gardener possesses enough patience and mindfulness.

Similar to how the sun and the moon brighten the earth in different time, patience and awareness enlighten life in their particular period. Always remember this, and life will be full of loveliness.

Lama Surya Das in *Natural Radiance: Awakening to your Great Perfection*, presents a fascinating illustration on this subject: “*The true inner Himalaya, the secret Tibet, is to awaken to the high ground within*”. Greatness does not exist only on the summit of Himalaya and the secret of perfection does not reside in Tibet alone; they can as well be discovered on the summit of our own inner mountain which often referred to as *rigpa* (*nothing positive to accept, nothing negative to reject*). The supreme value in one’s self is encountered when the person is no longer being attached to happiness nor being distressed by sadness. At this point, the person deserves to be acknowledged as a conductor of life. A Sufism mystic attained this stage, Hazrat Hinayat Khan, on one occasion wrote: *indifference and independence are two wings that make us fly*. Liberation and non-attachment, those are the true wings enable the conductor of life levitates gracefully.

Have a good reading, and good practicing. May all reach the summit of the highest inner mountain!

Tajun Village, North Bali, March 2010

Gede Prama

The First Composition

Handling the Wastes of Life

*When we learn to be patient and to listen,
we do not only make other people happy,
but we are also opening the more noble
layers of us.*

All are Burning

An artist friend sighed heavily during a gathering, saying that nowadays it is very difficult just to do the right thing. Reading newspaper triggers emotion but if we don't we won't understand people's talk. Such statement prompted even sharper comment. Let alone politic, power and money that bring the "blazing" tendency in their nature, even religions those were born and grow in peacefulness now bring fire into the heart of men.

In Bali Indonesia, acts of violence on behalf of culture and religion begin to be dangerous. Frictions between the followers of Indian and Balinese Hinduism has produced sparks of fire. Ambon and Poso (the two islands in Indonesia where religious differences have become the cause of killing each other) are examples on how people were scorched by religious diversity. In India and Pakistan, some religious sites are strictly guarded because they frequently got burned. Religion is also one among the reasons why Middle East has been blazing for so long. There are thousands cases of religious blasphemy in America during the last few years. In Turk, a leader candidate presumed as taking along religious interest was seen with

suspicious eyes. In England, Gordon Brown faced terrorist attack only a few days after his appointment as prime minister. Thailand, a country which most of its citizens are Buddhists, was portrayed “*From land of smile to land of coup*” by *Economist* magazine, particularly after the sequence of coup d'états.

A lot of people are getting inflamed through their eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and mind. It makes sense then if someone wails that, whereas we are getting more and more developed in all aspects of intellectuality, still we are keep on repeating the same mistake by wishing for happiness but straying on the streets of misery.

Now is the age of raging fire, characterized prominently by numerous souls' evolution from dark to dark. For instances, there are many people unsatisfied with their financial income (dark) get involved in criminality (dark), and lots of irritated people (dark) carry out brutal counter-attack (dark).

Equanimity is a natural quality

Some analogize a soul's journey as a puppet. It is naked (innocent, pure) in the beginning, but on the way we put various clothes (desires) to the puppet and these days many people are haunted by this puppet, bizarre and fearful in its colorful dress. Those are the fear of being defeated, the nightmare of being called loser, the anxiety of experiencing hard times in elderly days, and many other dreadfulness.

The smoldering environment outside meets the highly inflammable gasoline inside (fear), originating the fire that scorches many life in a raising temperature. Environment is indeed a force which is hard to be modified, yet the fear inside might be changed through perseverance of practice. Therefore, all serene and tranquil souls are not so passionate to change the surrounding but so devoted in transmuting the inner gasoline into the rejuvenating water.

Take a closer look at the comforting natural views such as mountain, lake, beach, and river. All of them are calming because of their natural sight. The difference compared to human's daily life is that even though we are fond of the natural value in the environment but many of us don't like the natural quality in the self. A lot of women turn their feminine nature into masculine and men alter their protective nature into destructive. Government, which is a public's servant by nature turned into a victim of public's condemnation. Home, a natural field for development, turned into a lifeless place. Religions those naturally are calm, sheltering, and clement, turned into raging fires.

Whoever begins to get along with natural values will easily feel comfort in his/her inner side, that often invites invisible helping hands. Abu Bakar (once a terrible temptation in Rasulullah Muhammad's prophetic journey) bowed respectfully not by threat or fear, but by God's verses chanted in profound serenity. Fuzail's (a robber who later became an astonishing Sufi figure) life started to change dramatically when he was charmed and trembled by the recitation of Al-Quran's verses.

We are fond of the natural value in the environment but many of us don't like the natural quality in the self

Jesus Christ is a wonderful representation of tranquility. We rarely hear about serving only those belong to the same faith. Jesus said *love all serve all*, and He even proposed to *love your enemy*. Therefore, no wonder that a prominent character of the Christians is their awesome social piousness.

Khrisna's message in the beginning chapter of Bhagawad Gita is: "*Adveshta sarva bhutanam*" (never hate nor hurt). The one who was chosen to directly receive God's messages was not Bima the vigorous fighter or Yudistira who was lured to gamble, but Arjuna whose name means *purity of heart*. In Bali's traditional villages, people usually acknowledge someone who is patience by saying *buih dharma gati* (how dharma is he/she), as if bestowing a message that beauty/truth can be achieved through patience.

Nibbana as the final spiritual attainment of the Buddhist is often identified as a state of liberated death. However, Bhikkhu Buddhadasa stated that *nibbana* is the composed mind, especially the one which has no longer being inflamed by *kilesa* (mind defilements) such as anger, greed, and hatred. In other words, *nibbana* is not only attainable after death but also here and now as long as the mind has been completely free from the blaze of defilements.

If all devotees of Islam, Catholic, Hindu, Buddha, Confucianism, and all other ideologies are calm, perhaps Bhikkhu Buddhadasa's dream of "*nibbana (tranquility) for all*" might become reality, and people are consumed by the fire no more.

Among this kind of tranquil and collected people, it is very likely to emerge a conformity that when we learn to be patient and to listen we do not only bring happiness to others for we are opening our own more noble layers as well.

Summary:

1. Everyone wants to be happy. However, we unconsciously lead ourselves away from it by our ignorance, greed, anger, and hatred. Moreover, many life begin to be inflamed.
2. Like the weather, environment can not be modified yet we can learn to adjust ourselves to it. The one that leads us to happiness and suffering is not the environment; it is the way we respond to the environment.
3. Among numerous ways of responding, back to nature is the one capable to provide long period of tranquility. This way is as simple as the coconut trees growing on the hot beach and the casuarinas greening the cool mountains.

The foremost beauty in the ways of defeat is found when the mind has become as extensive as the sky. Nothing can make the mind gets salty.

Defeat, Triumph, Beauty

Since the time immemorial, the drama of humanity has been dominated with a single theme: pursuit of happiness and evasion of defeat. In many parts of the world like Japan a lot of people put an end to their own life merely because of being lost, since all things associated to defeat are negative, ugly, and disgraceful.

School, as the institution where the young prepare their future plays the same game. By various kinds of “number one” agenda, school takes its role in establishing the mind set about the obscurity of defeat. And so does workplaces. Not any of them is free from acts of deceive. Everybody desires to get promoted, no one ever dreams to be demoted. The matter is even worse in the political world where defeat is truly nothing but devastation. And, frankly speaking, it was the whiff hanging on the Indonesian air in the early April 2009 during the coming of the national election.

Defeat is also a beauty

No one forbids the pursuit of glory. Winning is like paddy for the farmers and fish for the fishermen. It is the energy booster that makes life go round and the supporter prevents us from getting exhausted. However, no matter how great the energy and the spirit are, it is still impossible to escape the time of failure.

For that cause, wise men train themselves to greet both triumph and defeat with smile. They do struggle, make effort, work, and pray but smile glorifies their journey when failure is nevertheless the outcome.

Holding up high a trophy of champ and being respected are beautiful but no one can smile upon defeat save those with profound vision. Winners are like rocks on the top of a mountain. It is impossible for them to be there without the presence of the stones at the base and the slopes (those who are lost).

Some sages even whisper that defeat glorifies the journey more than victory, particularly because it is in failure that souls are trained, tempted, and softened. In this path, defeat is functioning like sandpaper that smoothes wood in order to make a valuable/expensive statuette out of it. It is also similar to a sharp knife cutting a piece of bamboo that shall become a beauty-presenting flute.

Patience, modesty, and sincerity are the qualities revealed by defeat; a bouquet of gift which victory can never presents. Those who have unveiled this understanding shall whisper: "Failure is a beauty as well!" In accordance to this, a master once stated: "Old friends pass away, new friends

appear. The most important thing is to make it meaningful”. All matters (triumph, defeat, luck, misfortune) come and go, and the most important matter is how to craft meaning out of them.

People seldom obtain profound meaning in the midst of victory’s extravagance, especially because victory has its slippery nature easily directs people into that kind of drunkenness where they put their heads in the clouds. Amazing crafters of meaning like Kahlil Gibran, Jalalludin Rumi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Thich Nhat Hanh, did their wandering in the midst of sadness. His Holiness Dalai Lama was even awarded the Nobel for peace and acknowledged as the first class citizen of the United States after decades of grief and defeat in exile.

Signifying defeat

Crafting meaning is indeed not the same with crafting woods. In every construction of meaning there is a dynamic interaction between reality as it is and the habit of understanding. A person whose habit is to comprehend within the perspective of dissatisfaction, insufficiency, and craving for more, will see unpleasant life all the time. On the other hand, an adept training his/her self in the way of gratitude and sincerity will encounter the beautiful expressions of life more frequently.

Based on this, we can perceive that the foundation of giving meaning to defeat is to recognize our habit of understanding. In a friend’s words, it is that: *the blueprint is found within our mind*. Letting anger and dissatisfaction rule over understanding will only prolong the list of sorrow.

In the stairways of wisdom, defeat is a beauty. Particularly because it is like a sandpaper that smooths wood in order to make a precious statuette, and a sharp knife cutting a piece of bamboo into a beauty-presenting flute

Once upon a time, a master asked his disciple to put a spoonful of salt into a glass of water. Certainly, the water became salty. Afterward, the wise took the pupil to a large pool and gave the same amount of salt into it. The water didn't taste any different this time.

The case is similar to human's mind. When the mind is narrow and complicated (fanatic, insular, irritable, like to make judgment) then life tends to be salty (with anger, irritation, and ill feel). When the mind is without limit, nothing can easily corrupt the taste of life.

With this understanding, it is easier to give meaning to defeat when we have managed in educating ourselves to have the broad and liberated vision. Making effort, working, studying, praying, are indeed the tasks of life, yet we have to be able to embrace whatever life brings out of our actions like how a wide pond accepts a spoonful of salt without being affected.

Win - lose, success - fail, and even life - death are merely the features of the wheel of time. It is like how the sun rises and descends at its period. Insisting to see sunset in the morning will only make someone become the victim of disappointment, and mockery as well.

Please apologize if what comes next sounds awkward. Given an option to become rich or poor, a traveler who has walked far into his/her inner self will choose poverty. He/She will also prefer defeat than winning. Wealth is definitely a blessing yet the house of prosperity does not have enough rooms for practice. Poverty is feared by many, but it provides a

tremendous forcing energy to be humble all the time. Being a winner causes pride, yet the temps of ego and haughtiness are so immense. Being defeated is loathsome for most people, but failure is the mother of patience.

A meditation master who has reached this point once whispered: *Finally I realize there is no difference between mind and the sky.* This is the sweetest fruit of meditation. One's mind becomes as unlimited as the sky. No cloud (the black cloud of misery, the white cloud of happiness) is capable to change the sky. And this is more likely to be happened in the mind capable of giving defeat a sense.

Summary:

1. Refusing defeat is humane, but learning to accept failure is the initial step toward maturity and wisdom.
2. On the stairs of wisdom, defeat is a beauty as well. Mostly because failure is like a sandstone smoothing wood to produce a precious statuette and a sharp knife cutting a piece of bamboo to make it a beautiful flute.
3. The summit of beauty on the paths of defeat is attained when one's mind has become as unlimited as the sky. Nothing is able to make it salty. Therefore, someone wrote that the summit of meditation is *the boundless capacity to suffer.*

Giving is rejuvenating.

Turning Anger into Flower

Fire! Fire! Fire! Perhaps everyone will utter the same panic expression upon discovering his/her house is in flame, without any chance to take even a brief pause in collectedness. The similar thing happens in human's civilization where the raging fires are everywhere. Let alone merchants and politicians those are being burned by money and power by nature, a lot of intellectuals, artists, and even religious personae are in flame. Let alone developing countries novel to education and democracy, even the United States that has become a world leader since quite a long time ago experiences thousand cases of religious blasphemy every year.

As the result, it seems that history rolls from one blaze into another. Mother Theresa had an interesting opinion about this matter: "The problem of the world is that we draw too narrow line on our concept of family". Actually, humanity experiences narrowing down and narrow mindedness not only in the concept of family but in most things. In the past, a cousin was considered as a close relative. Now, in many people's case there is a long distance even with their blood brother/sister. In the past, making decision for the benefit of all was an easy matter. Now, people make simple things complicated. As the

consequence, these days there are too many sparks of fire in human's life.

Fire becomes water

One among nature's rejuvenating symbols is water, chemically formulated as H₂O. Hydrogen is a highly flammable substance and oxygen is the matter that makes a blaze possible. Uniquely, when these two substances closely related with fire are properly combined, the outcome is the rejuvenating, calm, and gentle water.

This inspires that the environment might be surrounded by flames, history might revolve in the wheel of fire, yet if all are properly managed humanity shall experience the calm and serene life. Notice that many devoted practitioners of spiritual ways (*zikir*, contemplation, yoga, meditation, etc.) had their life burned before they started to take the inner wandering. Nevertheless, after the flammable life's substances are cultivated by spiritual practice a lot of people live their life calmly, unruffled, and gently.

Pema Chodron's experience depicted in *When Things Fall Apart* is a wonderful example. After serving dutifully as a wife for more than twenty years, her life was suddenly burned down by divorce. It was that fire which then guided her to the art of meditation. In most of meditation centers, the initial steps will be ethics and morality. The devotion of practice guided by ethics then leads the practitioner to experience concentration (*Samadhi*), and those who frequently get into *samadhi* will one day unlock the peaceful gate of wisdom. In Pema Chodron's

case, it is not only that her life became peaceful and smooth, for she is now admitted as a meditation master.

Thich Nhat Hanh once spoke about waste and flower in his retreat. Those who are being inflamed share the same personality in which they are greedy of collecting flower and rejecting the waste. Accepting friend and refusing enemy since they see friends as flowers and enemies as organic wastes. However, the ill-treated flowers will be wastes on the following day while wastes (in condition that they are properly treated) will turn into flowers.

The best way to transform life's wastes into flowers is by applying ethics and morality. Stop doing bad things, do more kindness, and purify the mind. It is not a coincidence then that the word *sila* in Sanskrit language means the power that makes someone collected and gentle.

Numerous masters refer to this as the heart of spirituality: purify the mind from all stains (greed, anger, and hatred) then behold and experience the opening of the gate into the realm of tranquility.

Giving is calming

Following the report of a robbery and murder in Central Java, Indonesia, a teacher in Mendut was asked by his student if he knows the victim. Gently and composedly the particular teacher replied: "Physical pain (as experienced by the victim) arouses pity. Mental illness (as the cause for the robber to conduct the crime) arouses hatred. Both pity and hatred are

The best way to transform life's wastes into flowers is by applying ethics and morality. Hence, it is not a coincidence that the word sila in Sanskrit language means the power that makes someone serene and gentle

stains for the mind. Radiate the light of compassion to both of them”. This is the nature of a person who has managed in transforming fire into water. He/She is not greedy to choose the good over the bad, but radiates the light of compassion to all.

In the light of this understanding, trouble will surely come and temptation will pay a visit but the important matter is how to deal with them. And Thich Nhat Hanh taught that when life is blooming (with wealth, praise, etc.) don't forget that all flowers will become wastes. On the other hand, when life is full of wastes (revilement, profanity) keep in mind to transform them into flowers.

In the hands of those who have been skillfully turned wastes into flowers, not even a single dust is useless in life. Larry Rosenberg even entitled his work *Living in the Light of Death*. In this state of mind, even death is a light that illuminates the journey. Notice Larry Rosenberg's conclusion: "The awakened mind is the mind that is intimate with all things". Even with death.

One day, an American reporter/journalist who was assigned in Israel met someone whose daily routine was to pray facing the wall every morning and afternoon. Being questioned of how long she has been performing this practice, the person calmly replied that she has been doing it for more than twenty five years! When the reporter asked about the result, she reassuringly whispered: "Even with the prayers, the world is like this. Life is unimaginable if no one prays". This is another expression of a peaceful and tranquil mind: praying for the well-being of all.

A friend once asked: what is in Bali that it is very easy to find peace in there? As the teaching of Balinese elders, life itself is an offering thus thousands of Bali people give offerings every day. Many of them perhaps do not know the meaning of their offerings nor concern whether the ritual will bring any benefit or not. They just keep on doing it anyway. Not only physical objects like fruits and flowers are regarded as offerings, but also farming, dancing, and striking *gamelan*. Practically, all things in life are offerings.

In simple classification, the outer offering is the form of material/physical objects. The inner offerings are peaceful mind, words, and actions. The innermost offering might only be spoken among masters. Only the thing that calms the mind may be revealed. Charlotte Joko Beck in *Nothing Special* concluded that *practice is giving*. Giving is rejuvenating therefore people should practice to be happy in charity.

Summary:

1. Some fires are undeniably caused by outer factor, but most of them are originated from the inside. Narrow mindedness, fanaticism, irritation, and anger are examples of inner factors that make people get burned easily.
2. How the gentle water is produced out of flammable elements exemplifies that the surrounding might be in flame, still if we understand how to manage the things properly (through open-mindedness, friendship, prayer, meditation, etc.) then all of the outer fires might become the substances for the inner equanimity.

3. All of the burnings in life are originated by the excessive greed for flowers (being wealthy, praised) and terrible detestation for wastes (being poor, scorned). The passage into tranquility begins to be visible when a soul learns to embrace anger with mindfulness.

*As the wings of a dove, one is faith
and the other is honesty
accompanied by modesty.*

Blasting the Attachments, Unveiling the Beauty

“The truth is awesome”. This might be the dominant nature of interaction among people at the beginning of the 21st century. Being sure of his/her righteousness, someone might even do a killing. America and its allies felt certain of their righteousness thus they attacked Afghanistan and Iraq, and so were the terrorists with their bombings. India – Pakistan, Palestine – Israel, and North Korea – South Korea are merely several examples on how the sense of righteousness might be followed by hostility.

Hence, the expression of truth in general is fearful. If we care to scrutinize this matter further, we might notice that ideologies, particularly religions, frequently manipulated as the masquerades of attachments (such as attachments to pride, injustice, and bitterness) and become an origin of the fearful life.

Blasting the attachments

In the East, it had been understood since long time ago that attachments are the origins of moral deficiency. Therefore, numerous eastern wisdoms, including Zen, claim attachments as one of the targets to be demolished.

Historically, the seed of Zen was originated in India, grew in China, and flourished in Japan. Some relate Zen to Buddhism whereas some others do not associate it to any religion. Regardless to whatever it is been associated with, Zen always comes up with a single theme: blasting the attachments. Perhaps because it was flourished in Japan, most of its exploding targets are related to Buddhism.

Actually, Zen is more suitable for matured souls. However, because maturity is the one easily slipped into attachments, then the demolishing is needed. In the chronicle of Zen, numerous masters attained enlightenment by the explosive Zen stories recounted in this chapter.

For souls still require a lot of developments in their wisdom, Zen might bring irritation. Therefore this writing would like to ask an excuse beforehand. Forgiveness is among the Buddha's virtues, as well as it is also possessed by other divine beings.

The first story is about a Zen monk who was freezing. Finding out that there wasn't any firewood left, he calmly took a wooden Buddha statue and set it into fire. Confronted by people's anger, the particular monk replied, 'Something that you can burn is not a Buddha.'

Not only in Zen, human's daily life in a lot of nations show great number of incidents where emotion is easily inflamed by religion and other factors. For a number of reasons, some people are immensely attached to their religion thus they are easily "burned" by religion-related issues. In this case, religion is no longer a spring of tranquility but a pit of blazing fire. This kind of attachment might be beautifully detonated by the understanding that 'something that you can burn is nothing but a fake'.

The second story tells about a king who went to meet Boddhidharma. Proudly, the king spoke to Boddhidharma that he had built hundreds of monasteries and he would like to know the amount of merit that he had gain. Without any interest Boddhidharma answered, 'None!'

This is a problem people are facing these days. They do their actions and being attached to the results. Merit is exists beyond doubt for it is a part of the nature's law. However, this kind of attachment makes the doer imprisoned and stained with ego. This is the one Boddhidharma abolished by the principle of 'act, let go, sincere'.

In the third Zen story, it is said that there were two Zen monks journeying in the middle of a forest. Suddenly the older one felt the urgent need to urinate and without any conscience he did his business beside a poor Buddha statue that was happened to be there. The junior was horrified and shouted angrily. Without even managed to turn his head the senior asked, 'Oh, then I suppose that you can show me a place where Buddha is not present?' The junior naturally provided a

*An incomprehensible thing might
be too far beyond the capability
of the mind, or too simple to
satisfy the complexity of the mind*

custom remark that Buddha is omnipresent. Calmly the elder asked further, 'So... where shall I take a leak then?'

It is virtuous indeed to consider religious attributes as sacred. Nevertheless, it is worthy to contemplate that the clinging to the concept of divinity might generate defilements. Particularly because divinity was not created to bring anger and hostility.

It is even worse when the concept of divinity causes killing because it turns spirituality into a horrible thing. This is the kind of attachment blasted by the previous story with the understanding that purity is present because there is impurity. Without impurity, purity vanishes. It is the unity/totality of both purity and impurity that provides liberation.

The fourth story is among the most famous of its kind. Since long time ago Zen disciples have been asked to explain the sound of a single-hand clapping. The riddle remains unanswered for hundreds of years, as if presenting wisdom that there are some matters impossible to be solved by human mind.

An incomprehensible thing might mean that it is too far beyond the capability of the mind, or that it is too simple to satisfy the complexity of the mind. Over-judgment prevents the growth's process, hence it is blown away by the understanding to let such matters unanswered so one may step through the gate of liberation.

Generating the beauty

The freedom from attachment is possibly the cause for some Sufi sages' coloring their life with beauty. A Sufism practitioner, Hazrat Hinayat Khan, in *The Heart of Sufism* wrote that '*Indifference and independence are two wings which enable the soul to fly*'.

Wayne W. Dyer in *Spiritual Solutions* exposed the immensely beautiful prayer of Santo Franciscus as follow: '*Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace... where there is hatred, let me sow love... where there is sadness, joy*'. Life is going to be unimaginably beautiful for those practicing the essence of this prayer.

Disciples in Advaita Vedanta way have been taught since long time ago to focus only on *sat cit ananda* (truth, awareness/consciousness, and eternal beauty) as the heart of their journey. Perhaps this is why Balinese elders combine inward journey with beauty. They choose beautiful places for religious sites, and offerings are arranged/managed as lovely as possible. To be simple, beauty is a side benefit of the discovering of the truth and the practicing of the mindfulness. Besides that, beauty is the origin of unity.

Thousand years ago Buddha Gautama has noted to spread the *Dhamma* that is beautiful in its beginning, beautiful in its middle, and also beautiful in its ending. Buddhadasa once taught that the very heart of Buddhism is to perceive everything as they are. Furthermore, if everything are already perfect as they are, is life not a beauty?

In the end of this chapter on blasting attachments and

generating beauty, it is would be valuable to re-contemplate the horrible expressions of truth and divinity/purity. Zen has already detonated the core of them, that is the attachment. After banishing attachment, sincerity unveils beauty. Thus, souls in this path whisper: '*God is beautiful, that is why He loves beauty*'. This is the one frequently referred to as *the religion of beauty*. Hopefully, beauty would not turned into a brand new attachment.

Summary:

1. It is good to have faith, but letting it turned into fanaticism makes religion and spirituality's expression horrible.
2. As the wings of a dove, one is faith and the other is honesty accompanied by modesty.
3. Whoever flies with the particular pair of wings, he/she will easily unlock the gate of beauty.

For those who have become mature lovers, moreover souls that seek no more, Indonesia's expression is no longer a disastrous one. For them Indonesia is a country that beautifies the soul.

The Beautician of Souls

Following the rapid emerge of disasters (such as tsunami, erupting volcano, terrorist bomb, hot-mud, flood and land slide) along with their countless victims, a lot of people then wonder if God is in fury. A query that, though simple, has become the major inquiry in many discourses. And, as usual, there are also two kinds of answers: positive and negative.

Since the ancient time people in the eastern part of the world have recognized an idea that, suppose God is a dancer, than the universe is His dance. If that was so, does the angry nature reflect the wrath of God? No one knows... Nevertheless the question reminds to a Catholic priest's story of a mother whose candy was stolen by her son. Upon discovering this incident, the mother questioned the boy: "Didn't you see God when you stole my candy?" Innocently, the boy replied, "I did mommy!" The mother, even angrier with the answer, then delivered a more emotional query: "And what did God say?" Being innocent, the boy replied frankly: "He told me that I may take two".

This story indeed provides rooms for interpretations. Nevertheless, from a certain point of view we might notice that our image of God greatly depends to the purity of our own mind. In the mind of an innocence and honest boy in the story, God has a forgiving and merciful expression. On the other hand, in the emotional and suspicious mind of his mother God's expression is that of wrath and punishment. The matter is the same in the ways Indonesian people perceive disasters.

Without using the frames of good or bad, right or wrong, pure or impure, and high or low, a lot of masters taught that every soul has his/her own level of evolution. In all of the levels, every soul has the same task, which is to evolve! It is not suggested for high school pupils to deride those in the elementary class, whereas students in the junior high class are not supposed to feel too inferior to those in the college as well. All are growing. There is no guarantee that the present high school students might reach the higher level quickly than those who are now still in the elementary class.

With this kind of spirit, please permit this piece of writing to classify the soul's evolution into four steps. The first is the stage for the merchants of life and prayer. This kind of people does business with anyone, especially with God. When their prayer is being granted they think that God is kindhearted. On the contrary, when their demand is not being fulfilled (or even worse, being obstructed by misfortune) then they think that God is furious. In their perspective, disaster is a form of God's anger toward human's deeds. Nevertheless, this is not a mistake for it is but a part of the evolution process.

The second kind is the teenage lovers' stage. The nature of the people in this step is that they are highly possessive. There should be no third party, only he/she alone might be close to and loved by God. Love, according to this group, does not have other manifestation than to care, forgive, and liberate. Hence, there should be no other expression for God's love than caring, forgiving, and liberating. Once they experience other kind materialization of God's love (moreover the one with miserable nature), then it is easy to presume the direction to which their life is going to ahead: the collision of hatred and longing! This is why some friends those are wounded by tragedy question, "Do Thee still love me God?"

The third is the group of the mature/sensible lovers. For them, love is no longer accompanied with hatred. Love is love. It is not in opposition to detestation. Moreover, differ than the previous "teenagers" who perceive being loved as more beautiful than to love, for souls in this level falling in love is more beautiful than being loved. Therefore, rather than perceiving disaster as punishment, they are now recognizing it as reminder on some parts within their selves that need to be mended. In other words, disaster is supplement for the soul's evolution.

The fourth group belongs to souls that seek no more. Not because of irritation or, moreover, frustration. Absolutely not! They attain this state through the deep sense of contentment, sincerity, gratefulness, and guidance that all are already perfect as they are. Being healthy is perfect, as well as being sick. Is sickness not the one teaches how to be grateful for health? Being success is just as perfect as being failed for what guides

*Similar to walking on flight of steps,
we can only proceed to the higher
stairs by leaving the lower ones*

us to a summit of life termed as self-knowing save the failure? Life is perfect, and so is death. Is not death the spouse of life that unveils greatly deeper understanding toward the meaning of life? Being rich and being poor are both perfect for poverty is the teaching not to be arrogant and to always be humble instead. Therefore, disaster is unknown for souls in this step. Whatever things happen are given the same title: perfect! Buddhists term this as Nirvana, some of our Moslem and Christian brothers refer to it as *heaven on earth*, and some Hindus mention the state as *maha samadhi*. In Confucius' words: "In meeting a good person, follow him. In meeting a wicked person, examine thy own mind."

Back to the preliminary discussion about disaster and the angry God, the choice of attitude is indeed reflecting the evolution of each individual soul. As have been mentioned earlier, all are evolving. Judging others is merely delaying our own evolution. Referring our self as "better" and judging others as "inferior" are merely the affairs of ego that poison the future development of our soul.

For whoever has become a mature lover, moreover a soul that seek no more, then Indonesia's expression is no longer a disastrous one. For him/her Indonesia is a country that beautifies the soul. Without trial and temptation, isn't life only looping outside the circle and easily becomes dreary? Isn't it in trial, temptation, and turmoil, that all souls are being guided inward into the very center of the circle? Isn't it true that the core of the circle is the only place where the soul might become beautiful and lovely? In an analogy of a girl who becomes hale and hearty in a gymnastic, isn't it the willingness to undertake a

moment of exhaustion by the exercise (willingness to endure a brief moment of tragedy) that makes her even more beautiful? Therein, may the contemplations conclude this section.

Summary:

1. Temptation, trial, and turbulence are not punishments nor mistakes.
2. The mature souls know and understand (because they have been through the experience) that temptation and trial are signs that life is stepping on the higher stairs.
3. Like in climbing flight of steps, we can only proceed to the higher stairs by leaving the lower ones.

*Initiated by the flexibility of the water,
deepened by the practice of mindfulness,
concluded by the brilliance of life. That is wisdom.*

Banishing Darkness with a Broom

A friend who is a fan of Paramita Rusadi (an Indonesian actress) has a unique way in expressing his admiration by uttering the idol's name every time he meets a beautiful woman. The place can be anywhere; on the street, market, mall, office; he practically brings the custom everywhere he goes. However, when he sees his own wife who doesn't take care of him, he has another spell which is: "Really bad".

Please excuse jokes, for jokes are kind of witty seed that bring merriment and laughter into life. Nevertheless, such custom indicates a nature of persons wandering their life from a dark zone to the even darker ones. They are always praising other people's belongings and grumbling on their own possessions, and they constantly have reasons in making the best gifts life bestows into their hands seem flawed.

Another nature of darkness is a daily life which is easily distressed and irritated. Observing the opinions in the media, one may recognize that the more the public get angry, the more important is the news. Study the readers' letters published in

the media and be aware that more than half of them are expressions of anger. The issue is the same with the leaders' writings and comments that have less chance on arresting public or media's attention when they are not filled with anger.

In the language of the heart, this indicates that there are still many people who care about the fate of their nation. Some people still have willingness to serve as guardians of history so the past evil is not going to be repeated. It signifies that a lot of people love still Indonesia. Therefore, anger does not always have an awful intention.

In the language of clarity, dissatisfaction, anger and irritation are signs that our emotional state is too easy to be stolen. Even the unimportant matters may trigger the emotion, moreover the significant ones. Therefore, human's life is generally similar to a huge residence which is daily invaded by a thief. Anger, annoyance, dissatisfaction, and objection are merely some symptoms of the stolen emotions.

A thief in an empty mansion

An ancient logic said that darkness is impossible to be expelled by a broom, for it might only be disposed with light. This raises a curiosity on the kind of light useful in banishing darkness.

If we reconsider the house broking-in analogy, the thief could only do his stealing if the house is both unguarded and filled with things. There are some "matters/items" in our selves that cause the emotion to be easily stolen; those are the over

pride, the intelligence that is full of attachment, and the stubborn logics.

Having self-esteem is indeed a sign of development, yet expecting to be highly praised all the time easily makes one's emotion stolen. Even those with good position (in the government, corporation, etc.) and high reputation are unable to make themselves be praised constantly, moreover common people. Therefore, a lot of masters counter self esteem with humble manner. Praise is a source for motivation, whereas being derided is a useful input informing that there are some aspects in our selves that need to be mended.

Intelligence has a unique attitude which is unrecognized by some people. At first, it creates measurement. Then, it evaluates and judges everything according to the measurement. If life goes along with the standard, the measurement will result in pleasure, happiness and agreement. However, since life has far more diverse, complex and deeper expression than any measurement, hence the standardizations based upon intelligence easily cause life to makes disappointment its estuary.

In this case, wisdom might be the balancing force for intelligence. Whereas intelligence is full of measurement and then rejects many of life's expressions, wisdom is more to learn accepting all as they are. This is mainly caused by a profound understanding that perfection has already existed in life right from the beginning up until the end. It is desire that violates the perfection with demands and turns happiness into something rare. In the language of wisdom, acceptance is the beginning of liberation.

*Intelligence is a fortune.
However, it requires a balancing
force which is wisdom*

The stubborn logics, which is a trend in the modern civilization, has other unique natures. As what happens when a stone encounters with its kind, it always get crashed. Government versus legislative, employee versus employer, NGOs versus media... crash, crashes, and even more crashes. One prominent matter in the stubborn logic is the idea that truth is to be found through opposition. The greater the resistance is, the more credits gained in life.

However, when terrorists with their inflexible view meet the U.S. government that is using the same kind of logic, they are just looping from one complexity to the others. Nowadays, more people are longing for the “water logics”. Like the Lao Tzu’s idea that, “*The people who cultivate the Way should be more like water*”.

Observe how water flows in the river might pass through obstacles by its flexibility. Compare a dead person’s body to the living one, stem of a living tree to the decayed one. In all of the cases, we might distinguish that the living one is more flexible than the deceased. Hereby one could learn that life is closer to flexibility. Moreover, flexibility is more likely to bring happiness.

Realizing the crashes generated by the over pride, the intelligence that is filled with attachments, and the inflexible point of view, numerous masters learn to enlighten darkness with silence. No matter how great the pride, intelligence, and stubborn logic are, they will be gone by time. Stillness makes all pass in silence.

Generosity, as well as cruelty, is going to go by. Divinity

and impurity, as well as success and failure are also going to over. If this is the orientation of life, then one's soul will start to flow and the soul's dwelling will become that of an empty house. Upon a stealing attempt, the thief will find the house empty and there is nothing to be taken. Moreover it is guarded by alertness and awareness.

Executive might be seldom in agreement with legislative, employee often get crash of interests with the employer, democracy turns into *demo like crazy*, but there is nothing inside the self to be stolen. In Tibet, this condition is termed as *rigpa* (pure presence), which is a brightly illuminated inner state achieved through the long practice of alert mindfulness. Hence, soul will enlighten itself causing all paths of life seem to be pervaded with the illuminating light.

Summary:

1. Self-esteem is a plus, yet expecting to always be highly-praised is the one that makes emotions are easily stolen (angry, irritated, ill-filled).
2. Intelligence is a fortune. However, it requires a balancing force which is wisdom.
3. Initiated by the flexibility of the water, deepened by the practice of mindfulness, concluded by the brilliance of life. That is wisdom.

*Whoever can perceive the guidance in both
peacefulness and disaster will one day
understand the meaning behind “the garden song”.*

Unveiling The Beauty Of Suffering

*Take a look at my blossoming garden,
The flowers, some are white and some are red,
Watered are they everyday by me,
Roses and jasmynes, all are beautiful.*

Calamity, disaster, tragedy, and catastrophe are the mists of life overwhelming Indonesia for the last years. Not yet completely recovered from the great flood in Jakarta, there came the deafening landslides, the life-grabbing earthquake, the exploding of Garuda airplane... It seems that melancholy never loose the mood of putting Indonesia's soul in temptations. A Javanese friend frequently muttered the word *miris* (sad). Upon hearing a mother burned herself and her children because of the life's burdens, a psychiatrist quotes the ancient saying about the coming of the age where people lost their logic. An international writer even entitled his/her writing in International Herald Tribune touchingly *Indonesia: Mass murder of Natural Disaster*, particularly after counting the thousands of life devastated by the disasters.

Mourning, lamenting and being stirred by others' grief indisputably are indications of a soul's evolution. In the East it had been taught since the ancient time that in entering sacred sites even stepping on grass is prohibited. Especially because any harm we do to other beings will return to consume ourselves. Hence, we have to be immensely grateful that Indonesia still has many people with empathy in their heart.

The light of disasters

Still in respect to those whose hearts are filled with empathy, numerous masters agree that there is no path of beauty, moreover divinity, which is perfectly straight and smooth/easy. The more beautiful the destination is, harder are the paths that the wanderer has to go through. With this point of view, Indonesia might be able to be calm for a moment, gathering energy to pass a lot of sloping and winding road ahead.

Within this kind of soul's recess, it might be significant to take a moment of contemplation on the light of disasters. For numerous of souls, disasters are identical to death, separation, sorrow, and grief. And this is so humane indeed.

Not many souls are willing to dig deeper and find out that there are some secrets of the life's horizons that might be unveiled behind the curtain of disasters. Fear and sadness are useful reflections on the seizing desires. The stronger the grip, the more frightening the appearance of disaster is. When there is a kind of wish that life should only has a peaceful expression and that a family must be happy, then separation will be a punishment and poverty a curse.

Through the poundings of disasters, humans are reminded that the cycle of life has to go on rotating no matter how great the grip of desires is. The sun has to set to welcome the twilight. When the cycle of earth has to be marked by a tremble, then earthquake will be the companion of life. If the time has arrived for death to visit, there he will visit and become the associate of life. Therefore, a father once told his offspring that death come not because of disease, hex, nor disasters. Death's arrival is because the time of the appointment has come. Diseases and disasters are merely the opening doors for death.

By this perspective, not only desires will lower their seize, the lights of disasters is going to shine as well. It will be recognized that disasters are more than just sources of grief, melancholy and curse, for they unmask the knowledge on the fuller expression of life.

Similar to the nursery rhyme quoted in the beginning of this section, life is akin to gardening. Though you are planting fine decorative grass, some weeds do grow as well. Even though you have done many good deeds, said a lot of prayers, went to worshipping places frequently, still disasters plague when their time has come. If we grow a hundred meters of decorative grass then the wild weeds only take very small portion of the land. The matter is the same with life. We often forget to be grateful for our years of good health and we frequently grumble for only a few days of sickness. The number of the melancholic days in Indonesia's history are nothing compared to the decades of the nation's age.

*Peacefulness strengthening in the way
water does to the thirsty. Calamity
empowering like the way hard and rough
sandpaper does to a diamond*

A garden is made lovely by flowers and colors, and so is life. Happiness is more beautiful after passing through sorrows. Life is so meaningful because of death. An achievement rooted with deep gratitude once being shattered by failure.

A garden keeps on growing when it is continuously watered, and so is the soul. It is not only happiness that waters life for sorrow does too, particularly because grief is the educator of humbleness and self-reflection. Peacefulness is not the only one who strengthens life since disasters, once they have passed through successfully, do the same. Peacefulness reinforces soul in the same way with water to wanderers in a desert, whereas disasters bring strength like a hard and rough sand paper that shines a diamond. As a note for contemplation, Japan and Germany, two of the world's leading countries in this era, suffered miserable lost decades ago.

On the summit of all this journeys a beautiful stanza of life remains: "*Roses and jasmines, all are beautiful*". Roses, together with their thorns, are beautiful as well as the fragrant jasmines. Whoever may perceive beauty in every element of dualities (happiness – disaster, profit – loss, divinity – impurity, praised – scorned) is but a step from the gate of enlightenment and his/her soul shall chant, "All are beautiful!"

In the beautiful language of poets, profit is a lesson from numerous losses, impurity is divinity preparing to reveal its mysteries, and wealth is but the backside of poverty in the coin of life. In the evolving souls, dualities never cease to sway from one extreme to the other. Sorrow visits after happiness, loss after profit, and so on. The nursery rhyme quoted above

teaches that, being able to love, nurse, and accept the entire traits of life, something inside will sing, “All are beautiful!”

This might be the one inspired Robert Fulghum to point out that “*Everything we need to know in life are taught in the kindergarten*”. Childhood is when everything seems beautiful. A master, *Dzogchen Chogyal Namkai Norbu* referred to this as *primordial state* (a both starting and concluding point in the inward journey). The nature of this state is simple: the non-existence of desires for positivism and refusals for negativism.

Summary:

1. In the life accompanied by profoundness of contemplation, tragedy brings lights of guidance.
2. Peacefulness reinforces soul in the same way with water to wanderers in a desert, whereas disasters bring strength in the manner of a hard and rough sand paper makes a diamond shines more brilliantly.
3. Whoever can perceive the guidance in both peacefulness and disaster will one day understand the meaning behind “the garden song”.

The core of enlightenment is to become untouchable. To remain calm when intimidated, and to keep humble when praised. Not clinging to happiness nor rejecting sadness.

Sadness, Happiness, Peacefulness

Once upon a time, there was a mother with one son and a daughter. The son was an ice cream peddler, therefore the mother lamented for him during the rainy days for almost no one buy from him. The daughter was happened to be an umbrella seller and so the mother grieved for her on the sunny days for she could only sell a few of her goods. And there went the mother, filled her life with nothing but sorrow.

This story is indeed an analogy, about how many recent lives are characterized by misery. There is always a reason or two to slip life into grief as disaster, disease, old age and death. Hence suffering becomes an upper stream in a river of life which contained by stress, complaint, sickness and conflict.

Happiness-sadness

A psychiatrist once said that numerous mental asylums are lacking of accommodation. Some of them even send patients those are not fully recovered yet to their family to be replaced by severe patients who need more assistance and treatment.

Most people detest suffering. Perhaps because he was addressing his particular speak to public, His Holiness Dalai Lama once mentioned that, '*There is something in common for all of us: evading suffering and longing for happiness.*' And this is indeed so human. Only a few of us dare to say that, in need to cry, do not cry upon death but on birth instead for every birth brings sickness, old age and finally death.

In other words, birth as well as life is incapable to escape suffering. Sorrow is the faithful companion in the every steps of life. No matter how hard people manage, how strong they fortify their selves, the devoted companion will always find his way.

Like the swaying of a pendulum, the harder and the more passionate one swing the pendulum of happiness, the greater is the temptation of suffering will become. This is the explanation for a number of over-excitement seekers are being greatly tempted by overabundance sufferings as well. This is also the one behind the WHO data that the United States (as one of the biggest countries where the pursuit of happiness is greatly intense) is the biggest consumers of sleeping pills in the world.

A researcher once compared Japan and Myanmar, two countries that both have Buddhism as their major religion (so that the comparison will be fairer). Japan is indeed a miraculously rare case in material achievement and far beyond compare to Myanmar in this respect. Nevertheless, Japan also has far greater number of social dilemmas such as suicide, divorce and depression than Myanmar. This fact is as if whispering the assurance that wherever lays abundant material

wealth, there will be found plentiful suffering as well.

In the excellent realization of this pendulum reality, numerous ascetics, meditators, yogis, Sufis and other kinds of inner wanderer permit their pendulum of emotion to sway in a limited space. During happiness they fully understand that it is going to be replaced by suffering hence the over excitement of the celebration might be restrained. Therefore, when suffering indeed comes it is not so tempting.

The joy of contentment

In Kahlil Gibran's beautiful verses (*The Prophet*) it is stated that, while we are conversing merrily with happiness in the lounge, suffering is waiting on our bed. In a more common sense, we share our dwelling with both happiness and suffering... and how may we escape suffering who settles in the very same residence with us?

For that reason, a number of masters then teach to step beyond the realm of happiness and suffering. In their terminology, both happiness and suffering are merely playthings for the infant souls during their growing to maturity. It is this evolution that needs the continuous interchanging of happiness and suffering.

However, a matured soul fully realizes that both happiness and suffering have the same natures: uncertainty and interchanging. Is not the dependency upon uncertainty makes life uncertain as well? Moreover, both happiness and suffering are originated from the same root which is desire. When desires are fulfilled happiness is the guest, and when

In the understanding of those who have perceived tranquility, a soul will remain poor no matter how wealthy he/she is without any sense of contentment. On the other hand, even the poorest shall remain wealthy in a contented life

they are not then agony is the visitor.

Every traveler into self who has accomplished a certain distance understands that desires (eventually those accompanied by attachments) are the foundations of suffering. This kind of knowledge is the one guiding a number of people to come into the realm of tranquility.

In contrary to the kind of happiness that is lustful to achieve this and that, compares this and that, and seeks to gain more than this and that, tranquility is all sufficient as it is. As the birds those are flying in the air, fishes those are swimming in the water, the wolves those are roaming in the forest, the sun that is shining during the day, and the stars those are twinkling in the evening time. All are already perfect as they are. There is nothing to be added nor eliminated. Addition and elimination indeed might bring happiness. However, in that kind of happiness mind is not completely calm and balance for there is always fear that the happiness will be replaced by grief.

In the understanding of those who have perceived tranquility, a soul will remain poor no matter how wealthy he/she is without any sense of contentment and even the poorest shall remain wealthy if he/she lives contentedly. Therefore, a seer once said that: *'Enlightenment is like the reflection of the moon in the water. The moon does not get wet, the water is not separated'*. In other expression, the core of enlightenment is to become untouchable. To remain calm upon being insulted, and humble when praised. Not clinging to happiness nor rejecting suffering. Exactly as the lotus that does not get wet in the water and remained unstained in the mud.

One vital origin for this untouchability is the achievement in training oneself to feel content. Reaching this state, there is nothing save the flow of the soul.

Summary:

1. Happiness and sadness are two ends of a swaying pendulum. The more someone enjoys the happiness, the more he/she will get distressed by the coming sadness.
2. Therefore, it will be beautiful not to over celebrate happiness. Not too exalted by the visit of happiness nor overly tormented by the arrival of sadness.
3. And later, the feeling of contentment to whatever happens will help in opening the gate of silence.

*Profoundness permits no one steps
into its hall save the spirits who have
found the crest of silence within
the heart of turbulence.*

Kuta's Sorrow, Our Sorrow

The account of the terrorist bombs is a story of sorrow. It is also the same with the bombing in Bali. Hundreds of life were devastated. Even though Australian citizens are the greatest number among victims, but in the chill of death it is no longer relevant to talk about nationality. It is more significant to discuss about the human's sufferings.

Everybody wants to be happy, but some people's daily life cause wounds full of sufferings. Human keeps on mounting miseries through hatred, anger, and resentment.

The September 11 2001 attack on the World Trade Center's twin buildings was indeed a darkness. And it was about to be solved with another darkness by the United States and its allies' invasion to Afghanistan and Iraq. So there went the second bombing in Bali, terrorist bomb in Turkey, suicide bombing in Iraq, the kidnapping of Korean citizens in Afghanistan, the blasting of an airport in London and the following bombings accompanied with anger and grudge. News and analysis have been spreading that the United States'

destiny in Iraq will be the same with theirs in the Vietnam war.

Based on this reflection, civilization is chasing around from one darkness of hatred to other darkness of the same kind. In this case, Bali is sharing the light of understanding. Maybe the opinion of some peace activists is right: Bali is the world's heritage of peacefulness.

Sharing the light

It was in Bali that the hatred of terrorist bomb (even though it happened two times) was not followed by more terrible malice. Hatred, anger, and bitterness were responded by hands those were holding and shaking each other. Hajj Bambang with his friends and Nyoman Bagiana Karang with his associates in Kuta, Bali, were not touched by the darkness of grudge, anger, and hatred. They walked radiantly enlighten a lot of people's sufferings.

Years after the tragedy, Hajj Bambang has received numerous national and international awards. Nyoman Bagiana Karang has become a member of the Indonesian parliament. Bali successively acknowledged as the best island for tourist destination in the world from a number of prestigious international medias. This is as if sharing lights of understanding that, in a place where hatred is not confronted by hatred, anger is not followed by anger, and grudge is not faced by grudge, there hatred, anger, and grudge will be transformed into greatness. Perhaps that is why the highest mountain in Bali is the *Agung* (Great) mountain.

And through this manner of responding, not only Bali is painting the beauties of peacefulness, but also Islam through the exemplary of Hajj Bambang and his friends. The heart-touching Islamic role-models were not exist only in the Middle East, but in Bali as well. Without asking about religion, Hajj Bambang and his friends forgot about grudge, anger, hatred, and the fear of death in the grip of terror, to walk hand in hand alleviated a lot of people's sufferings. With this drama, it is as if Bali intended to revive the beautiful expression of Islam: *rahmatan lil-alamin* (be a blessing to the world).

Sorrow, love, and profoundness

As have been told in many stories of humanity, sorrow is double-faced: devastating and purifying. It is devastating when a person responds to bitterness and irritation with even darker spirit. In this case, sorrow is similar to a rolling ball of snow which is made bigger and bigger by the hays it rolled upon.

Sorrow purifies a being who has completely realized that there is guidance for life within sufferings. Quoting the experience of the Sufis, since the message of life exists even in the falling of a leave to the Earth, moreover in the suffering that devastates hundreds of life. If we focus on the guidance in every happening then suffering can guide us to the light. Let alone in the brightness, the light also shines in the darkness. This light is also the one guided Kuta in its time of sorrow.

In Eastern wisdom, sorrow is a moment to pay back our debts to life, parents, teachers, past time mistakes. Those who refuse fail to do the refund and also create new obligation.

The moment of suffering is the time to pay back our debts. Whoever declines is failing the duty and also creating new obligation. Anyone flows with the sorrow, is compensating the debt sincerely and then rejoice in liberation

Whoever flows with the sorrow is compensating the debt gratefully and then be free.

And fortunate are those who are made holy by suffering. Mostly because the journey passing myriad of sorrows grants them a boundless capacity to suffer. They are as grand as the ocean, which does not get affected by anything thrown into it. The greatness of life is unimaginable if death can be greeted in this manner.

Happiness is indeed a charm. However, it does not teach anything. Suffering is full of tears, yet there are so many humans made more perfect by suffering. Jalalludin Rumi shines because the sorrow of losing both his teacher and his manuscripts. Kahlil Gibran born and grew up in misery. Arjuna found enlightenment in deep grief. Pema Chodron entered the gate of enlightenment after her haven of loyalty toward her husband was trembled down by divorce.

Sorrow often makes us sensitive and it also encourages us to join hands. Above all, it forces us to profoundly realize that all beings are interconnected in this web called life. Whatever done in this web (good-bad, holy-unholy, right-wrong) will return to the doer.

Therefore, it is not an exaggeration if we conclude that the sorrow of Kuta is ours as well. Dost a rose not composed by unflower elements (soil, water, sun light) as well? Does in the terrorist' cruelty not lie a mesh of millennial old hatred? Does Kuta's sorrow not reminding humanity that it is only by love we can be happy? Apparently, suffering opens the window of love.

Only a few seekers taking the journey into their own selves (through fasting, meditation, *zikir*, contemplation, yoga, etc.) wish to experience the taste of sorrow. Yet sorrow still comes like a guest visiting a mansion of life. Sometimes through disaster, death, misfortune, or failure. Nevertheless, whoever has been illuminated by the understanding that “suffering opens the window of love” knows that suffering is also a kind of light that guides the journey. Does the profound spirituality not reveal itself to anything save the minds that find the summit of silence within the turbulence?

Summary:

1. Wherever anger is not followed by anger, grudge does not responded by grudge, hatred is not returned with hatred, there the seeds of greatness are being sowed.
2. Happiness is delightful indeed, but it is scarce of lessons. Sadness is undeniably hurtful, but it is abundance with teachings.
3. Profoundness permits no one steps into its hall save the spirits who have found the crest of silence within the heart of turbulence.

*Though has been knocked in silent prayer
and laborious work, The Door remains
closed for the visitors come with their names.
The Door opens willingly only for the wanderers
lost their selves somewhere along the journey.*

As Determined as Gandhi, as Touching as Rumi

Following the burst of violence in a number of western countries (U.S.'s attack to Afghanistan and Iraq, to name one of them) that used to be the worlds' role models in many things, some fellows begin to ask on who will become the next figure in determining the civilization of humanity. A question that is indeed hard to be answered. Quoting a master's opinion, it is easier for the tangled thread to be pulled from the needle's hole than to find figure able to set good examples for civilization in this era.

For the optimists, there are always opened windows of opportunity in every age. If the light of the role figure is still unseen then it might because the time has not come yet for the covering cloud to pass. In other words, the light does exist; it is but still unveiled. Analogically, there are two kinds of archer whose target is concealed by the cloud. The first archer waits for the cloud to pass while the other insists to shoot and takes

the risk to miss the target.

Both are having their own advantage and detriment. The first attitude is safer, but when the cloud disappears the target might have already been occupied by other archers' arrows. The second is risky yet it is more likely to be successful compared to the first.

The purity of struggle

With this kind of risk, some of us then start to predict the future determinants of civilization. Some nominate China for its population and economic development. Some mention India because of its impressive mastery in IT. Some refer to South Africa, particularly for the firm foundation of development built by Nelson Mandela, and you may as well prolong the list with personal opinion.

Whatever the nation is, it is hard to be imagined as a role model of civilization without the role of an astonishing leader. Therefore, the exploration of ideas on this subject is going to be focused on the characters of leadership.

In dealing with the present challenges, there is no other word more suitable than "hard". When people oust even leaders who have performed greatly (as Thaksin in Thailand), what will they do to those who perform less? Let alone those who govern for a few years, even those who have held the power for decades have to fall.

Therein emerges the importance of perseverance in

leadership, and Mahatma Gandhi was one among the leaders possessing great determination. Challenges that he had encountered are countless. From being tortured when he was a lawyer in South Africa, facing the British colonial with both power and weapon in their hands, to being tempted with authority upon the independence of India. Nevertheless, under whatever kind of temptation Gandhi kept on persisting with his two principals: non-violence and integrity not to intermix personal matters with the struggle affairs.

In this century, it is hard to find someone comparable to Gandhi in the matter of non-violence. His physical body tortured and wounded for many times in both South Africa and India, Gandhi was still consistent to the creed of non-violence. Before his passing away he even asked mercy for the one who shot him.

Gandhi's innermost quality in determination not to intermingling personal matters and struggle affairs was revealed during the early days of India's independency. Numerous figures from both Hindu and Moslem parties agreed that Gandhi is the most qualified person to be the first Prime Minister.

Nevertheless, as written by the quill of history, Gandhi sheltered the purity of his struggle by letting Nehru been elected as the Prime Minister. Hence, Gandhi was truly a character who knitted the beauty of life with two determinations: non-violence and the purity of struggle.

Knocking the door

*Ascending the stairways of
Divinity means descending the
ladders of ego. Both Gandhi
and Rumi's life are full with
inspirations by their stepping
down the ladders of self*

However, as have been recorded by time, there are too many leaders practicing “blind determination” (determination without guidance/guideless determination). In analogy, those leaders are similar to a boatman who rows vigorously (determinedly) without realizing that he is not the only person in the boat. Hence, the determination is then associated with repression.

Furthermore, an era frenzied with opinions, struggles, conflicts, and clashes of interests, is no longer the time to persuade people with stick, fist, threat, and especially by killing. No matter how strong one’s personality is, how gloomy his/her experiences are, how sentimental he/she toward life is, mortals are still longing for the touches.

The matter is more or less similar to Cleopatra who became the first to conquer Europe. Taj Mahal, a non-Hindu who was not the consort of the king as well, yet she left remarkable memory of being a charm in a kingdom where most of its people were Hindus. Like Mother Theresa who touched the heart of the world. This is then the point where humankind needs a Rumi.

If Gandhi is astounding with his determination, Rumi is with his touches. In most of his works one may sense dignity, charisma, vibration, and touch. There was once a day when Rumi was deep in a profound prayer. Upon finishing his pray, he knocked on the door of The Lover who Loves Most. A voice behind the door asked: “Who is that?” Serenely Rumi answered: “It is me”. Almost instantly, the voice replied: “Please go, for there is no room may contain the two of us in this

house.” Being rejected, Rumi resumed his insightful prayer. When he felt the sufficiency, he once more knocked at the very door. The same voice was heard: “Who is that?” Rumi, now trembling was he, answered, “It is Thee...” and the door was immediately opened. Anyone who journeys his/her own within will understand how distant Rumi has wandered.

The Door in Rumi’s account has been knocked in many ways both during prayer and work. However, for those who are still busy with the word “I” (occupied with ego, arrogance, boast, anger and hatred) the Door remains closed. The Door will naturally open for seekers upon their lost of self.

In a master’s words: ‘When you step up in the path of God means you step down in the path of ego’. Ascending the divine stairways means descending the ladders of ego. And both Gandhi and Rumi’s life are full with inspirations by their stepping down the ladders of their ego.

Back to the previous story about the role model of civilization, in any land borne leaders as determined as Gandhi and as stirring as Rumi, there the light of civilization may rise to guide those who are still seized by the darkness.

Summary:

1. Determination often becomes the starting point of creation. However, without being accompanied by tranquility, a lot of determination becomes the root of devastation.

2. Many people are longing for the tranquility. Nevertheless, without being escorted by determination, tranquility often leads to indolence.
3. Therefore, a leader requires both determination and tranquility at the same time: Gandhi's determination and Rumi's tranquility.

All happenings bring guidance and counsels. Calmness makes all more lovely.

Peace is Every Step

In Bali there is a tale about a boy named Nyoman who was loved by everybody because he was smart, intelligence, and handsome. However, bored with his life, he went to meet a forest wizard who gave him a magic flute that could take him into the future. So it was said that Peter started to do experiment with his life.

Firstly, he leaped into his teen. A moment later he got jaded and proceeded to his old age where he saw himself a father with an aging wife. Finding out that old age is even more boring, he went further, and it was at this point that regret struck. There were a lot of present moments that he forgot to enjoy; the amusing childhood, the adolescent full of friendships, the college life full of argumentations. And there went Nyoman, crying and running to the forest asking the wizard giving him his life back.

To be honest, most people are like Nyoman; rushing to the future. And once get in the future, they lament for there are numerous present times that have become the past without being enjoyed. People are very smart and spartan in preparing

for their future, but many of them frequently fail in the matters of enjoying and being grateful. In a complaining friend's language, in the past we could not enjoy delicious food because it was unaffordable and now when we have the money such meal is forbidden for us because of the cholesterol.

This nation is the same. Getting bored with the "old order", people subverted it and welcomed the "new order". However, the new order was also subverted and then substituted with the "reformation order". And now there are strong indications that people are getting bored with this one as well.

The human civilization is the same, shifting from one boredom into the other: the first world war, the second world war, the cold war, and now the war against terrorist.

Today as a present

Perhaps because of getting tired with life and its everlasting chase for the future, a lot of meditation masters teach their students to embrace the present time. It does not ask for uncanny and difficult requirements. It can be done with the present body, age, and wealth. It is learning to embrace all things with smile and friendship.

It has been proven that finding health and happiness through smiles and friendships is far more easier than by anger and hatred. Hence, several writers (like Spencer Johnson in his work *The Present*) conclude that today/this time is *the present*.

The present husband, wife, child, parents, house, job,

and health, are not perfect indeed, but they are waiting to be celebrated. Indonesia as a resident for many people is also flawed. Nevertheless, this country provides a lot of things worth to be rejoiced. The beautiful rising and setting of the sun, a moderate income that can pay more than one house keepers, the temptation of disaster that often proves that Indonesian people are still care and kindhearted.

A friend fantasizes that if we are lost in the outer space, the most beautiful dream will be to step our feet back on this lovely planet Earth. Palestine might be raging with its politics, Middle East and Israel might keep on warring each other, yet there are still plenty of things deserve a toast in this planet.

Breathing is a beauty

Someone questioned: if it is so, why it is so difficult to enjoy the present time? Analogized with a house, human's body is vulnerable by a number of unguarded openings those are our eyes, mouth, nose, mind, desire, and feeling. To make it even worse, we expose ourselves to the horrible images in television and violent dialogues in radio. And thus life becomes a wrecked house.

By the profound understanding on this matter, a lot of people then secure their windows with the guardians of mindfulness and patience. Activating these guardians is very simple, and moreover, it is completely free: only by paying attention to the breathing. Anyone has taken a long journey of meditation knows that when we frequently observe our breathing, the guardians of mindfulness and patience will begin

People are so smart and spartan in preparing for the future. However, when the future has become present, they often fail to enjoy and to celebrate it

to carry out their task and we will also find something beautiful in it which is the embrace with the eternal presence!

The past has gone and the future has not come yet, therefore both are not at hand. The only moment in time available to be hugged is the present, and in order to do so is as simple as to smile, see, enjoy, and be grateful as we are inhaling and exhaling the air.

It will be even easier to be performed if one has become as amazing as Jalalludin Rumi: *all are sent as guides from the beyond*. All happenings bring guidance and counsels.

Success is beautiful, and so does failure. Does failure not informing us of our limitations? Being acknowledged as a saintly figure is good, but being identified as a charlatan is good as well because it keeps us humble. Everything do provides guidance.

With this point of view, unification with the eternal present can be done easier and with beauty. Calmness makes everything more lovely.

Moreover, this practice can also be performed outside of the meditation room. It can be conducted as we open our eyes in the morning, wash our face with the water from the sink, smile to the traffic jam, lead a meeting, and hug our beloved ones once we get home. This is the peace in every step.

In His Holiness Dalai Lama's words, realizing the peaceful world through the tranquility of the self is difficult

indeed, still it is the only way. Therefore the beauty of breathing needs to be accompanied by mindfulness in every contact of the senses. When we see something (an annoying person, for example), the vision will give raise to a certain feeling. Examine whether this feeling makes alliance with mindfulness or ignorance. It will generates calmness if it collaborates with mindfulness, but it will produces sadness if it is hauled by anger.

Every step enlightened by mindfulness and patience will become a step of tranquility and divinity. In this subject, Thich Nhat Hanh is incomparable. In some of his works (from *Present Moment Wonderful Moment* to *Peace is Every Step*) he always highlighted the significance of peacefulness in this present time. Wherever he is, he will take a short pause, breath, and get connected with the present until the bell is ringing. In his meditation room in Plum village, France, he writes: Breathe, You are still alive!

Summary:

1. Racing to the future is modern people's custom that makes life runs mad.
2. The future has not come yet and the past has been gone. Both are not at hand. Today/This time is the only cash we hold. Therefore, in English language *today* is called *the present* (gift).
3. All things performed in the present with mindfulness (having meal, walking, sitting, working, laying on bed), moreover accompanied with deep gratitude, are the meditations that bring enlightenment.

*Be kind when you speak of the forces
of darkness. They are not evil,
they are just uninformed.*

The Bringers of the Dawn

On the outskirts of Lake Toba, from the direction of Taman Simalem (near Binjane) recreation center, nature is painting both beauty and perfection. Imagine the sight of Samosir island from afar, embraced by the gentleness of Lake Toba. And this tender hug between hill and lake is illuminated by the tranquil light of the sun.

For whoever with adequate sensitivity, this kind of place is similar to an unfolded ancient manuscript. It is longing to be read. Lake, with its water, is a symbol of gentleness while mountain with its rocks is the representative of assertiveness. When both are embracing each other intimately, a brilliant light of tranquility is generated, as if giving message to humanity (especially leaders) to be as hard as rock in educating their selves, and as gentle as water in serving others. As the result, the practitioner of this teaching will be shining serenely.

The flowers blooming beautifully on the shore are other examples. It is as if they are inviting us to smile. Because it is in smiling that happiness dwells and the friendship with life is

hidden. It is easier to find peace through companionship than hostility.

Those who have the will to listen more carefully will hear the teaching that there are fruits in the wastes, and there are wastes in the fruits. The existence of fruits is not possible without fertilizers that often called as waste. And every fruits will be wastes in time.

This also happens in human's life. There is victory in defeat, as well as there is defeat in victory. When someone is lost and does not make any trouble, he/she is actually winning him/her own glories. Every persons' victory will end with defeat (like retirement). How beautiful these messages of nature are.

We are what we choose

Only a few people properly connected with nature, especially because the frequency of human's mind is different with the nature's. The mind of most people is marked with too many disturbances (anger, greed, protest, hatred), while nature is perfectly calm.

Our mind is like a television set with thousands of channels (such as the channel of anger and of peacefulness), and, intentionally or not, we are the ones responsible in choosing the channel. When being praised, we can choose the channel of haughtiness or modesty. In oppression, we can choose to fight back or we can choose the channel of mindfulness which perceives that the intimidator is in need of our compassion.

The certain thing is that it is not the harassment that devastates, but the consequence of choosing the angry channel. Hence, while some psychologists have the formula *we are what we think*, in this path of understanding the principle is *we are what we choose*. We become what we choose in daily life. The note then is that some people make their choice with clear mindfulness while some others with the darkness of desires.

Therefore, people with a long journey of prayer and meditation train hard to manage desires and also to activate the light of mindfulness. Whatever happens to them, they always prefer the shining mindfulness and stay away from the darkness of desires. Another feature of the travelers in this path is that they do not merely smile with their lips but also with their eyes (see everything with the spirit of understanding, acceptance, and companionship).

Consequently, there is an advice to *less thinking more smiling*. With intelligence, it is very easy for us to slip into judgment and then into suffering. Through smile all are embraced with gentleness, and this will present happiness, peacefulness, and tranquility.

A handful of poetries, a pocket of sun

For whoever trains devotedly to enlighten the self with mindfulness and stays away from desires, life becomes a handful of poetries and a pocket of sun. A handful of poetries because all are meaningful. Moreover, they are already in hands (become the force that guides the manner of choosing in daily life). A pocket of sun because these meanings can be

*Be as hard as rock in training the self,
but as tender as water in serving others*

carried away everywhere as the light that illuminates the path. There is no more darkness of envy, irritation, or any of its kind. All have been enlightened.

Success, failure, praise, scorn, holiness, impurity, all of them are poetries because they are rich in meanings. If these meanings guide the conducts in daily life, they will transform into the enlightening sun of mindfulness.

Life might be replaced by death. Fame might turn into obscurity. Praise might be substituted with curse. Yet the light of mindfulness keeps on shining. Like how the sun shines on everything, mindfulness performs its task free from discrimination.

Barbara Marciniak in *Bringers of the Dawn*, (which she admits inspired by Bali, among other sources) is more distinctive in this matter. Pay attention to one of her conclusions: “*Emotions are a source of food. This is how you nourish yourself*”. The states of emotion (happy - sad, cheerful - angry) are valuable nutrition for inner seeds. If most people hate the negative emotions (like anger), in this path all kinds of sentiment (positive-negative) are recognized as guidance. Therefore, Barbara Marciniak wrote: “*anger serves a purpose*”. Anger is merely a servant, not a decision maker. Nevertheless, it is easily understood that anger helps to achieve goal. Anger is a kind of darkness, thus being angry to it means adding darkness to darkness. Smile to anger, realize its coming, and be aware not to follow its desire. Subsequently, one will see that anger is a kind of indicator informing that there is still defilement inside. It is a sign that we still have to be aware to certain kind

of person or condition out there.

Pay attention to Barbara's next message: "*Be kind when you speak of the forces of darkness. Do not speak as if they are bad. Simply understand that they are uninformed*".

Those who enlighten their daily life with this kind of inner mindfulness, are the *Bringers of the Dawn*. A band of light conveyors amidst the immense darkness of anger, greed, hatred, confusion, and dissatisfaction. Let us pray together that all being may be happy.

Summary:

1. Not too many people can access the secrets of nature. Nature, which is tranquil, can be approached only by the peaceful mind.
2. Human's mind is similar to television set with hundreds of channels. We become what we choose.
3. The bringers of the dawn do not banish anger, greed, and darkness for such emotions come with purpose. As electricity that flares by embracing the duality of positive-negative, so do the bringers of the dawn. They are guided by calmness and then realize that, in fact, all are useful and meaningful.

As a Mother, ocean symbolizes love because she handles everything that comes with love. As a Father, ocean represents total surrender by accepting whatever comes without any greed to discriminate.

The Mother is Love, the Father is Sincerity

Science, since a long time ago, has recognized the term *archaeology of knowledge*, which inspires that there is a genealogy of science. In Fritjof Capra's (an Austrian physics doctor) wonderful work entitled *The Tao of Physics* we will find not only the legacy of Newton, Einstein, and Heisenberg for we will also notice the fingerprints of Confucius, Buddha, and Krishna. A particular chapter about atom and sub-atom is even entitled *The Dancing of Shiva*.

It is heartening that the Capra-like Western-Eastern synthesis also appears in the East. Yongey Mingyur Rinpoche in *The Joy of Living* has skillfully presented profound elaboration not only on meditation but on physics, biology, and cognitive psychology as well. As a Tibetan, his familiarity with Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Tilopa, Marpa, and Milarepa is natural. Yet Mingyur Rinpoche is also very fluent discussing the works of Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, and the great biologist Francisco

J. Varela.

The point of these two examples is that there is an interaction process affecting each other happening everywhere. And this development is constructing a plural, tolerant, and friendly science. Sufism is a beautiful tradition in Islam, yet it has inspired a lot of Westerners and Jalalludin Rumi has become the Einstein of Sufi since a long time ago. Parallelism between the teaching of Buddha and Jesus has been conducted by numerous writers. Bali as one of the global corridors also reveals a tendency in which the terrorist' bombs, though they did bring sorrow, yet were not strong enough to drag Balinese people back into the primordial sentiments that will even more depressing.

All of these are showing humanity the tearing down of the walls. Not only the barriers in the field of science, but also in spirituality. Mahatma Gandhi was born, raised, and passed away in Hindu family, yet he becomes reference about non-violent struggle for a great number of Islam, Christian, Catholic, and Buddhist devotees. He had become the Max Weber of anti-violence movement. Nelson Mandela grew up a Christian yet his exemplary acts in forgiving the past is an illuminating light for a lot of souls.

The rain, the river, and the ocean

Only a few elementary school students will attain doctoral grade. The case is the same in the journey into the self. Only a very small number of travelers might finally step their feet on the summit of the mountain like Rumi, Mandela, and Gandhi.

Like what has been illustrated by the nature, most people initiate their journey like the rain pouring down the Earth in rapid speed. This might explain why the majority of youngsters live their days (studying and working) with the motivation to gain benefit from their actions. Full of spirit, tough, and powerful/energetic is the characteristics of people in this stage. Some among the ambitious politicians, academics, and merchants also belong to this group.

However, any drop of rain, once emerged with the river, starts to loose some of its tough natures. The river stream gives smoothness to the rain. Though rivers are tough and malignant in some cases (like in waterfall or flood) but mostly they are gentle. Exactly like the view of a river marked by hard stones and gentle water, people in this stage are so. There are times when they are firm and tough like warring soldiers and there are moments when they are so gentle like servants. A great leader usually combines firmness and toughness in a perfect blend. He/she is as hard as rock when giving punishment and as gentle as water when serving.

The arrival of water from the river to the ocean is merely a matter of time, and at the ocean all toughness and gentleness (duality) become one. This kind of attainment is the one experienced by people like Nelson Mandela, Dalai Lama, Jalalludin Rumi, and Mahatma Gandhi. Though they have different homeland, religion, and nation yet they share one likeness: do everything with love and accept the result with gratitude.

Spiritual parents

Gracefully is the life that finds its spiritual parents. Like an eagle soaring high elegantly in the sky: serene, free, and liberated. Love then makes everything useful and meaningful

Knowing that only a limited number of persons able to attain the greatness of the ocean, emerged an innocent curiosity to track their spiritual genealogy. It reminds to the story of a village boy who one day met a helium balloon seller surrounded by customers. When the rush was over and the seller was pumping balloons with various colors, the boy innocently questioned “Can the black one fly too?” Patiently the seller replied: “Son, it is not the color that makes ‘em fly. It is the thing inside”.

In Vivekananda’s words: “*When the blossom vanish, the fruit appear*”. If outer matters (praise, wealth) begin to lost their charm, then inner matters (gratitude, modesty) emerge as substitutes.

That’s why ocean descends itself, expressing gratitude to whatever things come and thus become immeasurably great. Anyone learns this thoughtfully from the ocean has found his/her spiritual parents. As a Mother, ocean is the symbol of love for anything comes will be managed with love. As a Father, ocean represents the total sincerity, particularly because it accepts anything without any greed to choose.

This is the spiritual lineage of the great people. Their Mother is love and their Father is sincerity/acceptance. Dalai Lama once bestowed a message: “*If you want others to be happy, practice compassion. If you want to be happy, practice compassion*”. Practicing compassion is the secret of happiness. In a Mahamudra master’s words: “*If one can rest the mind naturally, that’s the supreme meditation*”. And acceptance contributes greatly in making the mind rest in naturalness. Like

an eagle elegantly soars high up in the sky, so does the life that meets the spiritual parents: serene, free, liberated. Love will then make everything useful and meaningful.

Summary:

1. Most of human's life starts like the rain (studying and working hard). Nevertheless, once arrive at the river (being mature), the journey smoothened.
2. For those seriously train themselves to become gentle like the river, the time will come for them to arrive at the supremely wide, deep, and great ocean where all things are accepted, embraced, and managed warmly.
3. There is only one character of people who have arrived at the ocean: doing whatever task given by life with love and accepting the result with gratitude.

Whereas the lovers of being number one concentrate on how to be correct and great, the tranquility of the casuarinas focuses on how to be good and touching.

Happy to be the Second

Years ago, David C Mc. Cleland was known for his idea of “achieving society” with the basic notion that life is only worth living by being number one. Most countries and corporations were interested to accelerate their development by injecting the motivation-virus in order to gain achievement and after decades it seems that the virus is still spreading in rapid speed.

The world of corporation, which is the center of development in which a lot of futures are being prepared, marked with the more intense contagion of this virus.

It is also similar in the shifts of power in nations. The influencing figures are the aggressive ones like George W. Bush and John Howard, those are countered by the not-less-aggressive terrorists. As the result, the temperature of relationship between persons is getting hotter day by day.

While the material benefit obtained by injecting the achievement virus is beyond doubt, still everything has their own cost. In this case, peacefulness, happiness, and comfort of

mind are only a few of the things that must be sacrificed.

The issue of global warming which recently is being re-popularized intensively by Al Gore, negative sign of peace in the conflict caused by the United States' attack toward Afghanistan and Iraq, and the heating up of the political climate in some countries that used to be peaceful like Thailand and Myanmar are only a few among the symptoms.

It is also the same in Indonesia. Ten years of democracy stained with frictions between elites fighting each other to become the number one. During the era of direct election for the heads of regional government, the citizens are so busy serving elites those are all craving to be number one.

The secrets of the touch

As described in Daoed Joesoef's writing about Japan's economy, the amazing pillar of Japan's progress are house wives doing their motherly tasks proudly and happily. They let themselves be the second.

The story of India is also the same. Upon the independence of India, Mahatma Gandhi gratefully presented the prime minister position to Nehru. A decision that saved the nation and presented the opportunity by which India might develop without being disturbed by the rivalry to be number one.

Mohammad Hatta was an Indonesian legend who was happy with his life as the second. No matter how many frictions

happened with the number one person at that time, he saved this country by joyfully become the number two.

In the East once born a great master with brilliant light who, long before attaining the enlightenment, was incarnated as a turtle. One day the turtle noticed a human floating in the middle of a sea. Regarding the person's life more important than its own, the turtle carried the man to the shore where exhaustion then made it fall asleep. The turtle woke up when its body was covered by thousands of ants. Still with the thought that other beings' life is more important, the turtle made sacrifice by letting the ants consumed its body while actually it could gain safety, and also exterminated the ants, by a single move to the sea.

People like Master Hsing Yun are inspired by this kind of life. In his beautiful work entitled *The Philosophy of Being Second*, the modest master who has received a lot of praise revealed the secret of his life. In a chapter he wrote: "*You are important, he is important, I am not*". Others are important, this self is not. Tibetan masters even teach to dedicate all good deeds, prays, harvest of meditation practice, and spiritual blessings to all beings.

A fascinating touch

It sounds weird indeed, especially for those whose custom is to worship ego, to put off the goal of being number one as the sole nature of the life worth living. However, the success of the world class giants of service like the Singapore Airlines is caused by educating their employees that: "*Others are important, I am*

*The destination of the journey
is reached when we are
celebrating others' happiness*

not". *Dalai Lama is a living spiritual giant*. He was presented the Nobel prize for peace and the highest civil award in the United States that equals him to George Washington and Pope Johannes Paul II. The secret behind all of these is also similar: banish all egos, let only kindness remain.

The travelers in the way of God and the path of Buddhism never speak that ego and arrogance lead someone to the destination. Most of those who are remarkable in these two ways are characterized by the willingness to put others as number one, and then build their happiness by delighting others.

The matter even goes further for Master Hsing Yun: *being touched is the most wonderful thing in life*. Being touched (especially when it leads to tears) is an enthralling experience for the mind. Whoever makes others touched is creating happiness as well as building impenetrable walls of loyalty.

In a corner of this humble master's life it was once happened that he was so praised and admired that it was not only he who shed tears, even the cloudless blue sky broke down drops of rain as if illustrating that it is not conceit which is able to reach the heart. Benevolence, sincerity, and the will to build happiness under others' delight, those are the secrets of the touch.

Nature is indeed full of signs. It does not forbid people to become number one. The number of stones and rocks on the summit of a mountain is far more fewer than on its slope and base. Isn't this a touching manner?

Another sign of nature is that coconut trees grow on the beach and casuarinas on the mountain. Mc. Cleland has made a lot of persons become number one and characterized them with the heat of the coconut trees on the beach. Master Hsing Yun gave inspiration about touching life by being the second, letting others to be the first, like the rejuvenating casuarinas on the mountain.

Whereas those who love to be number one concentrate on becoming right and great, the tranquility of the casuarinas focuses on becoming good and touching. This is similar to the story of three kids those are given three pears by a neighbor. Mc. Cleland's student will choose the biggest and the freshest, while a child with peaceful mind will pick the smallest and the poorest. This kid is happy watching his friends enjoy the big and fresh peach. And you are free to take your side.

Summary:

1. Most people desire to be number one, which is something so human in this era. However, like the stones and rocks on a mountain, only a few are at the peak and the others have to be satisfied residing on the slope and base.
2. Human's life is also similar. Not all people are gifted to be on top and become number one. Nevertheless, those who are willing to be the second are in fact peaceful and noble. Peaceful because they don't have to be chasing around in the heated race to be the first, and noble because the number one may exist only because there is the number two.

3. All travelers who have walked a long journey into self know that the destination is reached when they are able to celebrate other people's happiness.

*The shining life is the vanishing of ego.
Among its values is the realization that
there is no difference between the singing
of the birds and the cursing of the neighbors.*

The Light from the East

Anyone ever stayed in the West knows the importance of speaking out. In the West, there are more things expressed by words than in the East. *Fight*, *argue*, and *complain* are the values of a “living” person in the West. Without resistance and argument, one will not be considered “alive”. The point is that fighting back is strong, keeping silence is weak, pushing back is smart, being submissive is ignorance.

With different background, this manner then spreads vastly through television, internet, radio, printed media, and so on. In the wrapping of democracy and human rights, all were brought to the East so that in many circumstances (the rising number of suicide cases in Japan, political crisis in Thailand, political assassinations in Pakistan) a lot of people in the East suffer the confusion of Eastern spirit in Western outfit.

As a means of measurement, pay attention to the way people live in the village where the birds sing every morning. Without many arguments about who will become president, the course of the future, what political party will win, the birds just

sing in all their simplicity. Now compare it to the life of human, the creation regarded superior by the possession of logic, virtue, and feeling. In the past, a lot of people sang in their bathroom. These days, the number of the bathroom artists is significantly declined and the time for the show is now dedicated to the grumbling program instead of the singing. In a village where many birds live and the villagers spend a lot of time watching television (as a note, life in a village is very simple while the programs in television are very tempting), the life theme each morning is “birds sing, humans curse”.

Cease refusing and float

Imagine someone who is unable to swim plunged into a deep river. First, the poor person fights the water, then gets drowned, and finally expires. Strangely, the water then sustains the deceased floating on the surface. And the main reason is because the body stops to fight back.

This inspires that the main cause for the drowning of many people (stress, depression, diseases, conflict, and war) is the continuous refusing. Teacher wants to be principal, citizen desires to be president, and employee craves to be as rich as employer. All with the idea to refuse today’s life so it might be changed with the better one later.

No one forbids others to become a president or a rich merchant. But, as has been exemplified by nature, all things have their own natural character. The nature of birds is to fly, wolves is to run, and fishes is to swim.

It was said that very very long time ago animals envied humans because the latter race has school. Didn't want to be left behind, the animals started courses for specific skills with well-known teachers: swimming school taught by fish, flying course by bird, and running lesson by wolf. After years of trying they got exhausted and finally realized that all things have their own natural characters. In Javanese elders' words, the quest of the journey is accomplished when one recognizes him/herself.

Meditation without resistance

Most people's attitude toward problem and suffering is to get rid of them as soon as possible. Getting jaded, most people will look for entertainment, have meal, or do anything to cast out the boredom. Upon sickness most people will take medicine with the hope to be healed A.S.A.P. Those are examples of the resisting life, and we can see the truth of some psychologists' formula: *what you resist persists*. This explains the reason why some life never make their way out of the dark tunnel, that is because they keep on resisting.

On the contrary, the paths of meditation teach the disciples not to fight back but to make contacts (recognizing, seeing, listening, etc.) without judgment and discrimination. Boredom, sickness, healthiness, happiness, sadness, all are tried to be recognized without being seated in the defendant's chair. In a master's words: *when you remove all waves (up and down, success and failure), you will lose the ocean (the greatness)*.

If we reverse the English word "understanding", we will

*As long as there is battle between
justice and injustice, life will
keep on falling apart*

get “standing under”. Like the legs of a table that keep on standing upright resisting the weight. So do the meditators. They do not hurriedly banish trouble and call suffering as punishment. Instead, they persevere, recognize, and study them. Afterward, the secret unveiled. It is then understood that ego is the root of all sufferings. The greater the ego the more terrible will the suffering be, and the smaller the ego the lesser will the trouble be. It is this ego that is fond of making opposition.

The beauty is, as experienced by numerous meditation masters, when trouble and suffering frequently observed deeply to their root and illuminated by the light of mindfulness through the practice of meditation, they will start to vanish. It is like finding a rope in the darkness and misrecognizing it as a snake. As soon as the light comes, the snake disappears. Mindfulness is the same with the illuminating light that banishes fear, doubt, and anger. Perhaps this is the reason for Charlotte Joko Beck to write the following lines in *Nothing Special*: “*Sitting is not about being blissful or happy. It’s about finally seeing that there is no real difference between listening to a dove and listening to somebody criticizing us*”. This is the spiritual blessing of meditation. The singing of the birds and the cursing of the neighbors do not make any difference; they are only being listened. The good one does not trigger arrogance, and the bad does not cause anger. Applause ceases to be the upstream of conceit and rebuke stops to be the origin of hostility.

When seeing, it is only to see. When listening, it is only to listen. The feelings of like and dislike cease to sabotage the clarity and peacefulness. Quoting Bob Marley’s lyrics in *Three*

Little Birds: Don't worry about the things, every single thing would be alright. Don't need to worry. Everything was, is, and will be okay. Birds do not go to school nor understand the idea of intelligence yet their life is neatly arranged by the nature, moreover humans. This is meditation without resistance. Understanding through practice (not intellectuality) that ego is the root of all sorrows. Once the darkness of ego is enlightened by mindfulness, it will be disappeared. Nothing needs to be opposed.

A master who has arrived at this point whispered: *the opposite of injustice is not justice, but compassion.* As long as injustice fights against justice, life shall fall. Only the act of compassion toward each other is capable to ends the collapse. Some friends in the West who have embodied this kind of perfection in meditation often call this as the Light from the East. The Light in the midst of immense darkness of anger, hatred, dissatisfaction, and ignorance. Like electricity that shines by joining the positive and the negative, meditation is simply a combination of awareness and gentleness that enables the mind to enlighten itself.

Summary:

1. All sufferings are originated in human's habit to fight back, such as finding entertainment and having meal when getting bored. In some psychologists' words it is that: *what you resist persists.*
2. Therefore, meditation edifies that there is nothing to be refused. All happenings (including the disturbing ones) are merely ingredients of life to be processed. Meditation

manages them by recognizing and seeing things without judgment and discrimination. Those who have practiced a lot will be able to perceive through direct experience, and their life will go on. The ego that refuses to flow (craving for happiness and refusing sadness) is the root of suffering.

3. And when ego is enlightened by the light which is a combination of awareness and gentleness, it will start to vanish. This vanishing of ego is the one often called as the life that shines brilliantly. One of its characters is that there is no difference in listening to the singing of the birds and the cursing of the neighbors.

When we are good enough, we will see that both the kind and the unkind people are virtuous.

Survival of the Kindest

Problematic society is the terminology of some friends who fill their thoughts with irritations about Indonesia. Especially during the coming of the 2009 national election when public spaces were being crowded by monstrous amount of political propagandas. Some people in their annoyance term this kind of environment as “virtual rubbish”. And such expression has to be respected as well. However, it must be admitted that each individual has his/her own way of development. Like how fishes grow in the water while wolfs are on the land. Ego likes to hastily call the different manner of development in negative ways.

In another illustration, trees grow calmly, receptively, and sincerely while homeless dogs fight even when there isn't any food at all. The trees are gentle, tranquil and calm whatever the temptation is, whereas the dogs are tough and fierce in any circumstance. And still both are growing.

The gift of listening

The frame of good-bad, holy-unholy, success-fail, high-low, and other dualities are the ways of human's mind to open the gate of understanding. Unfortunately, when the gate has been unlocked, the dualities are not left behind but being carried all the way.

This is similar to the story of someone who is nearly starved to death in an island and then saved by a boat. The person's gratitude and attachment to the boat is so extraordinary that he carried the thing everywhere. Later on, he was found dead by exhaustion.

In other kind of expression, those who use their knowledge, experience, tradition, and religion to judge and hurt others, are actually sharing the same fate with the boat-loving person in the story: walking in exhaustion carrying the boat of faith on their back. Therefore, wise men are always willing to learn and listen. By learning, they cease being like turtles thinking their tiny shell as the one and only worth place to live in. Through listening, they unite themselves to the infinite ocean of knowledge. When there is something peculiar and hard to be understood, perhaps it is too advanced or, on the contrary, too shallow compared to the present state of understanding.

Perhaps it is the reason why the anatomy of human's face gives sign by the presence of two ears, eyes, and nostrils, but only one mouth. As if giving a message that understanding is more likely to be achieved if we do more listening, seeing, feeling the clarity of life, and less talking.

Those who have touched the borders of rationality and

understood that knowledge might become a barrier for understanding will smile and whisper: How ability to listen is actually a gift! A master in France wrote that: *To say you don't know is the beginning of knowing*. Realizing our ignorance is the starting point of knowledge and greatness.

The gift of understanding

With the assets of abilities to listen and to learn, the wise then examines corners of life. Some things appeared to be good at the beginning and later turn out to be bad. Things initially seemed holy then become the source of terrible bind. The final point is one: there is nothing eternal. Everything, including knowledge, are like water in the river that keeps on flowing all the time thus continuously changing and fresh.

Therefore, in the East a lot of people are liberated and enlightened only by profoundly realizing the meaning of impermanence. Knowledge, philosophy, religion (especially the ones with tremendous grip over the mind and turn the followers into fanatics) are like huge stones in the river. Stuck and motionless. The will to learn and listen are like the flowing water that will arrive at the ocean at its time.

Speaking frankly, life has a lot of people who have found the beauty of learning and listening. Ahmad Syafii Maarif (the former chairman of PP Muhammadiyah, one of the biggest Indonesian Moslem society) concluded his contemplative column in *Kompas* (The leading Indonesian newspaper) about Idul Fitri 2008 by quoting Mahatma Gandhi's opinion. Yudi Latief (one of the disciples of the late Moslem scholar Nurcholis

*Different way of life does not
necessarily mean wrong or bad.*

*Maybe it is our lack of
understanding that has not yet
been able to comprehend the matter*

Madjit) closed his reflection (on the same topic and in the same media) by the argument of Thich Nhat Hanh. A Catholic priest leading a church in Puja Mandala, Bali, spent years in Egypt learning Islam's philosophy and through his words flow the beautiful expressions of Islam.

His Holiness Dalai Lama many times expressed that he does not have any interest to convert people into Buddhism. His one and only concern is how to build a harmonious relationship among humans. Therefore, a lot of people said that Dalai Lama has a *universal appeal*.

This is the nature of a being whose inner side is enriched by the act of learning and listening. When there is a different understanding (about philosophy, religion, ideology, tradition), such person does not hurriedly considered/judged it as an erroneous thing. He/She will start by listening and then learning. The will to understand itself is a gift (the gift of understanding) since through understanding the gate of companionship and brotherhood will be unlocked and become provision for the happiness after.

Those who have arrived at this summit of understanding will whisper: "The best lover is the one who never speaks about God". Speaking demonstrates duality (subject - object, God - human). In this kind of understanding which is guided by friendship and serenity, some say that the two have become one, and some others just smile gently and say nothing. Their expression suggests that there is nothing more to be spoken.

From this point a question is aroused: if that is the frame

of understanding, then what is the guideline for the act? A very touching master provided a simple guide: *The best way is to help releasing the suffering of beings*. If it can't be done, it is enough not to cause harm. This is the creed for *survival of the kindest*. Life becomes shock-proof because of kindness. The hard iron is easy to break, but who can do so with the gentle water?

All life begin with the benevolence of other beings. Since we were born we were indebted to the compassion of our parents and many other persons, and when we die we also have to rely on others' helpfulness. And if we forgot to fill the period between birth and death with kindness it means that we fail to compensate our debt. Therefore, someone wrote: *compassion is the best protection*. It does not only protect us now but until the life after.

Pay attention to the life of Mohammad Yunus, Nelson Mandela, and Dalai Lama those are weaponless and without any secret agent yet shining everywhere. Some people might live full of judgment (good for themselves, bad for others), but on the path of kindness all offer something to be learned. As the result, we can perceive beauty not only in the righteous people but in the political propagandas as well. When our inner self is kind, we will see that the good and the bad people are both benevolent.

Summary:

1. We can not judge blindly that someone who lives in different manner is wrong or bad. Maybe we just not yet able to

understand his/her way. Perhaps the person's way is too advanced for us, or the contrary. It will be beautiful to learn seeing like the nature: fishes are in the water, and wolves are on the land.

2. The beauty to see nature-like will be easily developed if we learn to listen and learn. Listening and learning are like window and door for the house of life. When they are widely opened the air in the house will stay fresh.
3. As have been exemplified by the life of Muhammad Yunus in Islam, Nelson Mandela in Christianity, and Dalai Lama in Buddhism those are shining brilliantly everywhere without weapon nor secret agent, kindness enables life to withstand all turbulence.

*Love is already contented
just by being practiced.*

The Lovely Countenance of Religion

For those relating material progress with religious devotion, Western world demonstrates strange symptoms. In one hand it is abundance in material progress, while in the other the number of religious followers is declining. In Europe someone counted that there are only ten percents church goers among the total population, all are senior citizens. In America, after the devastation of the World Trade Center by terrorist in the beginning of 2000, there are thousands cases of religious blasphemy every year. In Turkey a leader candidate carrying religious banner was seen with suspicious eyes.

Those stories illustrate that the influence and charisma of religion in the West has been so decreased. Ask a newly-met Westerner his/her religion, and be prepared for an unfriendly gaze. At the same time, there is a gigantic wave engulfing the world which is the immense hunger and thirst for peace.

The brand and package are not too important, a lot of people will go for anything that provides peace. This is the reason for the blooming of meditation centers everywhere. People look for nothing save peace. Therefore, this arouses a

fine challenge for religions. Any religion fails to answer its devotees' aspiration for peace is very likely to be abandoned.

Sailing across the sea of obscurity

In a master's analogy, the teachings of religiosity are like boats to cross the sea of crowdedness. Firstly we have to build the boat, then go across the sea, and finally leave the boat on the shore.

Most of the particular boats are built with ethics and morality in the early steps. In Islam it is called *Syariat*, in Christianity it is the Ten Commandments, Buddhist devotees have *Sila*, and it is the *Tri Kaya Parisudha* in Hinduism. There is a similar thing among all of them: stop doing bad things, do more kindness, and purify heart and mind.

Anyone starts to be afraid in doing ungenerous act, eager to do good things, possess pure heart and mind, has stepped across the sea of obscurity. Like a person learning how to smile, it is done unnaturally and appeared to be artificial in the early days of practice. However, once becomes habit, the smile will become natural and beautiful. The case is the same with the initial steps of religiosity those are to cease doing bad things, do more kindness, and purify the heart and mind.

Those who walk seriously on this path begin to see the expressions of peace, though in the beginning they are in rough and impermanent forms. Less enemies and more friends are the early appearances of peace. However, in case that he/she is intimidated, the practitioners of the way are now commence

to be able to smile understandingly.

Of course there are a lot of temptations and challenges. For examples, some might call them hypocrite, suspect them as ingratiating, looking for sensation, or looking for political sympathy. However, like drops of water on a rock, anyone persevere and manage to pass the barricades will find peace in the more rejuvenating expression. Both in meditation and daily life, it appears as the calm and touching mind. Evil has been buried together with the past and kindness has become the daily needs like eating and drinking. And at the same time every breath is a pray for when inhaling the practitioner absorbs the corrupted things from the nature, and upon exhaling he/she exudes the virtuous and wholesome matters for the world.

Perhaps this is why J. Khrisnamurti once mentioned that *understanding is doing*. Understanding emerges only after practice. Nothing is capable to unlock the gate of understanding save the practice in total devotedness. In simple words, it is like learning how to ride bicycle. The beauty of balance appeared only after the rise and fall on the road of exercise. Therefore, a master suggested that one should not think that he/she understands the teaching/way only because he/she is able to verbalize it. Unlock the gate of understanding only through the practice full of temptations. This is the beautiful expression of religion: the religion in practice! It also banishes all mind's defilements like greed, anger, hatred, and ignorance.

The great clarity is the sign that someone has put his/her religion into practice, and that the sea of obscurity has been crossed over. All sensuous desires have been placed as

*Any religion fails in responding its
devotees' aspiration for peace is
very likely to be abandoned*

servants and they have stop acting as fearful dictators. The passions to escape the present (to be another person, to reject the present being) has also disappeared. Those are the values of a traveler who has crossed the sea.

And once arrive at the shore, all things (including the boat) are left behind. The devotee no longer has any interest in using ethics and morality to judge people, no longer fascinated to claim him/her self holy, moreover to criticize others' religion. He/She is now like the ocean. There are waves on the surface, but there is none in the depth.

This is what often called as the great silence. All desires and wants are gone. Only love and love alone remains. And it is not the love which is demanding, for it is the kind of love already contented simply just by being practiced.

Summary:

1. All things (including religion) are like knives. It is a valuable tool if properly used yet it might bring disaster in unskillful hands. The West, as the indicator of civilization, illustrates that religion has lost its influence and charisma. Without any effort of preservation, the extinction of religion is not an impossible thing.
2. The way to preserve religion is by putting it into real practice. In a master's words, religion exists to be practiced, not to be used in criticizing other people.
3. Whoever seriously practices his/her religion without being allured by the desire to judge other people will one day behold the lovely countenance of religion.

Realizing a single weakness in our own self is much more shining than pointing out thousands of other's.

Homecoming: a Promenade

*Let's go home, let's go home
Let's go home together.*

“Losing sanctuary” is perhaps the suitable analogy for nowadays civilization. Some Westerners loath things originated from the West hence many of them study Eastern wisdom. And not all of them return to the West with the expected value, proven by the fact that there are only a few Western leaders have Eastern empathy. A lot of poor and hungry Easterners curse their tradition as they head to the West, and later return to their homeland like empty boats. In fact, not all lessons from the West can provide more prosperity for the East. Apart from all of those, both parties of seekers undergo the same thing which is the quest for sanctuary.

In the past, religion was a haven. However, now its expression has been filled with suspicions and battles. In the past, school was beautiful. Now, it is a place haunted by too many fearsome specters such as fights, terrible assignments, and punishments. Religious ritual used to be an event to get

together as well as a means to express thankfulness and gratitude. Now, a lot of rituals are conducted to gain pride. All of those symptoms raise a question: where will the future take shelter in the future?

The light of suffering

One thing which is so feared and causes people rushing here and there in search for sanctuary is suffering. It is identical to punishment, fault, sin, and other things scary. Therefore, upon the acute illness, breaking up of family, gloomy future, death of a close relative, sorrow starts to appear as a fearful demon.

Whoever has observed life profoundly will understand that misery is in fact not a punishment nor mistake. It is the light that will guide souls on their journey of home coming. If life is only consisted of happiness and pleasure, we will keep on being attached to the worldly matters and straying endlessly in the sea of sorrow. Being separated with the beloved ones, getting-together with the hated ones, failing to get the desired things, are some natures of the sea of grief.

Therefore, the masters do not hide away from sorrow; they even get into it as deep as they might. And the seers then conclude that in the heart of suffering lays beauty. It is like a turbo machine projecting us out from the deep of woe. Take notice that there are numerous persons arm their self with devotion, serenity, gratitude, and profound prayer in their time of trials. Their ego vibrates and, eventually, they are at home.

Moreover, frequent observation upon other beings

through the spectacles of misery will grow compassion. It will be realized that an intimidator is actually a soul in grief. With this perspective anger calls off to tempt and the insult/harassment even waters the seeds of compassion inside.

It seems to be the reason for Arief Hamdani (the chair person of Rumi Café Jakarta) to state that whoever accompanied by misery is actually being granted a “prophetic cross”. Especially because all saints were made noble by a long journey of temptations and ordeals. Jalalludin Rumi in Islam experienced a lot moments of wretchedness in his life. Jesus Christ was crucified in a very heart touching manner. In Hinduism, Rama’s wife was kidnapped. Buddha Gautama’s life was repeatedly threatened by Devadatta. The holy masters’ teachings are different, yet they share one similarity: finding light within suffering!

The true home

If that is the expression of suffering, a question is again served: where is the home in which civilization may take shelter? A devoted disciple once received an answer from a master: *“Home is not a place but a result of practice. Those whose mind is clean from delusions, then giving hands to help, they are at home already”*. Home as a physical building is impermanent and will eventually vanish. Nevertheless, home as an attitude is a true sanctuary. Those who purify themselves from ignorance, greed, and anger, and then provide their helping hands, are already at home.

From hundreds of Thich Nhat Hanh’s beautiful works, the

*Sorrow is indeed fearsome, but
it is a calling persuades us to
come home sooner*

most beautiful is the one entitled *Going Home: Jesus and Buddha as Brothers*. This particular work does not only succeed in constructing a wonderful bridge between Christianity and Buddhism, but it has built spiritual home for a lot of people. Quoting a beautiful phrase from the book: *darling you are my home!* Anyone with calm and tranquil heart shall become a home for his/her surroundings.

How beautiful life is if husband become shelter for his wife, mother for her child, superiors for the subordinates, employers for the workers, government for the people, followers of major religion for the minor, Israel for the Palestine, and America for Iraq and Afghanistan.

A wise person who has returned home once bestowed a message: *"If I have to choose between religion and compassion, I will choose compassion"*. Nature as a site for growth is indeed full of gentleness. Sun shines on everything without any discrimination. Mother Earth gives blessing without asking for any compensation. Trees keep on sheltering though continuously being cut down. Gentleness is the element that nature presents to life. All philosophies, religions, and traditions have both the severe and the gentle expressions. In any opportunity to make a choice between the two, go for the gentle. Not the gentleness which opposes violence, but the gentleness that befriends all things.

In this path, religion is not a weapon to attack others, but a glory to purify one's self. Understanding a single weakness in our own self is far more useful and meaningful than pointing out millions of others' flaws. The question is not the misstep of other

people but how many ignorance, greed, and anger still remain in our own self?

As the result, each step of life is similar to the children's song in the beginning of this chapter. Children on their way home do not have any other feeling save happiness. Moreover, a lot of pointless sorrows (like Israel's attack on Palestine, terrorist' assault in Mumbai India, America's invasion to Iraq, etc.) might be prevented, especially if a lot of souls dedicate their life as shelter for others.

Summary:

1. Sorrow is frightening indeed. However, it is also the one encourages us to take our journey home sooner. Misery is indeed full of tears, yet holy sages find light behind it. And it is the particular light that illuminates the way home.
2. It is only a matter of time for home as a place to be vanished. But, home as an attitude (calm, tranquil, patience) provides shelter not only to its dweller but for all beings.
3. In this kind of shelter, religion is not a weapon to attack others but a glory to purify one's self. In this path, realizing one lack of the self is far more important than criticizing millions of other's mistakes.

The Second Composition

A Lovely Bouquet of Life

In giving we are healed.

Healing, Peace, Enlightenment

*Mother's love to me
Infinite, never-ending
Forever giving, unrepayable
Like the Sun shining the world.*

Arabian King Abdullah's initiative that the United Nations' General Assembly held international dialogue about peace, which was later conducted on November 13th 2008, was truly a glory especially in the age overloaded with sorrows and tears.

Making 70 nations sign declaration of peace is indeed an achievement. However, turning it into action is far more difficult. Declaration and action do not always go together anyway, particularly because action involves more complications. Borrowing a friend's opinion, as long as greed and anger are still ruling as lords, peace remains a rare item.

Only two weeks after the declaration was signed (November 27th 2008), terrorist' weapons again seized hundreds of innocent life in Mumbai, India. Greed and anger are machines of violence subduing intelligence, logic, sensitivity, religion, and declaration agreed by tens of nations. At this point, it might be wise to learn constructing the building of peace on

the foundation of healing.

Holistic healing

A lot of masters agree that defilements of mind (greed, anger, ignorance) are the true diseases, and it is from this point that the treatment should be directed in the first place.

Therefore, in the beginner level, an adept is regarded as spiritually healed if he/she knows the danger of the stains of mind. Mindfulness is the guard in this stage. At the intermediate level, a disciple starts to feel the immense need for doing good deeds. And at the advanced level, he/she surpasses the good-bad duality. Everything comes and goes to the same place thus greeted with the same smile. Those who have arrived at this point know that defilements grow fertile on the land of ignorance, and then made fearful by dualistic thoughts (good-bad, holy-unholy, etc.).

In this highly developed spirit of healing, Martin Luther King Jr. once stated: *“Happiness depended on healing the whole situation.”* Or Pema Chodron: *“To be healed, everyone has to be healed.”* In other words, holistic healing is more likely to be happened when we start to realize that we are all interconnected.

In the East, the word frequently uttered in respect is *bodhi* (awake). Awakened from the illusion of separated individuals. The un-awakened mind is the reason why people do monstrous acts so easily.

It was said that there was once a king who, being angry by a thorn that wounded his foot, ordered to cover all streets in his kingdom with animal skin. His counselor whispered: “Your Highness, how many animals must be killed? Isn’t it better to cover your highness’ feet with shoes instead?” That is the story of healing for most people, intending to wipe out all annoying things outside (chaos, irregularity). Those who cover their mind with awareness and patience are like wearing shoes and they have gotten rid all irritations. Like the message of a healer: “*When there’s no anger, there’s no enemy.*” This is the quality of a person who was awakened and then revived.

Besides awareness and patience, it is important inviting all people to profoundly understand that all things are connected. Someone said that the expire of a butterfly in Bali affects human’s feeling in Vancouver. Those who feel pity upon other creatures’ misery has stepped into holistic healing thus, let alone to kill human, they even feel guilty stepping on grass. This kind of people will easily shed tears reading news like the terrorist attack in Mumbai, because other’s suffering is theirs as well.

The physician Fritjof Capra termed this as *the hidden connection*, the social anthropologist Gregory Bateson referred to it as *the pattern that connects*, Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh frequently repeat the word *inter being*. The point is, all are connected. We have to see phenomena more than separated things.

The good shepherd

*Those who dedicate their life for the
healing of others will one day be
recovered, peaceful, and experience the
ultimate healing (enlightenment)*

In the world's map marked with a lot of fire sparks (war, terrorism, suicide, etc.) life needs a great number of healers. Borrowing a friend's opinion, there are three types of healers: king, sea captain, and shepherd.

In the king's type the theorem is that someone might become a healer when he/she is already healed. For the sea captain, we sail together and shall reach the shore of the healing land together as well. However, in a shepherd's life, one has to firstly take the sheep to the prairie. The shepherd must make sure that the sheep are all safe and can get enough food before taking his own meal.

Some say that the noblest pattern is the shepherd's. It is also the one most likely to be adopted by most people with gentle heart and sympathy. They do not need to be healed first, moreover to reach enlightenment. They only want to do whatever they can to heal as many beings as possible.

Those who own garden arrange it as green and as beautiful as possible, together with the butterflies, ants, worms, and frogs living there. Owners of media (newspaper, radio, television) use the advantage to soothe hearts of many people. People with significant position (president, governor, regent, etc.) make the most of it to reduce poverty at their best. Parents love their kids as much as possible. These are some practical examples on how to be a shepherd.

Those who provide their life to heal others, one day will not only be healed and peaceful, but also experience *the ultimate healing* (enlightenment). In a wise person's words: "*In*

giving we are healed.” Thus, ordinary people can make something extraordinary by giving their best performance in daily life works. A Westerner fellow said: *“The most significant step one can make toward global peace is to soften our heart.”* Soften the heart. That is the important role one can take in order to take part in establishing global peace. The result is that people might be connected with the part of life which is calm and touching.

Similar to how a chrysalis leaves its tiny residence and flies freely as butterfly as if owning everything in nature, so do the devoted shepherds. Their courage to depart the small hut of ego (separated individual) enables them to soar into the realm of enlightenment. Not only being healed, peaceful, and enlightened, but, like the butterfly, all things in the world become “theirs”.

Similar to the children song at the beginning of this chapter, those who are enlightened become mothers for all. Speaking frankly, living beings are the causes of enlightenment. When they are intimidating they are actually teaching about patience. When they are in sorrow, they are awakening our compassion. Their suffering is ours as well. Our deepest condolence for the tragedy of humanity in Mumbai, India.

Summary:

1. Building peace with rules and enforcements needs to be reconsidered. In the middle of this dead end, perhaps it is worth to think about constructing peace on the effort of holistic healing.

2. In the beginner level, one is regarded as being healed when he/she has been freed from the defilements of mind such as greed, ignorance, and anger. In the intermediate, the healing is signed by the need to do benevolence deeds, especially because it is in giving that people are healed. Holistic healing takes place when one starts to cease self-centeredness, and then, like a chrysalis, stepping out from the diminutive residence of ego into the amazing realm of healing.
3. Those who dedicate their own life to others, will not only be healed and peaceful for they will also experience *the ultimate healing* (enlightenment).

Love guides us to find the tranquility of peacefulness. And serenity then unlocks the gate of enlightenment.

Love, Peace, Enlightenment

In many things, the West seems to be the early warning system pointing the direction of civilization. Industrialization, democracy, labor union, and environmental awareness, are only some of the trends initially developed in the West and then engulf flood like to the entire world.

A lecturer at a college in Melbourne once asked the class: “Any of you who have religion?” Only a few raised hand. And all are Asians.

From one side it appears that religion in the West tends to be seen more as a burden than as a celebrated identity. And, at the same time, there is another tendency worth to be contemplated.

Karen Amstrong (the author of *History of God*) wrote that this is the golden age of Buddhism in the West. Directed by the scientists’ thirst of peace, Buddhism enters Western community without violence. Albert Einstein thought that Buddhism is a religion that might fulfill humans’ intellectual needs in the future.

Lama Surya Das (the author of *Awakening to the Sacred*) met some youths in the West who admitted that: “*My parents hate me when they know that I am a Buddhist, but they love me when they know that I am a Buddha*”. Parents do not like seeing their daughter go to *vihara*, but they love realizing their daughter become patience, gracious, respectful, and humble.

Combined into one, there is a gate of tendency which is opened. On one side there is human’s thirst for peace, especially in the West where materialism has reached saturated and dangerous point. And, on the other side, Buddhism touches the Western community’s thirst of peace without any violence and coercion.

Comprehending these signs, the challenge of religions is not the competition among them. King Asoka (a devoted student of Buddhism) stated that: “Those who insult other’s religion is insulting their own. Those who respect other’s religion is respecting their own”. The future challenge of the religions is to satisfy human’s thirst for peace.

Without it, especially if religions keep on prolonging the list of violence, their extinction in the future is very likely to be happened.

The languages of love

To be honest, love is the tongue of all religions. Islam places love in the first place of the 99 Names of Allah. Christianity experienced dynamic from the Old to the New Testament, yet it does not experience any change in the matter of compassion.

Hinduism Yoga can not be perfect without *bhakti yoga* (the path of love and devotion). The Buddhist's *Brahmavihara* (the Four Divine Abodes) started with compassion.

It is also similar in the manner of characterization. Islam shines through persons like Jalalludin Rumi and Imam Al-Ghazali that did not have other language than love. Jesus' teaching shines through people like Santo Franciscus of Assisi who was driven by compassion. In the hands of Mahatma Gandhi, Bhagavad-Gita came to life. There was no other energy assist Gandhi except *bhakti*. When Dalai Lama was being asked about his concept of God, he replied: "God is an infinite compassion". Serene and touching, those are the genuine expressions of religions.

However, this is often intercepted by curiosity that compares discourse to reality. If that is so true, why there were terrorist attacks, the invasion of American government and its allies to Afghanistan and Iraq, the brutal shooting of Buddhist monks by the Myanmar's military regime, and violent acts done by Balinese people those are so committed in conducting religious rituals?

Practices as steps

Borrowing Zen's story, words are merely fingers pointing at the moon. Even the combined words of Buddha and Krishna can not lead humanity to enlightenment, particularly in the case where the discourses are merely understood to be forgotten. What we know is a cliff whereas the thing we conduct daily is another cliff. And the bridge connecting the two is practice.

*When anger comes, smile and
remember not to be dictated by it.*

*When peace arrives, smile
and realize that it will depart*

It is difficult to imagine enlightenment without devotion of practice. Spiritual giants like Jalalludin Rumi, Nelson Mandela, Mahatma Gandhi and Dalai Lama were all raised by their practice. Whoever dare to do more practice, he/she will get further. An honorable Tibetan master, Atisha, took a person with patience-tempting natures (short-tempered, lazy, and so on) as a disciple on his way from India to Tibet. Being asked about the reason, he replied that it was because spiritual seeds might only grow in temptation and trial.

In France there was a spiritual master named George Gurdjieff. One day, one of his students was so disturbing that all agreed that the culprit be dropped-out. However, months later, his meditation practice became tasteless and dull that it was decided to invite the mischief back.

Unfortunately, most people do not care to do such difficulties. They rely on intellectuality alone in their quest for enlightenment. It is similar to the wish of stepping feet at the moon only by pointing finger at it.

Thich Nhat Hanh in *Creating True Peace* is more concrete in the matter of practice. Inside us there are seeds of peace and seeds of anger. The journey of practice is more perfect if in daily life a disciple waters the seeds of peace and ceases doing so to the seeds of anger. The best way to do this is by practicing mindfulness.

Do all activities throughout the day (waking up, having meal, working, until going to bed again) with mindfulness. Upon the coming of anger, smile and remember not to obey its will.

When peace is visiting, smile and realize that it will go as well. Therefore, when it really does, there is no need for disappointment.

Being tempted by annoying person, focus to the flame of anger inside. See, smile, don't obey. If this does not help, change the title of "annoying person" into "a person who needs my love". When the title is "annoying", the common response is anger whereas in the latter case the natural reaction is to help.

Keep on practicing till there is nothing left (both anger and peacefulness vanish), save the great mindfulness. Sometimes it is being referred to as the great perfection because all are perfect as they are. And what others see on the outside is the calm daily life, smile, and hands those are joyful in providing helps.

Guided by love humanity finds tranquility, collectedness, and serenity. Peace then unlocks the gate of enlightenment. Someone asks, what is enlightenment? Like in learning to drive a bicycle, the theory is simple but it is certain that a trainee will fall during the practice. Some might even get into a gutter and get wounds. It is only by the devotion of training that one might find balance (the great mindfulness), and at the very moment a practitioner does experience it, he/she will say: *oooo!*

That is enlightenment. It is beyond words. Anyone tries to explain it by words will get the same fate with a pair of mortal hands trying to empty the ocean.

Summary:

1. In their profound expression, all religions speak in the language of love. The laziness to practice causes us to be taken away by anger and greed, thus the expression of religions is no longer beautiful.
2. This language of love will only be revealed if people have the determination in practicing. In other words, love is the fruit of the devotion in training. Whatever happens in daily life (being praised – being scorned, righted - wronged, etc.) are practicing materials need to be processed. The practice is even better when the daily life suffers a lot of rebuke and turbulence.
3. Enlightenment (the great mindfulness) is attained when people are no longer attached to happiness and do not reject sadness. The acceptance to all possibilities, that is the great mindfulness.

The light of the silence spares only one thing: compassion is the only nourishment. Dualities are gone, and compassion makes life go round.

Within the Light of the Silence

A crowded civilization, that is how a comment described life at the beginning of the 21st century, especially in the plaguing of energy and foodstuff crisis. Many agree that the world is experiencing global fright. United States' representative accused India depletes the food supply because of its great number of residence. India's delegate countered by saying that it is America with its greed that caused energy and provisions crisis. In Indonesia, energy and foodstuff also become political commodities to knock down one's opponents.

Some reviewed this expression of civilization not with analysis but with joke instead. One day, a young man who was confused in the matter of choosing a life companion seek counsel to an elder who then elaborated the requirements for a prospective wife: beauty, wealth, career, amazing performance on bed, and the obedience to do the housekeeping.

Evidently, the young fellow couldn't find such kind of woman even after he sought here and there. He found out that having a beautiful, rich, and professional woman as a wife

compensated him a high price filling his days sweeping the floor while wistfully crooned a song about the never ending ailment.

More arguments, more heat

Human's civilization is the same. Every advantage will cost in disadvantage. Greed only wants benefit, and wishes that it will never turned into the contrary. Such is the beginning of a crowded life full of miseries.

When the world was tensed by the possibility of star war between two super power countries, there was no fear about terrorist bomb. Now when the dread of global war has ceased, even getting into a hotel requires us to be scanned by security.

The fate of Indonesia is the same. It rolls from one dissatisfaction into the other because the citizens refuse any disadvantage. During the Soeharto's time, some political rights were banned, but the prices of groceries, housing, and oil were affordable. In this era of reformation, political freedom is gained and anyone can be criticized. However, the compensation is that the food, housing, and oil prices become more and more unaffordable. It is exactly like the story of the poor lad and his wife; every excess must be paid with shortage.

In the middle of civilization cramped with the enormous amount of discontentment, there are countless meeting, conference, discourse, seminar and advanced lecture in universities try to explicate the situation. And it is found out that the arguments even add more gasoline into the flame of civilization.

If there is any result, civilization will be cooled down. However, as how we feel now, the Earth is getting hotter physically, psychologically, and spiritually. It is indicated in birth with the piercing cry of the baby and in death with the wail of the mourners. If the period between birth and death is also crowded with arguments and fights, a profound question shall be contemplated: when do we have the chance to meet silence?

Become one with the nature

The nature as a teacher clearly pronounces that all are change, bring advantage and disadvantage. Day turns to night, night turns to day. If the mount is high, the ravine is deep. Being argued or not, it is like that. Profound understanding of this nature's character is the one that will reveal the silence.

A master who has a lot of students in the West explains this subject quite clearly. The steps in entering the gate of silence are actually uncomplicated. First, study the nature. Then live according to the natural principals. As the result, one can perceive the truth behind the nature. And finally, become one with the nature. Before being united with the nature, human will always circling around from one suffering to the other.

Those united with the nature know that there are guidance, perfection, and peace there. Identical with human's life, there are also big waves (being rich, admired) and small waves (the ordinary life). However, regardless of the size, all waves are submissive and humble to the shore. It is as if saying that capitulation and modesty are the ones banish the terrible expression of death.

*When words and disputes risen
the heat of civilization, perhaps
this is the very time to
read the Scripture of No Letters*

Whoever fill daily life with acceptance and humbleness will find that nature is actually a grand library abundant with knowledge and wisdom. Take a closer look to the ocean that, the same with human's life, is always wavy on the surface. In the deep, there is no movement, moreover wave. Only silence that draws beauty and perfection.

Note what was written by Zenkei Shibayama in *A Flower Does Not Talk*: “*Silently a flower blooms, in silence it falls away... pure and fresh are the flowers with dew... calmly I read the True Word of no letters.*” By the guidance of the silence, a wordless understanding that Zenkei Shibayama termed as *Scripture of No Letter* is comprehended. There is no word nor complications. Only a heart of profusion inside!

Back to the early story about the clamorous civilization, the world is indeed in crisis. However, when words and fights rise the temperature of civilization which is already so heated up, perhaps this is the very time to read the *Scriptures of No Letters*. Some describe this as the inner knowledge that reveals itself only in the heart of the silence.

In order to get there, start to live according to the law of nature. Those who are flowing with the nature and smiling in all of its cycle know that actually there is no punishment. What often named as disaster is merely the ocean's invitation to dive deeper, into the regions without wave (arguments) that is full of silence.

As have been neatly written by the life of *Mahasidha* (persons become great through countless of barriers like

Jalalludin Rumi, Mother Theresa, Milarepa, and Mahatma Gandhi), disaster appears as trials in the beginning. However, upon being experienced, it strengthens the muscles of life. Exactly like how physical muscles become strong through rigorous exercises. In this point of view, disaster is no longer bringing the darkness of anger but the illuminating light instead.

Armed with devotion, disaster enables the mind to withstand suffering and this immunity then allows human to greet all dualities (good-bad, success-failure, life-death) with exquisite smile. This is the light of the silence. It spares only one thing: *compassion is the only nourishment*. Dualities are gone, and compassion makes life go round.

Summary:

1. Greed only desires advantage and disposes disadvantage. That is the origin of suffering. The nature speaks that every excess results in shortage.
2. Those who learn from nature, live naturally, and be united with the nature, will then see that nature is actually a grand library abundant with knowledge.
3. The difference with other libraries that brings dependency to outer factors, nature guides human step by step into their own self. The summit of profoundness is found when human starts to meet *the innermost scripture*, which is called *the Scripture of no Letters*. In this level, there is no more questioning, moreover arguing. Life is then revolves with the law of compassion.

*With love inside, we meet
compassion everywhere.*

Love is All Around

“The story of humanity is the tale of sorrow”, whispered a friend. In Pakistan, Bhenazir Bhutto was shot shortly after stepping on her homeland. In Cambodia, Buddhist monks fought against police officers. Unites States, the paradigm of the world, obstructs the agreement to lessen the impact of the global warming. Earthquake, tsunami, and starvation plague entire corners of the Earth.

Indonesia shares the same story. Numerous elections of regional government lead to riot. Hostility among youths is so disheartening. In Bali, sometimes violent act takes place during a religious ceremony.

Interpreting this kind of signs, many of us wail that life is a hellish thing. We don't know for sure. The certain thing is that the appearance of the expression of life depends on our inner self. If it is love, we will find love everywhere. If it is hatred, then hatred is the one we see in all directions.

Building the house of love

Considering the substance, human is actually made of love. Father and mother are embracing full of love in the creation of a human being. An infant is breast-fed by a mother cuddling her baby full of affection. A lot of fathers withdraw taking food into their mouth only by the wish to share love with his child. Our food and drink come from the nature that is abundant with love. Some analogize life as an endless rain of love though many people are confining their selves with arrogance and conceit hence they are dry from the downpour of love. With this kind of material, when the output is hatred, perhaps we must contemplate the process.

Life's habit is like the sun. It rises and falls on time. And in the mind filled with love, the sun is illuminating and energizing. In the mind filled with complains, the sun is hot, a source of dryness, the beginning of famine.

With this awareness a lot of masters agree that the basic foundation in building the house of love is the mind carefully observed upon both happiness and sadness. The problem with a lot of people is that they are greatly being attached to the pleasant things, refusing the bothersome ones, and getting bored with the ordinary matters. Because the pleasuring things are paired with the annoying ones (like nights and days) thus life rotates in an endless cycle of happy, sad, bored, and so on. This is the origin of many emotional fatigues.

Realizing the outcome of this exhaustion, some people put an end to the last cycle only by observing it. *Being a compassionate witness* is the suggestion of a writer on meditation subject. Perceive the rise and fall of emotion and

mind like a grandmother seeing her daughter's children running here and there with love in her heart. All are and will always be just fine. Or observe daily life which is always motioned by happiness, sadness, and boredom like seeing the water stream in the river. Happiness flows away, and so does sadness.

On this carefully observed cycle, then built useful pillars of daily conducts. "If can not help, it is enough not to hurt", is a serene message of a Lama. The roof of the house of love is then called prosperity by the sense of contentment. In the words of a father who really loves his son: "It is in the sense of contentment dwells the greatest wealth". As the result, tranquil and peaceful houses of love are built.

To keep the air fresh, the house needs door and window. The door is deep listening and the window is *loving speech*. As has become the secret of many therapists, the will to listen is a solution for the many imprisonments of souls in this age. A lot of patients have been half-cured merely by being listened to. And if we have to speak, speak in the language of love.

A friend with captivating words, once was asked why his words are so charismatic. He replied promptly: "Use words only to help, never to hurt". It is the combination of the will to listen and the words of love that fill the house with fresh air.

Borrowing the contemplation result of holy sages, when you have time to contemplate, use it to contemplate your weaknesses. When you have time to speak, talk about the good of others. Listening to such explanation, someone asks: So, what is love? *The Book of Mirdad* mentions that: "Your love is

*Your love is your true self.
Without love there are
nothing but artificiality*

your true self". In other words, other things than love are artificial. Apply love and then see how it unveils its beauty. Words are only limitations for understanding.

A walking house of love

In Okinawa island, there was a highly respected Karate master. During a practice, his student asked: What is Karate? Smilingly he replied: "Karate means keep smiling in all situations". The disciple was confused, but kept silence out of respect.

On the way home, the particular student encountered a drunken American soldiers making trouble on the street and felt an urge to fight. However, when the clash was about to start, the master came and greeted the soldiers with smile: "Welcome to Okinawa. You must have enjoyed the beautiful sceneries here." The brawl was withdrawn and relationship with American soldiers went fine.

This might be what people called as a walking house of love. The Karate master is a factual example of the saying: "If the thing inside is love, someone will find love everywhere". In relation to the coming of the new year, most people only concern about their age and only a few think about the recent condition of their house of love.

Through husband's gaze, wife's loyalty, children's respect, superior's treatment, the smile of the neighbors, hand shake of the subordinates, the help of friends or family, the smile of people who never do harm, we are seeing our house of love. Is it better or worse than it was in the previous year? Pay

attention to what Thich Nhat Hanh wrote in *The Diamond that Cuts through Illusion*: “If you die with compassion in mind, you are a torch lightening our path”. Perhaps this is the reason why Jesus never stops enlightening great numbers of travelers.

Summary:

1. The expression of life depends greatly to our inner being. If the thing inside is hatred, we will find hatred everywhere. If it is love, we will meet love in all places. Therefore, build the house of love.
2. The house of love is the devotion to practice being the compassionate witness, the pillar is the will to help, the roof is the sense of contentment, and the window is the will to listen and only to speak in the language of love.
3. As in the story of the Okinawan Karate master, whoever has built the house of love will meet love everywhere.

*Smile helps us to greet the day
with gentleness and understanding.*

The Exquisite Garden of Peacefulness

Once upon a time, there lived a greedy mouse that went to a wizard. It was disturbed by cats and therefore asked the wizard to kindly transform it into a cat. Nevertheless, it felt disappointment right on its first cat-day and asked the wizard to be turned into a dog, for it was now afraid of dogs. On the following day the mouse-dog was chased by a wolf and therefore asked the wonder worker to be transmuted into a wolf. On the next day a tiger bite it so it asked the magi a favor to turn it into tiger. At this stage, the creature's greed culminated and it tried to gobble the wizard to prevent him transforming it into something else. The magi certainly got angry, and so he restored the culprit back into its original kind.

Speaking frankly, a lot of us have the same fate with the mouse. Greed makes human's life a never ending race. Always think that home is ahead. At the primary school, we think that junior high school will be cool but then we assume that senior high school will be beautiful. In the college we imagine that professional life is the ideal one yet once being a person at

work and receive a lot of pressures we think about retirement and rest. After being retired we lost people's respect, income, and health.

This arouses a question: where is the true peaceful home? After being pursued by so many people, being searched through loads of materials, analyzed through a lot of holy scriptures, humanity is still keep on racing, racing, and racing.

Doggy mind, lion mind

In the Western countries, a lot of people like to have dog as their pet. Dogs are not only do as guards, for they are also nice companions. The common game humans and dogs do is in which the human throws a plastic bone filled with meat. Wherever the artificial bone is thrown, the dog will chase.

Alike to how dogs run after artificial bones, the life of many humans are also running here and there in the pursuit of artificiality. Money, position, big houses, fancy cars all bring nothing but disappointment. Suddenly, old age and sickness have arrived. In meditation, this kind of people will be straying around aimlessly being carried away by their own mind. The more they try, the harder the twist of the mind will be. This is what being termed as *doggy mind*.

Different from dogs, lions can easily distinguish the real meat to the artificial. Lions are not running here and there busily, but calmly observe everything without any fear. This is why lion frequently used as a symbol for enlightenment with its calmness and fearlessness. It even includes fearlessness

toward death.

The same thing also happens to the advanced practitioners of the inner science. Their body grows old, gets sick when they are supposed to be, and expires when the time has come. The amazing difference is that they undergo everything with supreme calmness. Therefore, a lot of gurus highlight that the outcome of practice is *the boundless capacity to suffer*. This is frequently termed as *the lion mind*.

The inner cosmos

Sharon Salzberg once collected the experiences of the advanced meditation masters. From Joseph Goldstein, Jack Kornfield, the famous Larry Rosenberg, Kamala Masters who is an ordinary housewife, Venerable Gunaratana who has been practicing for more than fifty years, and Ajahn Sumedho who was a teacher. In the beautiful work entitled *Voices of Insight*, it is clearly described how the practicing people's life is different: calm, peaceful, and free!

Some are interested in meditation because of the desire to recognize their true self. Some because have been dashed by life through temptations and trials. Others by the practice of divine life. However, no matter what the reason is, they still need patience and devotion to keep on practicing, practicing, and practicing. The difference compared to most people those are made very busy by all extravagance of outer living (listening to the radio, watching television, arguing), is that the devotees of meditation focus all of their attention to the inner cosmos.

*When all things are ornamented
with smile, mindfulness then guides
us into the exquisite garden of
peacefulness. It is not
all-pleasuring, but all-smiling*

Note the result of the profound and amazing contemplation of the 13th century Sufism mystic, Jalalludin Rumi, in one of his masterpieces entitled *The Guest House*. This life is similar to a guest house. Things come and go everyday. Happiness, sadness, praise, rebuke. Learn to smile warmly to all. To calamity, disaster, and even death because all bring guidance and counsel, and all of them craft meanings.

The beauty and freedom of Jalalludin Rumi's life are unimaginable. They also illustrate the true garden of peace. The garden for all. For most people, smile only appears when the guests of life are happiness and praise. Refusal, anger, and judgment are so very easily emerge when the visitors are sadness, pain, and reprimand.

Therefore, advanced meditators focus to a single matter: *the unbroken continuity of mindfulness*. Whatever happens is observed with total mindfulness. Like Rumi, a well-trained meditator can smile when he/she has money as well as when he/she has debt, when he/she is acknowledged as a good person, and when he/she is accused as a charlatan.

A child once asked his grandmother when sadness lessens his faith on God. Gently the patient and wise grandmother asked: In which holy scripture is it written that God only presents in happiness? In which sermon Buddha stated that sadness is merely garbage deserves only to be disposed?

The story is very similar to the experience of Sufism mystic Hazrat Hinayah Khan. One day he met The Lover Who Loves Most. On his knees, Khan whispered: "Thou art the one

who sends disaster to the evil and grants blessing to the kind”. Smilingly, the Lover replied: “No. One more time, no. The evil bring their own disaster, and the kind invite their own blessing.”

Learning from this beautiful response of the Lover, the true garden of peace is where all are accepted with smile. There are laws for all things. Simple laws like touching water will get wet and touching fire will get burnt. When all are ornamented with smile, mindfulness then guides human to find the exquisite garden of peace. It is not all-pleasuring but all-smiling.

In this garden, every morning humans mutter calmly that there are 24 breezy hours, waiting to be filled with smile because smile helps us to go through the day with gentleness and understanding.

Summary:

1. Tired of racing to the future, a lot of meditators then learn to be connected with the more profound present.
2. When most people are so busily being hauled by outer things (reading newspaper, listening to the radio, watching television), devotees of meditation focus their attention to the inner cosmos.
3. The main capital to explore the inner cosmos is to apply mindfulness. Whatever happens in the daily life is always illuminated by the light of mindfulness. Like Rumi, who was able to smile in both the presence of money and debt. In this garden of peacefulness, everyday we have 24 breezy hours to be filled with smile.

The works of the enlightened are like trees. In silence and peace they transform carbon dioxide into oxygen vitally required by the beings around them.

A Touch of Tranquility

Some tourists on their visit to Bali were bewildered by the announcement “Scrap-pickers are not allowed here” that can be found anywhere. Those who have empathy and understand psycho-linguistic (there is a psychological mirror in the manner of choosing words in daily life) will question: what happens in Bali, this land of peace?

Friendship, understanding, patience, and kindness are the characteristics of a place filled with peacefulness. With the massive amount of the particular announcement board in Bali, has peace left from this place which is often called *the last paradise*? Please apologize curiosity. And, speaking frankly, Bali is not alone. Daily life in all places marked with the increasing rarity of peace.

Let alone poor countries like Botswana in Africa where the life expectation is under forty years and most of the adults are positively HIV. Even America and Japan known for their prosperity are classified as the biggest consumers of sleeping pills per capita in the world, and also marked with great number

of suicide.

Perhaps it is the lack of serenity that is behind the vast growth of meditation center in the West. Most of Eastern masters are greeted by Western community with hunger of peace.

Indonesia is also the same. After more than six decades of independency, peace does not get any closer. Poverty, suicide, and unemployment are only some among the confirming data.

This moving away of peace is the one that makes a lot of people start the journey into the inner self, in search for the illuminating light inside.

The tree of peacefulness

In the journey into the self, there is a similar thing between trees and the lovers of peacefulness. A tree grows toward the light and so does a lover of peace. With the devotion of practice, one day his/her life is going to shine brilliantly. Therefore, in English the summit of inner journey is called *enlightenment*. There is the word *light* in the middle of it. Therefore, the journey in touching the peacefulness in this writing is made alike with a tree.

Let us start with the seed. The seeds of soul in inward journey are the savings of benevolence and malevolence doings. It is not the good-bad that becomes the seed, but how it is being managed. Kindness does not always make a good seed, especially when it is accompanied with over pride. Evil

does not automatically become a bad seed, particularly when it becomes the starting point of profound repentance and strong commitment to practice hard.

There are a lot of kind people with good seeds. Nevertheless, there are also wicked people with good seed. Milarepa was an example of this case. After casting a curse that caused the death of his uncle and aunty who cheated him, Milarepa was stricken by profound feeling of guilt and the will to pay the mistake with whatever the price was. This was Melarepa's seed to take the inward journey that made him a very honored saint in Tibet.

The case is different with the fields of growth. Borrowing Kahlil Gibran's beautiful line, our daily life is our true temple. Therefore, when one day Guru Nanak (who had about the same number of Moslem and Hindu students in India) was asked which one is greater between Islam and Hindu, calmly and collectedly Guru Nanak replied that both Islam and Hindu lost greatness if the devotees do not practice loving-kindness. Whoever fill his/her life with benevolence, he/she has prepared a fertile field.

The root of the peacefulness tree is the mind liberated from judgment. As written by Ajahn Munindo in *The Gift of Well Being*: "Until we enter this dimension, all our words will be mere imitation". Our words are only artificial things those are tasteless and un-vibrating before we are free from making judgment. Therefore, those work with the prophetic quality and vibrating words like Jalalludin Rumi, Thich Nhat Hanh, Michael Naimy,

*The progress of the journey is
when life has been made similar
to riding an opened truck to
the top of a mountain: it is
getting cooler and cooler*

and Rabindranath Tagore, have lost the fondness to make judgment. And whoever has passed this stage knows how fast the growth afterward.

The branch of the tree is the suitable technique. Adapting too advanced or too basic technique compared to one's level will only cause the journey dull and tasteless. So, it is suggested to try various techniques, and then to feel them. Whichever technique brings the profoundest peacefulness might be the one suitable with the present development.

The thick leaves of peacefulness then emerge when the inward journey starts to be united with daily life. Like taking a bath, there is something missing when the person does not conduct the inward journey for even just a day. Moreover, every things in daily life (the joy and the sorrow) bring guidance.

The flowers of the tree of serenity start to bloom when daily life begins to get in touch with peacefulness. Life is similar to a journey to the summit of a mountain. The higher you get the calmer and cooler the air is. This is only the shadow of the moon. If the shadow is already that beautiful, how gorgeous the true moon of calmness is.

For whoever committed and continuously touching the serenity, it is only the matter of time for him/her to witness the blooming of the tree. The peacefulness that is in opposition with sadness does vanishes and substituted with the balanced mind free from all dualities.

A number of Sufism friends who already attained this

level stop praising heaven and stop cursing hell. In Java this is called *suwung* (empty). In Bali it is called *Embang* (Silent). Zen people call it *attaining the non-attainment*. Completing this story about the tree of peacefulness, Thomas Merton once revealed that the work of enlightened people are like trees. Silently and peacefully, trees turn carbon dioxide into oxygen inhaled by countless beings. The beneficiaries of the fruit of the peacefulness are also alike, for they do not keep the joy of peacefulness for themselves. In silence and tranquility they generate vibration of peace, which, the same with the oxygen, is unseen yet vital for innumerable beings. Some of the enlightened people have unique way of breathing. When inhaling they imagine to absorb all impurity and when exhaling they imagine to emit all clean and wholesome things.

Summary:

1. The fading away peacefulness outside makes humanity starts searching for the inner light.
2. Similar to trees that grow toward the light, the inward seekers also move toward the brightness. Therefore, the English word *enlightenment* has the morpheme *light* in it. Like electricity that beams by embracing both the negative and the positive, meditators also transform positive and negative into guiding light for the journey.
3. The progress of the journey happens when life is, similar to riding an open truck ahead to the summit of a mountain, getting cooler and cooler. And the works of the enlightened ones are similar to the trees: silently and peacefully transforming carbon dioxide into oxygen those are vital for countless beings.

This is the spiritual transformation. The feeling of guilt from the past and fear for the future are handled and enjoyed in this very present day.

The Beautiful Painting of Wisdom

An endless dark tunnel is perhaps the metaphor for life in the present day. The treasure of children's life is usually their hope for the future, yet in the old age many are boasting their past.

The condition is similar to a cat chasing its own tail. In the morning (early age), the shadow is in the west. It chases and fails. In the afternoon (old age) the silhouette is in the east, and again the pursuit is in vain. Realizing the danger of this matter, some decide to end this circle of darkness by the faith that life starts from the present and ends in the present as well.

The past has passed and the future has not yet come however the two might be made more shining or darkened through the present action. For example, a Mother that has passed away without being satisfied makes her son's present life gloomy if he fills it with remorse, guiltiness, and inability to forgive the self. On the contrary, it might be the beginning of light if the painful experience become a starting point to bring happiness into others' life.

In Tibet, the word for “living being” (translated into English) is *mother being*, in particular because it is believed that all beings were our mother in the past life. Therefore, one who often bring happiness to other creatures also brings joy for his/her mother. Besides that, it is one of the best preparation in welcoming the future. This is the spiritual transformation. The feeling of guilt of the past and the fear for the future are processed in the present and also enjoyed in the present.

Teacher as light

This is the sign of people in their early period of receiving guidance. In every happening (both the enjoying and the depressing), the guiding light is present. In the East, it is called as the presence of the symbolic master. There is no coincidence, all are guidance. However, some of them might be understood now, whereas some others later.

Unfortunately, only a few persons in this age have the spiritual blessing to personally meet a master. Therefore, for amazing people like Jalalludin Rumi, the meeting with a master is a truly celebrated spiritual gift. Some of the few who are blessed by this chance mention that half of their fear of hell directly disappears only by hearing the name of their master.

Therefore, a lot of seekers spend time, energy, and money to meet one. Ideally, the search is started with meeting a living master, then the instructions of this teacher are enriched by masters in the form of holy scriptures. The next step is then to meet the symbolic master in daily life, and the summit is then reached when the three masters turn into the teacher in one's

self (*the inner most teacher*). In this level, the adept is like bringing a lantern everywhere thus there is no more darkness left for him/her. Wherever he/she meditates, there is the center of the universe and wherever he/she stands, there he/she beholds the *mandala* (perfection).

Death as enlightenment

For those who have not been granted the blessing of finding a living master, it is suggested to guide their self carefully with ethics. And, among numerous symbolic masters, death is the greatest.

Pay attention to Dzogchen Ponlop's thought in *Mind Beyond Death: "In order to die well, one must live well"* (a life which is full of love). Therefore, numerous meditation masters use death as an eternal fountain of contemplation in which they imagine the death of their body, how it becomes rigid and turns blue surrounded by the crying relatives.

Enlightened by the light of gratitude, death is perceived as the returning of the bodily elements to their origin. Earth returns to earth, water to water, fire to fire, air to air, space to space. In Balinese elders' language, death is termed as *mulih ke desa wayah* (return to the true home). An advanced meditator knows that there are some opportunities to experience enlightenment (liberation) in the journey of death.

Whoever contemplates death deeply will has calmer, better, more polite and modest life. Are calmness and peacefulness not the best companions for death? Moreover,

*In a hermit's life, death comes
without being accompanied by fear
for death is only a little
experience of enlightenment*

death is also transformed into a symbolic master that guides the steps in ascending the stairs of glory. Perhaps this is the reason for St. Paul to said *I die every day*.

Speaking frankly, we experience death everyday. After breakfast we get separated with the nice taste (the “death” of the flavor). Going to the office, we are separated with the comfort of home (the “death” of the comfort of home). At the end of a meditation session, meditator is separated with the beauty of concentration (the “death” of the peace gained during meditation). In the fundamental expression, death is fearsome because the existence of separation. Getting accustomed with daily separations, the severance through death will also become an ordinary matter.

Quoting the teaching in the *Tibetan Book of the Dead*, the most beautiful expression of death is found when all phases between death and the next life (*bardo*) can be passed calmly in equilibrium. Therefore, it is suggested to treat all things in life (praise - rebuke, success - failure, meditation, and even dreams) as *bardo*. There is nothing in them for the joyful and the frightening are merely emissions from the pure mindfulness. As mentioned in the song of Milarepa: “*Death is not a death for a yogi; it is a little enlightenment*”. In the life of a recluse, death stands without being accompanied by fear. It is just a little experience of enlightenment.

This is the end of the dark tunnel where the lights of guidance emerge. Success, fear, and even death generate the bright light of understanding, a sequential expressions of symbolic teacher. Because the fear of death is the mother of all

fears, once it vanishes the other fears disappear as well and the mind becomes perfectly pure and clear. The characteristic is that the manner of seeing, intention, words, actions, livelihood, efforts, attention, and concentration, are becoming all wise. Life then turns its expression into the beautiful painting of wisdom. The picture is love, and the frame is acceptance.

In Ubud, Bali, there is an elderly Western woman who is very devoted in taking care of homeless dogs. Though her understanding about love is not too profound, she keeps on doing it in a long period of time. Understanding accompanied with doubt often become barrier for acceptance. The life of the Western woman is striking the ink of beauty: love and acceptance paint wisdom.

Summary:

1. Spiritual transformation happens when the guilty feeling of the past and fear of the future are transformed from wastes into fertilizers of life.
2. In order to do so, humans need teacher (living teacher, holy scriptures, symbolic teachers, inner most teacher). Perhaps that is the reason why the Sanskrit word for “guru” means the bringer of light.
3. Those who have their master (especially the inner most teacher) will experience “daily death”. Different than other people those are very afraid to die, this kind of people see the guiding light in death. Since death is the mother of all fears, when it vanishes all fears ceases as well.

*The light of greatness is visible
only for a few seconds but it turns
the beholder into a servant for life.*

Mortals with Divine Blessings

Our knowledge has since long time ago understand the formula “we can be what we think”. When the cold war between the United States and Russia was so frightening, human’s collective mind concentrated on how to put it to an end as soon as possible. The fall of Russia ceased the cold war, which was substituted by America’s supremacy. The howling terrorist bombs then try to be the balancing factor. This was then followed by the more explosive bombs in Afghanistan and Iraq. In this circumstance, collective mind starts to long for a nation that might be the balancing power for the United States. And perhaps this might lead to another cold war.

Indonesia is the same. During Soeharto’s era, a lot of people were longing for freedom. And when the particular regime fell, freedom did arrive. However, nowadays there are signs that a lot of Indonesians are getting bored with liberty. Perhaps this kind of collective mind will also give rise to a new order.

Expecting the later

As how Dr. Michael Newton wrote on *Journey of the Souls*, hypnotherapy revealed that numerous spirits fell into acute depression because they were racing with desires from their previous life. In another degree, humanity is also racing with desires. The signs are that we are yearning for something that will happen in the future and hating the things already available at the present. After the future become present, again we long for the next future.

This is similar to Nasrudin's story. One day he when was enjoying his fishing, a police officer came and Nasrudin ran fast followed by the cop. After Nasrudin stopped running because of exhaustion, the officer snapped: "Where is your entrance ticket?" Innocently Nasrudin drew out a ticket from his pocket. Realizing that he has made a wrong arrest, the police asked: "Why did you run while you do have a ticket?" Innocently Nasrudin answered: "I ran because my ulcer hurts, I want to see a doctor hurriedly". This is the life of numerous people; too many energies are wasted for the chase. After being exhausted, we just realized that it is a misunderstanding. And the one most responsible for the life that keeps on running are greed and wants.

Happiness versus wants

Realizing the danger of greed, numerous masters try to handle it. Like taming wild cows, it will refuse in the first attempts by arguing that fulfillment of wants is the sign of happiness.

However, whatever the reason is, wants are returned to their initial position as servants, not lords. Therefore, a dialogue

with greed will be like the following: “O greed, whose places do you like to visit most?” “Those belong to the rich for I am a lord in such place,” replied greed proudly. “And whose dwelling you don’t like to go to?” To this greed answered sadly: “The house of the wise, for I am merely a servant there”.

This is the early sign of someone starting to be illuminated by wisdom. Wants and greed are restored to their initial position as servants after they have enjoyed a long arrogance period as lords. If the fulfillment of wants is not the measurement of happiness, then is there any?

An inward traveler once whispered that people with profound happiness is those who keep in mind that they are the most worthless ones. Hence, there is no better option to find happiness than to be modest. By placing their self in the lowest place, no one is able to insult them. And therefore, they are happy everywhere.

In the world of Sufi once born the great Faried. His teacher once told him: “Whenever somebody beat you, hurriedly kiss his/her feet, and then go home without any bitterness”. Jesus’ disciples has been taught that only compassion can alchemize a drop of soul into the ocean of God. It is even clearer by someone’s writing that: *all souls are perfected in love*.

When he was about to pass away, Bhisma gave a message to Yudisthira about holy persons. They are humans with the balanced mind, in which all directions are beautiful.

*The peak of greatness is found
when we see difference as a beauty,
use patience as a shield and
in unavoidable circumstances,
use wisdom as a sword*

For a few divinity seekers in Buddha's path, suffering is not something to be feared of. In need to make a choice between happiness and sorrow, they will choose sorrow. Especially because suffering is like holy water that purifies the journey.

Those are examples of humans those are happy by not being drowned in greed. They have their own typical understanding about wealth: *Contentment is the greatest wealth*. This kind of people often say that, when others say that you are great, it is actually not because you are great, but because your soul starts to be connected with the soul of souls. Theistic people (Moslems, Christians, and Hindus) symbolize this as the number one, particularly because the two (self and God) has become one. Non-theistic people (Buddhism, Jainism) signify this as zero, because everything are already perfect as they are. There is no more positive thing to be added nor negative thing to be subtracted. The two symbolizations look different indeed, and math itself is a language of symbols. All numbers in math dynamically progress between zero and one (0, 10, 100, 1.000, 1.000.000, and so on). The beautiful thing is that the greater the number the more the zeros are. And no matter how many zeros are present, they lost their meaning without the number one.

Therefore, in the East once born an opinion about the features of humans with great blessings: "Seeing differences as beauties, protecting their self with the shield of patience, treasuring contentment as their wealth, celebrating life that is enlightened by the sun of mindfulness, and, in unavoidable circumstances, unsheathing the sword of wisdom".

A Sufism mystic, Kabir, once said “I glimpsed it for fifteen seconds and it made me a servant for life”. It is as if representing a sense that it is not the title of religion that makes someone find the light of greatness, but the person’s devotion to serve life.

Summary:

1. Hating the present, longing for the future. Those are signs of those who have not yet met the great blessings.
2. Humans with divine blessings are those who bring desires back to their initial position as servants (no longer as lords). Then they guide their selves with peacefulness and humbleness. Contentment, that is their wealth.
3. The summit of greatness is found when we see diversity as a beauty, use patience as protection, and, in unavoidable need to draw sword, unsheathe the sword of wisdom.

*The crown of providence is reached
when kindness makes everything
seems good.*

Beauty at the Crown of Borobudur

Borobudur is an unfolded “ancient scripture”. Many people have managed to comprehend it, yet, like the other scriptures, its truth becomes probabilistic upon human mind’s cultivation. Enlightened by this kind of understanding, there is no slightest intention to suggest that there is no other beauty than the substances of this book. Therefore, please permit this writing to serve its probabilistic task.

As if beautifully designed by its creators, the three temples Mendut, Pawon and Borobudur are standing in a straight line. Most all kinds of visitors, both tourists as well as spiritual pilgrims, start their visit from Mendut temple. At the least, they usually pass by the Mendut temple beforehand.

Though relatively small in size, Mendut temple keeps a number of messages. In the outer wall, one might find a relief portraying a turtle doing hang-gliding by biting the middle point of a piece of wood which is flown by two birds, each biting one end of the wood. Seeing such a rare occasion, some children shouted cheerfully: ‘O birds, how wonderful your idea is!’ Hastily

the turtle intended to declare that the idea is his, not the birds'. However, upon gaping his mouth (and so losing his grip), the turtle fell and died with its body broken into pieces.

Though everyone is free to make interpretation, yet in a sacred journey to Borobudur one is warned right from the very first gate to be careful with ego. Making utterance in the name of ego has such an overwhelming risk.

Gentleness meets perseverance

Inside of the Mendut temple stand three grand statues: the Lord Buddha in the middle, along with the compassionate Avalokiteshvara (on His right side) and the determined Vajrapani (on His left side). This is as if whispering a message that, upon realizing the threat of ego, one shall discover the Buddhahood in Borobudur with the two spirits: compassion to others and determination to self.

Kitchen (*pawon*, in Javanese language) is a place to do the cooking. The ingredients are obvious: to be careful in speaking under the name of ego, to do nothing but compassion to others, and to keep nothing for the self but perseverance. These substances are well cultivated in Pawon temple.

The “food” referred to in Pawon temple is different to the ordinary food that is only processed once in a certain place. The cuisine of soul is cultivated every time in every place. Consequently, Zen disciples refer to meditation as having meal upon hunger and sleeping upon sleepiness. In other words, daily life is the meditation itself. Daily life is the when and where

we cultivate the ingredients of soul's cuisine.

Referring to some masters, both when your eyes are closed and opened, be a compassionate witness to whatever happened during meditation. Goodness-wickedness, divinity – impurity, accomplishment – disappointment, all are observed compassionately.

Souls who survived long relentless practice, become compassionate witnesses, and are filling their life with kindness, will sense that Borobudur is more than merely a massive mountain of carved stones.

As a composition of meanings, Borobudur is commonly interpreted as a mountain of life consisting the realm of lustful passion on the base level, the realm of forms in the middle, and the formless realm on its summit. This is surely a point of view that deserves to be appreciated.

Even so, once a soul comprehends the preliminary signs in Mendut and cultivates them in a compassionate and determined life, he/she shall behold an alternative interpretation that Borobudur is a pilgrimage in which a soul is being purified from all kinds of defilement (as greed, hatred and ignorance).

At the base level we can see an exposure of the soul's low desires as the bodily lust. It is true that the upper relief illustrates beautiful stories of Siddharta Gautama from his birth, enlightenment, and being a master for both mortals and divine beings. However, even the life accounts of the holy might turn into sources of defilement, particularly when they are used to

*Anyone whose ego is controlled,
practices devotedly, and acts gently,
will possess an amazing sanctuary
which is the inner virtues*

judge life.

When people conclude things like “This master is untrue”, or “That order is deceptive”, then the chronicles of the saints become resources of anger and hostility. It is indeed a good thing to study the life of the holy, moreover to embody them in the daily life. However, being aware that holiness might as well befall into the root of defilements is a meditation practice that purifies and clarifies daily life.

This divinity guarded by awareness is the one which then unlock the gate into the realm of wordless knowledge, alike the upper level of Borobudur which is sufficient without any relief. It is only a perfect cycle, filled with *stupas* containing Buddha statue in the *mudra* (hand gesture) of rolling the Dharma wheel. Without word, devoid of judgment. Only daily life activities perform the excellence of the teaching.

It is then easily understandable when Dr. Rabindranath Tagore (the first non-European Nobel winner), who visited Borobudur on September 23rd 1927 wrote Borobudur-like composition of perfection in Visva Bharati News.

All of Tagore’s wonderful lines about Borobudur are concluded with ‘*let Buddha be my refuge*’, which means that any soul succeed in renouncing defilements will gain protection only from the virtues within him/her self.

Notice Tagore’s final step in referring to Borobudur as follow: When the time has come, reach the inner life that stands in silence amidst the surging ages of crowdedness, until one is

filled with faith that the meaning of the highest liberation resides in the limitlessness, which whispers and trembles: “may I take refuge to the inner virtues”.

The reputation of Tagore’s life has provided facts on his personality, perseverance and compassion. His journey to Borobudur inspires that, for whoever are in command of their ego, sincere in their practice and bring compassion in their deeds, they shall discover a magnificent sanctuary within their selves that is their inner virtue.

Like His Holiness Dalai Lama’s message: *compassion is the best protection*. Or, in the words of Javanese elders: “The ignorant fails to the knowledgeable whereas the tricky wins over the knowledgeable. The invincible one is he/she who is blessed with fortune!” And the greatest fortune is gained when generosity makes everything seems good.

This might be the reason for the crown *stupa* of Borobudur being empty inside. It is without message for there is nothing left to be spoken.

Summary:

1. Borobudur is a monument filled with beauty. In the entrance it warns its visitors to be careful in uttering ego-driven speech. With this carefulness, remember to manage the ingredients of life by training the self hardly but being gentle toward others.
2. Ascending Borobudur is stepping the stairway of mind. In the low level we can obviously see vulgar mind defilements

like the fleshy desires. The middle level is indeed consists of stories about divinity but, without adequate mindfulness, divinity can also become a stain for the mind. Especially when it makes people become fanatic and short-tempered.

3. It is this mindfulness-guided divinity that unlocks the gate of understanding that all things are good.

*Those who fill their life with unlimited
compassion can meet God
even in their daily life.*

Hajj Bambang: An Encounter with God

On October 12th 2002, for the first time a bomb was exploded in Kuta, Bali, with hundreds of victims. Sadness, grief, touched, and concerned are suitable words to express the feelings of many souls at that moment. As if commanded by an unknown force, a lot of parties from Indonesia and abroad responded to the incident as indication of sympathy and empathy. Funds, efforts, medicines and news were streaming vastly.

However, there was something even more touching. Kuta citizens those were stricken by the uncertainty of their future, put upon a trial of patience, those whose birthplace and hometown was devastated by the bombing and stained with human blood, surprisingly carried out a touching response.

We have witnessed countless pages in the book of time where anger was counteracted with anger, blood compensated with blood, hatred followed by hatred, and destruction accompanied with nothing but another destruction. Hence, is a

moment where human blood responded by calmness, destruction brings friendship instead of animosity, suspicion to other party was replaced with empathies to share, not a rare one in the history of humanity? In addition, there was no single place of worship been violated, moreover been destroyed.

The discernible God

It was even more exceptional because, while the suspected perpetrator was Al Qaeda and the incident was happened in a place where major inhabitants are non-Moslems, the particular episode astoundingly established a Hajj Bambang as one of the messengers in conveying the deepest feeling of Kuta citizens'. The fact was reported in the media, and numerous humanity acknowledgements were also have been awarded to Hajj Bambang.

Together with Nyoman Bagiana Karang and other Kuta citizens, Hajj Bambang took action immediately. From transporting human remains, carrying the bleeding ones on their back, rescuing the survivors, to calming their public's emotion. As the result, though it has been four years after the happening and the court has charged the guilty ones together with their sentence, there is no change in the expression of Kuta. Hatred does not always have to be followed by malignance, destruction does not always have to be accompanied by bitterness, blood does not always have to be compensated by life, and Hajj Bambang is still an honored and respected citizen of Kuta.

For those who own sensitivity and note this episode in

their heart, this occurrence might open doors of contemplation. Most people are very devoted and deeply in love with the God they greet in Mosque, Church, Monastery, Konco, and Pura. Our Moslem friends do their prayer five times a day, our Christian fellows have countless worshipping songs for God, our Buddhist acquaintances even prostrate to Buddha statue, and our Hindu comrades have hundreds and even thousands rituals to worship God in Pura.

The question is, if the devotion to God in the places of worship could be that sincere, is there anyone who conducts similar devotion to the God within a husband/wife, parents, children, neighbor, superior/inferior, government, people, animals, plants, and other God's manifestations?

Many religions agree that God is omnipresent. In Buddhism language, all possess Buddha nature. All of us might be proud with the great amount of donation to build a house of worship and the high intensity of praying in one's site of devotion, still the question remains: "Do we pay homage to God in our daily life outside the religious sites with the same sincerity?"

God as compassion

Quoting Dalai Lama's opinion, God is an infinite compassion. In this understanding then Hajj Bambang, Nyoman Bagiana Karang, and their companions, have found God (the boundless love) and become living proofs that love is the one may perfectly exorcise hatred, blood spilled by war and fight, anger, and bitterness.

*Hatred and wrath can only be
ceased by patience and compassion*

As a comparison, the September 11th terrorist's attack on the World Trade Center had been followed by invasion upon Afghanistan and Iraq. How many bullets that have been shot, bombs that have been dropped, military aircrafts that have been let loose, warships and tanks that roamed with grudge and revenge... However, as has been recorded by history, there is not a single indication that the terrorist will stop spreading death and tragedy, as well as there is no clue that U.S. and its allies are satisfied with their bitterness and attacks. In particular, human being's fear on the imminent/latent terrorist attack is not lessened.

Kuta is not a superpower country; it is only a village. Kuta is frequently accused of pawning culture for tourism. Nevertheless, both of the 12th October 2002 incident and the second bombing in Bali were monuments of life that Bali has provided a comparison about how humanity affairs/problems/conflicts should be solved.

Moreover, it has escorted Hajj Bambang, Nyoman Bagiana Karang and their associates before God. Therefore, upon an issue of what name should be given to the monument of Bali bombing, a friend suggested it to be "The Monument of the Victory of Dharma" (Dharma: the Law of Nature). The victory of kindness amidst the temptations of evil. Dharma is alike to get wet upon touching water and get burned upon touching fire. Whoever fills his/her life with compassion shall gain happiness. Whoever fills his/her life with anger, sadness shall he/she obtain.

Hajj Bambang was not only saved from the bombing, he

was even acknowledged with a number of international awards. More than being regarded as a successful leader of the Institution of the Management of Kuta Citizens, Nyoman Bagiana Karang is now a member of Badung's DPRD (parliament). We also know how the terrorists were sentenced by the court, their imprisonment in Nusa Kambangan, and their destiny by the firing of the executioners. And we also know the troubles of U.S. government and its allies.

From all of these stories, Bali bombing indeed took priceless sacrifices. Isn't it a great waste if such event then merely flies by the time and vanishes? Is there any fellow touched to comprehend that the Bali way of resolution is as well the manner of reconciliation for humanity?

Summary:

1. We can see revenge taking place in many corners of the world. However, Bali bombings teach humanity that hatred and anger can only be subdued by patience and compassion. Furthermore, patience and compassion made Bali successively awarded as the best island in the world.
2. In the sense that God is an infinite compassion, those who fill life with boundless love like Hajj Bambang are able to meet God in daily life.
3. Bali bombing is a teaching with a severe compensation. Is it not a great loss to let it gone with the time?

*Enlightenment is as simple as
the blue lake and the green mountain.
It is beautiful as it is.*

The Rising Sun of Enlightenment

A fellow friend who is commonly mentioned in Sufism is Nasrudin. For some people, he is a symbol of comical and amusing matters whereas for some others Nasrudin represents a genius life for he frequently procreates amazing wisdoms of life.

One day, Nasrudin ran frantically to his master. As soon as he met the sage, without taking trouble to ask for permission Nasrudin hastily implored an aid. "Help me master, my house is turned into a living hell. A fussy wife, demanding parents in law, my children and their cousins running noisily here and there... Oh I will do whatever you say to get rid of this hell and create a heaven."

Knowing that Nasrudin would keep his promise, the master asked: 'Are you in possession of any animal?' Nasrudin nimbly quacked that he had four geese, six chickens, seven goats, eight rabbits, and a number of birds. His master then told Nasrudin to bring all of his animals into the house, together with the entire human inhabitants. Afterward, Nasrudin was to shut

all doors and windows tightly. Not a single creature, whether human nor animal, might sneak out from the house for eleven days.

‘But... but...’, responded Nasrudin in a nervous tone. Firmly his master said, “Don’t forget what you have promised me!” And so there was Nasrudin, reluctantly went home obeying his master’s instruction.

Eleven days later Nasrudin returned, his steps much more muddled than ever. ‘O master... help me... pleaseee... not to mention the humans, even the goats are going insane eleven days in that house...’ His master, with a sagacious smile, said, ‘Now you may release all of the animals. You and your kin shall work together cleaning the house in cheerfulness.’ A moment later Nasrudin revisited his master with a happy face. ‘Thank you very much master, my house is now indeed a heaven!’

This is the story of humanity from the ancient to the present time. There are a lot of households changed into hell by hating and rebuking one another. When this is put to an end, the very house with the same residents and animals becomes heaven. And, eventually, finding heaven is merely a matter of choosing the suitable comparison. If one succeed in doing so (in Nasrudin’s story the comparison is his house crowded with animals), the gate of heaven is opened.

When the comparison is always in a “more” condition (richer, prettier, more famous, wiser, etc.), then the gate is forever closed. Finally, life is actually a matter of attitude. Both

heaven and hell are consequences of the attitude. If the manners are of grumblings and shortcomings, then hell is what will be seen. On the other hand, upon an attitude of patience and gratitude heaven shall be revealed.

The sun of enlightenment

The conclusion that life is a matter of attitude might be the reason for some masters to make their life perfect with a kind of manner that is full of beauty. In the beginning, it is done reluctantly under compulsion. What is the beauty in being derided and humiliated? Which side of disaster is beautiful? Brushing teeth is initially an activity one does reluctantly, yet upon noticing clean and healthy teeth it becomes a daily habit. The same thing works to beauty as well.

Chogyal Namkhai Norbu (*Dzogchen: The Self Perfected State*) is among masters stepped into the realm of beauty. According to this Tibetan master, there is nothing need to be changed. One does not even need to do any renouncement. Dzogchen's (the Great Perfection) disciples only have a single task: to observe! To be more precise, it is to observe with awareness, not with judgment. To perceive when happiness comes. To notice the sorrow in time of despair. To witness the approaching success, and to realize the visit of failure. For anyone conscientious in the practice of observation, a day will come when his/her life is enlightened by the light of awareness. Deepak Chopra (*How to Know God: The Soul's Journey into the Mystery of Mysteries*), even wrote: '*The only clear path to God is a path of constant awareness*'. In other words, awareness is the enlightened path to God.

The duty of a farmer is to manage his field, a teacher's task is to give lesson, and parents' responsibility is to love their child. All beings have their own place to find happiness

Lex Hixon (*Coming Home: the Experience of Enlightenment in Sacred Traditions*) is another example of masters who found the beauty. Most people are easily tempted to exaggerate the beauty of their own culture and underestimate others'. Nevertheless, Hixon is different. He reflects the same degree of beauty when he wrote about Heidegger, Krishnamurti, Ramakrishna, Ramana Maharshi, Zen, I Ching, advaita vedanta, and also the Sufism master Bawa Muhaiyaddeen.

Like how water flows into the ocean along several river-paths, yet it shares the same expressions upon finding their final destination. It is bluish, wavy, salty, and turns white when reaches the shore. To tell that all religions are the same is just as hard as to say that all rivers are the same. On the other hand, once souls reach enlightenment (which Hixon termed as *coming home*) then there will be one likeness: beauty! Adopting the experience of Zen enlightenment, Hixon mentioned that '*Enlightenment is simply the blue lake and the green mountain*'. Enlightenment is as simple as the blue lake and the green mountain. It is beautiful as it is.

The similar account was also experienced by Stephen Mitchell (*The Enlightened Heart: an Anthology of Sacred Poetry*) who composed the great diversity of traditions (from Upanishad, Lao-Tzu, Izumi Shikibu, Santo Franciscus, Rumi, Kabir, William Shakespeare, Bibi Hayati to Robinson Jeffers) into a story originated from beauty to the beauty itself.

This is the reason for the enlightened masters to suggest the critical, skeptical, aggressive, and apathy students to simply

continue their growth and journey. Like the flowing rivers those are going to become one in an ocean where they will share the same expression, wave, taste and color.

It is similar to the mountain climbers in an early morning. Being asked the direction of the sunrise, those from the west reply that it's in front of them whereas those from the east point to their backward. Though initially they are contradicting each other, at the summit they will laugh together on the disagreement. It is in this kind of friendly laughter that an immense beauty might be sensed and life will then enter the realm of an everlasting beauty as words of Lex Hixon's words: '*Once enlightenment has dawned, we are at home every where*'. When the sun of enlightenment rises within, all places are homes. Like the sun that naturally enlighten all things, so does an enlightened being. Their words, actions, and mind will bring light into darkness without too much efforts.

Summary:

1. The real purgatory lies in dissatisfaction, ungratefulness, wailing, protesting. In contemplation it is realized that hell is not a place but the result of a sequence of attitudes. Hell is the consequence for the manner of making comparison (especially when the comparison is made between what we already have to the better things). On the other hand, the way of flowing in gratitude will bring heaven.
2. For the enlightened beings, the formula is simple: stop comparing, start flowing. It is like what has been illustrated by daily life: the duty of a farmer is to work his field, the task of a teacher is to give lesson, and the responsibility of

parents is to love their child. All beings have their own role to be celebrated.

3. Similar to the rivers flowing to the ocean, people climbing from different direction will find a lot of arguments on their way. Nevertheless, in the end all of them will meet beauty which is full of companionship.

*Spiritual knowledge is abundant
with words, but spiritual
attainment is full of practices.*

My Religion is Love

Paradox. It is the title given to nowadays tendency in life. John Naisbitt is one of the figures greatly contributed to the popularity of the paradox terminology. It is fundamental that, in the mind of people like Naisbitt any tendency that slips out of the common logic will be easily put into the box of paradox. Some people who keep a lot of paradox in their mind are disappointed. Meanwhile, on the contrary, some others were developed by the paradox. In this respect, this writing wishes that most of the readers are going to progress by contemplating the following paradoxes. There is no slightest intention in this writing to turn them into the beginning of another hostility and suspicion.

Some paradoxes worth to be studied are those happened in Bali, India, Tibet and Middle East. Bali, as have been announced years ago by tourism industries, is an island of peace. However, Bali was also the place where thousands of human, being accused as communists, were slain in 1965. It was also the place where two terrorist bombs howled and took a lot of humans' life. And it was also where a city was burned down in 1999 because a candidate president supported was not

elected.

India is about the same. It is the birth land of two major religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) as well as numerous great and astonishing spiritual figures from Mahatma Gandhi, Ramakrishna, Svami Vivekananda, Osho, Ramana Maharsi, to Buddha Gautama, Atisha, and Acharya Shantidewa. Yet in the very land hatred continuously compelling conflicts, thus our Hindu and Moslem brothers are still unable yet to relinquish their enmity. The argument about the borderline is still getting more intense, and a number of places of worship are still guarded by military forces.

Tibet is the roof of the world, as if it is the crown of the Earth. Therefore, it is natural that Tibet borne many remarkable literatures about life (as The Tibetan Book of the Dead). However, in Tibet suffering seems to be everlasting as well. The country is still mourning for the exclusion of its leader, Dalai Lama, which has been happening for decades. Lamentation is reigning the destiny of the Tibetan people, whereas the positive indication of change in the sacred land is yet unseen.

The case is also similar for the Middle East. It is the origin of two world's religions (Islam and Christian), yet killing machines are still howling and taking innocent human beings as their victims. Israel and Palestine have not revealed any sign for an everlasting peace. The conflict is even getting worse lately.

Spiritual attainment

In general, it is understandable that Naisbitt once recognized a

globally expanding tendency in which people say “no” to religion but “yes” to spirituality. This is similar to an Indonesian youth’s experience during her college years in the West. One day, in a class attended by a lot of students, the lecturer asked: ‘Any one of you who go to the holy place in holiday?’ Only less than five students raised their hand. However, those who kept their hand on the table never forget to return the pencil they borrowed. They are immediate give help upon seeing female lecturers carrying heavy books. Their discipline is well maintained during lining up in a queue. A smile is always on their face as they greet a friend. They do not have any slightest hesitation to help those in need. In entering an elevator or a train, they always let the elders to come in first.

A question then raised; what is their religion? This query is quite similar to the one delivered to some foreign tourists in Bali. Being asked whether they are Christian, their answer was simply a wordless smile... yet what an excellent courtesy they have! They always knock on the door first before getting into someone’s house. When the host forgot to share them a chair, they would ask permission to sit. Their expression of disagreement started with ‘Pardon me for my different opinion’. And there are still many more examples of touching courtesies.

This is also the one advancing a number of friends in inner path from spiritual knowledge to spiritual achievement. It is absolutely virtuous to learn Buddhism together with its teaching of compassion. Comprehending Sufism poetries that tell about nothing but love is indeed beneficial. Astonishment aroused by the Saint Fransiscus of Asisi’s prayer is certainly a meaningful matter. Falling in love to Bhagavad Gita is obviously

*Some fellow seekers start
to progress from spiritual
knowledge to spiritual attainment*

a sign of a soul's development, whereas studying Confucius' wisdoms is evidently advantageous as well. However, actualizing them into daily spiritual achievement undeniably demands even greater efforts.

Numerous masters agree that the most significant gate connecting spiritual knowledge and spiritual achievement is practice. Similar to someone who is in search for balance in cycling, it is only practice that help him/her best. The time and place for the practice are available abundantly. From one's house, working place, school, street, place of worship, to even a football field, all might become places to gain spiritual achievement. In other words, it is as the following beautiful expression of Kahlil Gibran: 'Our daily life is our true temple'.

Loving one's spouse and parents, educating one's children, respecting one's neighbor and superior, appreciating different opinion/attitude and government's services, being grateful to one's servants, and, if capable, loving one's enemy, are amazing daily spiritual achievements. Spiritual knowledge splendorous with words, whereas spiritual achievement ornate with practice.

Amazed by His Holiness Dalai Lama's spiritual achievement, Richard Gere once asked him about his true religion in daily life. With a genuine smile, Dalai Lama answered: 'My true religion is kindness'.

This is alike to the previous story of those college students in Melbourne that did not raise their hand, yet their daily life is filled with the desire to help others and not to hurt

others. Some of them whisper: '*My religion is love*'. Not the love that is spoken, but the one which is practiced.

Summary:

1. Religion no, spirituality yes. That is Naisbitt's finding about the global tendency, which is a useful thought for the future of religions.
2. Therefore, a lot of people start to shift from spiritual knowledge to spiritual attainment in which implementation, practice, loving, sharing, forgiving, giving, and respecting others is a sequence of more valued natures.
3. Spiritual knowledge is abundant in meaning whereas spiritual attainment is full of implementation. And the energy that makes the steps of implementations shining is love.

*Meditation is the state of
mind in absolute silence.*

The Illuminating Tranquility

Once a disciple asked a master about the human souls' evolution over the last centuries. The particular master was happened to be silent for a moment and then answered as he fixed his eyes on the disciple's, '*It is from darkness to darkness*'. From one dissatisfaction to another discontentment, from one conflict to another clash.

Observing this way in which life flows, some innocent/naïve suburban people questioning the reason of science and technology for bringing such impact... in this matter please spare the innocence/naivety... If this is answered by data, numbers and logics, perhaps the symptom of 'from darkness to darkness' will become even longer. Number is opposed to number. Logic is countered to logic.

Hence in this occasion let the question to be answered not by number or logic, but by silence instead. However, please notice that this does not mean to propose that silence is the only truth. Similar to human's mouth that has hard teeth because their function is to cut and chew food, and also soft and flexible tongue for its task is not to gnaw but to taste. Both

have different duty. In this kind of spirit, the silence in this writing asks the permission to speak.

Since the ancient time, not many people fond of silence. Those who dwell in silence are less than those who seek in crowd. And yet both are evolving. People in the crowd do like to grow outward (by other people's amazement and praising as the measurement criterion) whereas the devotees of silence prefer to grow inward. They evade amazement and praise for those are full with ego's temptations.

Gazing the moon with a lamp

One account that is greatly illuminating the path of silence is the life of the holy ascetic Ramana Maharshi. There was not a sign that he was going to be an ascetic until he was in the age of sixteen. Even so, it was happened that he felt a sudden heat in his body upon introduced to the inward journey. Therefore, he ran to the Arunachala hill where not only he got rid of the heat, but he greatly enjoyed the stillness of the site. And then he remained in complete silence for decades.

When finally he ended his silence, Ramana answered a lot of people's answers astoundingly with only a few words. And there an ashram was built by his many of followers around his hermitage. Every time someone asked who his teacher was, he always shook his head and spoke indistinctively that '*The Ultimate consciousness is the only teacher*'.

Similarly, in numerous contemplations under different religious titles, disciples are asked to be silence. Initially, the

outward dialogue extinguished to be replaced by the inner conversation. Finally, even this inner conversation vanishes and there is nothing left but awareness. Souls those have been enlightened by the illumination of awareness shall whisper that one does not need a lamp to gaze at the moon!

Words, logics, and numbers are similar to a lamp that people need upon the time of darkness. One of the Bali spiritualism's founding fathers, Dang Hyang Dwijendra, wrote *kekawin Dharma Sunya* where he mentioned that a calm and balance mind is the origin of beauty. Thereafter, when the source of beauty is already inside do human still need an outer lamp? In a master's provocative language, it is: 'When you still have someone who can make you happy or sad, you are not a master, you are a slave!'

Appreciation on the silence is not only in Bali. Lama Surya Das (in *Awakening the Buddha Within*) stated that the summit of the journey in finding the right speech is silence. Eckhart Tolle (*Stillness Speaks*) is more or less the same: "Wisdom comes from the ability to be still. Just look around and listen... let stillness direct your words and actions." Thomas Merton (*Thoughts in Solitude*) added that: 'My knowledge of myself in silence... opens out into the silence... of God'. J. Krishnamurti (*The Light in Oneself*) suggested that: '*Meditation is absolute silence of the mind*'. Dainin Katagiri (*Returning to Silence*) wrote: '*Shakyamuni is someone who practice tranquil silence*'. Whoever practices the perfect silence becomes a Buddha. Advanced Zen disciples are fond of conscientious silent illumination practice. Sufism poet, Rumi, greatly developed himself in the silence. One of his poems (from *The*

Logic and words are like the skin and shell of a coconut. They are useful in the beginning yet they are useless once the fruit and the essence are taken

Rumi Collections) spoke: “*When you know your own definition, flee from it, that you may attain to the One who cannot be defined.*”

In all of these descriptions one might see that there are numerous human beings illuminated by silence. They are not bordered by traditions. From Sufism, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism. This kind of people have the same evolution pattern. Logics and words are like coconut's skin and shell those are initially needed by human. However, upon being stripped and opened, the fruit is eaten, the essence is drank, then both the skin and shell are thrown away.

Mikhail Naimy (*The Book of Mirdad*) is more straightforward. He stated that words and logics are similar to stick, which is useful for those who have problem with their legs. Nevertheless, it is burden for people with healthy legs. Moreover, for the souls who are able to fly, stick is indeed a heavy burden. Perhaps that is why ascetics spend their time only in silence and smile.

Summary:

1. Logic, data, and numbers are similar to a flashlight which is useful in the darkness. However, it is useless beneath the light of the moon. Therefore, inward travelers focus to a single matter which is to attain the inner full moon.
2. The thickest darkness people can experience is the burden of carrying ego and selfishness on their back anywhere they go.

3. Like a person who is accustomed to walk with a stick, the early time of practice in lessening the ego is indeed seemed unbalanced and shocking. However, the frequency of the turbulence will get lower. Upon being healed, the person then realizes that stick is only required by those who have problem with their feet and merely a burden for people without such case. This is the rise of the inner full moon: the ability of the mind to enlighten itself.

*In this path, every
steps are offerings.*

In the Silence of the Flowers

Noisy and crowded are the mood of inter-humans relationship in 2009 that George W. Bush ended his presidency period with the shoe-throwing incident. In another part of the world, Indonesia was also clamorous and raucous with its election.

In this rising of temperature, it will be a beauty if silence might emerge once in a while. Not as the adversary of noise, but simply like how a person sometimes take a deep breath after moments of suffocation.

There are two paths available for anyone yearning to walk along the freshness of life. One is intellectuality and the other is devotion. In the first approach, every single thing is an object to be analyzed. Therefore, Western meditators (major travelers on this path) are ordered to realize emptiness as soon as possible by their master. Once a seeker gets personal experience of emptiness (not only understands it intellectually) then he/she shall know the wonder of silence.

Not too many arguments are required along the way of devotion for the matter that counts in this path is a devotion

which is sincere, full of obeisance, and deep respect. In the end of the path, however, the wanderer will also be greeted by emptiness. It is described by an accomplished master as: *Practice devotion all the time until it is revealed that the giver, the receiver, and the gift are actually not exist.* That is silence.

The inner worship

In the old time of the East, most people walk on the path of devotion. In Indonesia, this caused the word *berdoa* (praying) is equivalent with the word *sembahyang* (*sembahyang* is a synonym of *berdoa*, while the morpheme “*sembah*” means respectful greeting, homage, obeisance). Initially, it was started with duality of the worshipper and the worshipped, then the two will become one, and finally the one will vanishes in silence.

All kinds of worship are initiated with the physical manner. Nevertheless, because physic is composed by incompatible/contradictory elements (like water - fire, soil - air, etc.), many of those who only practice physical worship experience turbulences, for the elements that compose the body are also unbalance/impermanent in their nature. From this point emerges the need to practice inner worship, in which the practitioners' body begins to be guided by the vibration of sense, rather than merely using the physical means. The sense in this respect is not the sense of happiness which opposes sorrow, nor a sense of purity which contradicts impurity, for it is the sense which embraces everything with the same degree of affection.

It is like a woman mothering her only child. She cradles

the baby in her arms with love, both in the time when the child is smiling and when the baby is crying after wetting his/her diaper. It is very similar to inner worship because practicing inner worship means to greet everything in life with smile. As the result, life goes round smoothly in accordance with the rhythm of nature that an accomplished adept may smile to the light by working and embrace the dark by resting.

In this path, all things are worships. An adept will have a meal with gratitude knowing that at the same time billions of souls are starving. He/She will whistle a tune when sweeping the floor realizing that there are countless bodies lie motionless at hospitals. By doing things this way, every act is a rite, every step is a worship.

One of Rumi's poems describes this by symbolizing life as onions; dirty and brownish in the outside but getting whiter and whiter when being peeled. And finally when there's nothing left of the onions, there are only the tears remain.

Secret worship

A soul who has walked a long way in the path of inner worship will discover that nature guards a lot of secrets. In the East, Tantra is one among the esoteric methods. Only a few mortals are capable to open the gateway of Tantra for it is literally an act which is grave and dangerous. Some people analogize Tantra as a highway allows a traveler to reach the destination sooner and at the same time conceals possibility of terrible accident.

*Those whose life flows perfectly from
flowers into wastes, and then back into
flowers, have unlocked one of the doors
into the chamber of secret*

Some seers symbolize life as a tree poisonous with its temptations and divide the Tantric journey into three chapters. The first is where a disciple is ordered to stay away of the tree. This is the main idea behind the suggestions to fast, control one's self, and to live in contentment and gratitude.

Excellent self mastery signifies the accomplishment of the first chapter, and thus the disciple might proceed to the next in which the master gives order to guard the poisonous tree; an instruction that initiates the adept into the task of shepherding. In this period the practitioner might become a teacher, a writer, a priest, an honest leader, or anything as long as he/she keeps other people away from the poisonous tree of life.

When the disciple has accomplished an adequate shepherding period, he/she is then welcomed into the very heart of Tantra, that is to alchemize the sickening poison into the healing potion. Therefore, while most methods blockade their disciples from passion, Tantra has an approach that utilizes passions (sexual desire, in particular) as means of spiritual transformation. The disciple's purpose of this conduct is then not to be carried away by lust but to burn desire by its own.

Therefore, the displaying of sexual intercourse might be found in numerous archeological sites in Indonesia (such as in Java, Sumatera, and Kalimantan islands), India, and Latin America. In Bali this is referred to as *lingga-yoni*, *nyegara-gunung*. Anyone prevails in abolishing all desires (even the passion on divinity and enlightenment), shall begin witnessing the secret of secrets.

Physical/Material offering in a lot of traditions (not only in Bali) involves flowers and flowers even have significant role in some countries like Japan. It seems to revealing a secret that even though flowers represent beauty in their bloom still they have to surrender when time turn them into wastes. And both in the form of beauty and waste, flowers just remain silent. Those whose life flows perfectly from a flower (successful, praised) into a waste (failed, scorned), and then manage to restore their flower form, have unlocked one of the secret's doors.

A master with this state of achievement once wrote: "Physical isolation is not the true solitude. Totally free from any gasping, that's the true solitude". The freedom from attachments (good – bad, right – wrong), is the real silence.

Answering an adept's question about the code of conduct should be practiced in this state of liberation, a master whispered that it is to gaze in the manner of the sky and to labor in the way of the Mother Earth. The sky provides shelter without any discrimination and the Mother Earth strictly obeys the rule of nature that all beings shall harvest what they sow.

Summary:

1. Crowdedness and noisiness are not always bad since they may also take parts in opening the door so the longing for silence may enter.
2. In the East, the mount of silence is climbed through the paths of devotion. Considering the limitations of physical worship, many travelers start to realize the significance of the inner and the secret worship.

3. In the inner worship, all steps are rituals. Eating, sleeping, working, resting, all are acts of worship as long as they are performed in profound gratitude. In the secret worship, all dualities (good-bad, holy-unholy, etc.) are exceeded. Like how a flower flows perfectly into waste, and from waste returns into flower. There is where the secret lies hidden.

*The illuminating light is not
in the outside. It is hidden
in daily life which is full of love.*

The Inner Symphony

There is a social institution that has been nurturing civilization since a long period of time and now at the edge of extinction: family. It is said to be nurturing civilization for it is the shelter in which we born, grow, become old, and eventually expire. Moreover, it is where most of our weaknesses are mended.

Together with the falling of the family construction (by divorce, the declining of public's respect, the smaller number of role models in this matter), the atmosphere is getting more and more tense everywhere.

Offices are heated up with competition for power, traffics with jams, even some religious sites begin to loose their tranquility. Some public medias deliver nothing but tense-raising news for the calming ones are not classified as news... how unimaginable the expression of civilization is... In one side the temperature outside is rising, and in the other side family is losing its sheltering roof.

The field of growth, the field of acceptance

When the vegetables fail to grow freshly, most of us spontaneously looking for the reason/cause in their own mistakes. However, in relationship with other persons it is too frequently happened in life that people put the blame on others instead of searching for the mistake within the self as how it is done in dealing with vegetables.

Illuminated with this light of understanding, it is inappropriate to put all the blames in Descartes who deified “I” hundreds of years ago, or to capitalism that turns everything into materialism. Similar to the logic of the vegetables previously discussed, let us seek the causes for all these happenings within our selves.

Using the analogy of swaying coconut leaves, the turbulences of human’s life in the present time are harder indeed. It is even made more dangerous in a situation where a person in the midst of such turbulence is clinging on to something which is also hardly trembling.

Inside, humans are made imbalance by irritation, anger, and jealousy. At the same time most of outer things (including home and family) are in tremor. Therefore, building a tranquil home and family is a prominent issue in this era.

Like the real houses, the durability depends on how solid the foundation is. Speaking frankly, the reason behind the getting corrupted of many households is because they were built on the foundation of greediness upon gaining the benefit and refusing the detriment. Learning from this point, it is important to re-construct the house of the family by learning to

accept each other's weakness.

Any house will be beautiful and exquisite if the dwellers are watering each other. The emotional state of many people when they arrive at home is similar to waterless trees in the dry season (conflicts at the office, jams on the streets). On the other hand, how beautiful a household will be if the family members are capable in watering each other (accepting each others' lacks). These are the lovely seeds of love. Love which is blooming from the realization that all have their own weakness, and all need to be watered.

Flowing with the symphony

When a person manages to build relationship with a desire to find perfection in his/her partner then the flowers of love are very unlikely to bloom. In the way nature embraces dualities with the same intimacy (in the rainy season the grass is greening, in dry season flowers are blossoming), love starts to grow in totality. There is excess in deficiency and there is shortcoming in virtue (*love as a totality*). Most of life's accidents (divorce, war, fight, riot) are originated from the desire of advantage and refusing the disadvantage. Ask a thousand men who among them are willing to accept the beauty and virtues of his wife. Perhaps all of them will raise hand. However, if the question is who are willing to accept (my apologize) the fussiness and aloofness of his wife, the one who rises his hand, if there is any, will easily be accused of losing his wit. Or at least suspected as a chairman of the senior board of AHUWC (Association for Husbands Under Wife's Command).

*The lovely mansion of life is not a
place but the journey itself.
Whoever flows harmoniously in
daily conducts, is already at home*

Within the expanse of the particular cosmic materials, one evening a daughter asked her father about *home*. The father smiled and replied: "*Home is not a place. It is a journey. Those who totally flow with the journey, they're already at home.*"

As if the answer has not clarified the matter yet, the daughter again asked: what is the light in the search for the house? Gently the father replied: "*The light is not outside. It is within your love. Those who are full of love see light everywhere.*" The guiding light is not outside. It is hidden in the daily life which is full of love. Whoever walks with love, his/her journey will be brightly illuminated.

Actually it is even more than bright since the life of the masters have illustrated that, for anyone who walks in love, life is a beautiful symphony echoing the harmony of various instruments. Right - wrong, success - fail, all are arranging the tune of loveliness.

A soul may ask: if there is an inner symphony, then who is the conductor? A question is certainly welcomed. However, the matter that must be guarded is the one behind the question. In many occasions, they are doubt and fear. There are times when a question is delivered out of curiosity, and there are even more times when a question is driven by suspicion. Doubt, fear, moreover suspicion, are signs that the questioner is still straying far away from home. Curiosity is the hungry mind, and in many life it is the origin of turbulence.

Therefore, it is understandable that the masters who

have been staying at home for a long period of time and being united with the mansion speak only two languages: silent and smile. Smile indicates friendship with life, and silent signifies the inexistence of doubt.

Perhaps that was why Zenkei Shibayama entitled his work *A Flower Does Not Talk*. Flower blooms in silence, and withered also in silence. This might also be the cause for, when his disciples were arguing each other, Gautama Buddha chose to remain silence in a forest accompanied with elephants and trees. Pay attention to what Rumi wrote in *Masnavi*: “*The wages of religion are love, inner rapture.*” The earnings for those devotedly travel inward is love, the unspeakable inner amazement. That is the inner symphony. The symphony that makes mind rests perfectly in silence and shows the mortals that death is as simple as a leaf falling from a branch.

Summary:

1. The temperature of living is indeed getting heated up everywhere. Outside and inside the self. Therefore, there is no other option than to make one’s self calm and gentle inside.
2. The steps to become calm and gentle might be initiated by watering each other in a family (accepting each other’s weakness). This is made possible by the practice of *love as a totality* in which both limitation and value are accepted as they are.
3. Within every self and household decorated with *love as a totality*, life begins to be similar with a symphony in which various musical instruments of right - wrong, good - bad,

holy - unholy, success - defeat are composing a heart touching masterpiece.

*All beings are perfect and
happy at their home.*

Shanti, Shanti, Shanti

It is very unlikely that the great physician Albert Einstein ever expected that the development of science and technology would be as vast as how it is now. However, it is the law of nature that there shall never be any improvement without sacrifice. In this respect, the progress of science and technology takes a great cost indeed.

Human's capability to utilize science and technology advances greatly followed by an even greater force of destruction. Referring to the outcome of a research in *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* conducted by some experts in the particular field (as Bijker, Hughes, Pinch <ed>), it is identified that even though we, human, initially developed science and technology in order to provide assistance, presently we are facing difficulties in adjusting to our own discoveries.

All aspects of life (religion included) are unsuccessfully responding to the immensity of science and technology's advancement. Observing the leading countries in the science and technology development such as the United States, Japan,

United Kingdom, Germany and France, one will distinguish that there are numerous disheartening social indicators (as depression, mental disorders, war and conflict) those signify that science and technology are not merely fail to provide solution to those indicators for they even give birth to further sophistications.

The situation is similar to the race between the development of pesticide and the evolution of its target. The harder science and technology struggle to terminate them, the more bugs with advance and complicated immunity emerge. Global warming and never-ending conflicts are only a few examples among the science and technology's lacks of competence in this issue.

In the midst of these ineptitudes let there be a time when it is not science and technology those speak but silence. In this matter, the author's intention is not to alter the common order and definitely not to lecture, but solely to share fragments of contemplation.

Perfection in nature

When J. Krishnamurti presented the idea to return to the children's innocence of vision (therefore his masterpiece was entitled *Freedom from the Known*), a lot of Westerners frowned their eyebrows as a sign of puzzlement. Some even suspected the matter as a stepping back in spiritual evolution.

People definitely own the very right to have whatever opinion as they wish. As free as a butterfly perches lightly on a

flower and as liberate as an eagle flies high in the sky. A soul frequently experience union with nature will recognize the perfection that lies within.

Coconut trees grow on sunny beaches while Casuarinas remain fresh on the cool mountains. Fishes swim the water, wolves roam the woods. During the pour of a cold rain, chickens take shelter under the trees while ducks plunge their selves into ponds. All are perfect and happy in their natural habitation. No words, analysis, judgment nor comparison needed for the only thing required is the effort to see things as they are. Whoever might flow perfectly in this nature, he or she has become the perfection itself.

By doing a more profound study about nature, one shall witness that everything flow without grievance. Every day and night, no matter how scorching or freezing the temperature is, nature accepts all seasons without any melancholy. The outer performance of nature might seem weak and submissive for the ignorance, while the seers may behold in wonder how the inner side of nature is magnificently firm in its frankness.

Trees, in particular, are extraordinary models. Eons before the mortal prophets taught about the sincerity within silence, trees have been practicing the very attitude in absolute wordlessness. Therefore, Kahlil Gibran admired trees for they might serve as the symbols of the recluses those are stepping toward the light in perfect silence and sincerity.

An Australian reputed architect, Andrian Snodgrass, wrote in his profound masterpiece *The Symbolism of the Stupa*

Emptiness is marvelous

that *stupa* and *pagoda* of the Buddhists' and the Balinese' *meru* share the same point in which they are intending to demonstrate how the life of an ascetic is similar to a tree: walking toward the light in flawless serenity and wholeheartedness. Ramana Maharsi, a divine recluse in Arunachala hill (India), termed this journey as *Dhaksinamurti* (Shiva teachings in silence); that is Shiva that might only be greeted in silence.

By this point of view, then it is outstandingly wonderful that our Moslems fellows define the word *Islam* as the absolute capitulation / complete sincerity before God. The same greatness also reflected by Jesus Christ whose inner expression was so full of loving-kindness even when His physical body was experiencing the sorrow of crucifixion.

This kind of supreme submissiveness is more likely to be achieved when there is no more desire left, no more lamenting the past nor fearing the future. The only matter remains then is a perfect sincerity in this eternal present-time that belongs to a tranquil and silent spirit.

In relation to this subject, Nagarjuna once stated that: '*One who is in harmony with emptiness is in harmony with all things*'. This is the cause for Simpkins and Simpkins conclusion that '*emptiness is marvelous*'.

Sakyamuni Buddha was once insistently questioned by His disciple during a walk in a forest. Buddha then took a handful of leaves and asked whether the leaves in His hand or those scattered on the ground were greater in number.

Obviously, the quantity of leaves in His hand was nothing compared to the ones spread on the earth. Words are similar to the leaves in one's hand: they are limited and often become the sources of arguments that spoil the journey.

This might be the reason of numerous Balinese' difficulty in touching/realizing the *Parama Shanti* (the supreme peace) as the finale of their worship. A word always leads to its antonym. "Wrong" is contradicted to "right", "failure" to "success", "divinity" to "impurity", and there come the clamors into life.

The seekers who dare to bring words back to the original position as instruments, and then guides their selves with the tree-like qualities during their inner wondering shall return to the children's purity of vision and reach the supreme understanding of *dzogchen (tantra)* that *there is nothing positive to accept nor anything negative to reject*. They will achieve the condition termed by Suzuki Roshi as *Zen mind beginner's mind*. Moreover, they are going to experience the existence of *shanti, shanti, shanti* (peace, peace, peace) within their spirit.

It should be understood that the peace mentioned here is not the one that might be contradicted to chaos, as well as it is not the kind of peace that may be followed by attachment and suffering upon its departure. Instead, this peace is generated by the perfection of all in their nature. In the center point of Pura Besakih Bali (between *kiwa* and *tengen*) it is termed as *Parama Shunya* (the supreme nothingness). Buddha referred to it as *Shunyata*. In Rohit Mehta's words (*The Call of the Upanishads*), there is silence in chaos as well as there is chaos within silence.

These elaborations conclude that nothingness is the real/ultimate self. For those with nothingness alone dwells in their spirit, the only purpose of the cycle of life is to give as they realize that liberation is the act of giving itself.

Summary:

1. The development of science and technology has indeed been so advanced. However, though they used to be helpful instruments, now they have brought unsuspected complications.
2. Without any intention to banish science and technology, it might be wonderful if we learn to complete the science and technology those are abundant with words with silence that is rich in profoundness.
3. In the deeper layers of profoundness, humanity will understand that there is perfection in naturalness. It is as simple as the coconut trees on the beach, the casuarinas on the mountain, the natural tenderness of women, and the sheltering nature of men. This summit of naturalness is the one named *Shanti* (peace).

The Rear Gate

*Gazing as the Sky,
Laboring as the Mother Earth*

Those who hurt us are remarkably kind. They work hard, spend a lot of energy, eager to bear great sin, only to make us patient and wise.

Gazing as the Sky, Working as the Mother Earth

My gratitude for your devotedness that you are finally arrive at the conclusion of this contemplation. It is like the morning sun not everyone glad to see. For those who love its warmth, the morning sun is indeed a blessing. However, for some fellows exhausted by a sleepless night, the gentle ray of the ascending sun is merely an annoyance.

It is the same with this book. For those who enjoy a bright life (sincere, amenable, honest, flexible) this book might radiate flashes of brilliant illumination. For those who still adore the darkness of passions and desires, perhaps this book is not too much useful. For fellows who like advanced contemplation, summaries at the end of each chapter are like lecturing steps. For others that need guidance, those summaries might be very helpful.

To give provision for the fellows who feel that they are

assisted or guided, at the end of this book please allow the breaths of contemplation do their task. For those seek black - white, right – wrong kind of guidance, this book is a despair indeed, and this book was not written in that purpose anyway. Nevertheless, for those who are accustomed to be close with nature, listen to the sound of nature, find the guidance of nature, this book radiates a sequence waves of understanding.

Learning from a lot of experiences, where the narrowness of the point of view often becomes a source of disaster, this book invites the fellows to learn gazing like the sky.

Gazing like the sky

A friend from Tibet has an interesting message in this subject. If you are rich it is good because there are a lot of things might be done with wealth. Paying for children’s education, donating for the poor, and building religious sanctuary. If you are happened to be poor, it is good as well. Poverty liberates an adept from attachments and makes him/her humble. If there is no material possession, there is no fear of losing it.

If you are old and sick, it is good. Particularly because sickness in the old age removes barriers before going home, so the path to the final destination is easier. If you are old and healthy, it is also good for it means a lot of opportunities to pray, meditate, and contemplate.

If you are predicted to pass away soon, it is good because you are providing a chance for another person to be in

your present position. If it is forecasted that you still have many years to live, it is also good because there are a lot of chances to practice kindness.

This is the nature of a person who already heard the inner symphony. The life of this soul is exactly like the sky that gives space and shelter to all. And there is nothing more liberating than this way of life. In Jalalludin Rumi's language, life is like staying in a motel. The guests change everyday. And whoever the guest of life is (happiness - sadness, joy - sorrow, etc.) don't forget to give it a smile.

The question then is: does it mean the right to do anything without any restriction in action? This is where one needs wisdom to labor like the Mother Earth. As has been exemplified by Mother Earth, planting corn will harvest corn. If you plant flower you will get flower. The case is the same with life. Evil will conjure evil and goodness will invite goodness. Good acts often result in happiness while the bad acts often end at police station.

As shown in the story about the Okinawan Karate master, if you are full of smiles life will smile back to you anytime, anywhere. In the same spirit, the story of the Western woman in Ubud Bali who feeds many homeless dogs illustrates that if you are full of attention life will also take a good care of you.

In the gazing manner of the sky, there are time and place for everything. However, in attitude, Mother Earth bestows a wistful message: be careful because touching water will get wet

*Those who accustom their self to
always smile toward both the
dark and the white clouds,
and be untouchable, will one
day become the blue sky*

and touching fire will get burned.

In related to gazing like the sky, Deepak Chopra in his wonderful work entitled *Buddha: A Story of Enlightenment* shares a beautiful example. He ended the book with a chapter entitled *The Art of Non-Doing*. Not in any mean suggesting to live an idle life, but to let life greet all possibilities that come. So similar with the sky. There are various names and ways people suggest to reach this state, from *blue sky meditation*, *sky mind meditation*, *skygazing meditation*, to *sky yoga*. Blue sky meditation, for example, is good to be conducted when doing sitting meditation (eyes nearly closed, back and neck straight, observation on the breathing, etc.), and also in doing daily activities. Whatever appears both in meditation and in daily life, is to be perceived by the half-smiling practitioner as a cloud. Pleasuring things (calm, peace, focus, praise, happy, etc.) are white clouds. Annoying things (chaos, unfocused mind, rebuke, sadness, etc.) are black clouds.

And both the white and the black clouds come and go. They are impermanent. Appear and disappear. Whoever manages to keep smiling upon both the white and the black clouds, remains untouched/unaffected by them, will one day (with adequate spiritual blessing) become the blue sky: wide, open, unlimited. There is nothing in life able to touch/[bias](#) this kind of person. The outer perceptible things are merely mirages, what felt inside are only dreams. A master once whispered: "In *shunyata* (meditation terminology for blue sky) all are of the same taste."

Laboring like the mother earth

In relation to the laboring manner of the Mother Earth, Lama Zopa Rinpoche in his beautiful work entitled *How to be Happy* described a touching illustration. This old master frequently stated: “The true light of happiness starts to show its brightness when a person starts to put other beings in the first place.” Still in the same theme, the account of Mother Theresa in the previous chapter informs that most of our problems emerge because we draw a too-narrowed bordering line about the meaning of family.

In other part of this book, Rinpoche took example of his master, Lama Yeshe, who always sees everyone as kind individuals and treats everyone in good manner. By doing this, everyone around the master becomes compassionate. There are also various meditation ways for this. *Tonglen* meditation, meditation of thankfulness, embracing meditation, and meditation of forgiveness.

In meditation of thankfulness, for example, the meditator is suggested to see all beings as Mother Beings. Not only humans, but also animals and plants. Not only the visible but also the invisible. They are regarded as mother because, directly or indirectly, in the past or in the present time, we owe something from them. Trees, for example, produce oxygen which is vital for humans.

Therefore, meditation of thankfulness is required. See everyone as Mothers. Those who hurt and rebuke (who usually are so hated and kept away), are actually very good. They work hard, spend a lot of energies, and eager to bear great sin, only to make us patience and wise. In spiritual language, when the

pain is not followed with revenge, then it is an opportunity to pay back the karmic debt and to grow the seeds of patience and wisdom.

The good and caring beings are also the same. They are also Mothers with different message and guidance. Parents, teachers, and plants sacrifice a lot of their life for us. In order to compensate our debts to them, the tenet is simple in which the best way is by providing helping hands. If it can not be done, it is enough not to hurt.

Some people analogize our mind as a very extensive field with various kinds of seed. And, if we fill our daily life with compassion like the Mother Earth, then we are watering the inner seeds of benevolence. If one day life harvests kindness it is because of the Mother Earth's law: planting apple will get apple, planting flower will get flower.

In the matter of ways and approaches, everyone are welcomed to choose the suitable one from the available, or to create the method proper to the level of development. The message is simple: gaze like the sky, and behave as modest as the Mother Earth.

Concluding the story of gazing like the sky and behaving like the Mother Earth, someone once crafted a very good message: *"The expression of blue sky is compassion, because blue sky means empty of self. When there's no self, there's unity. And without the thought of I am loving, love becomes the natural expression of that of oneness"*.

Whoever has become the blue sky will be filling life with compassion. Blue sky is the symbol of emptiness. When we are emptied from the divided-self (I, ego, over pride, arrogance), unity happens naturally. Without effort nor coercion. Once the arrogance of “I love” vanishes, love and compassion become natural. They are as natural as how the sun rises in the morning, dew springs on the leaves, casuarinas grow at the mountain, and coconut fruiting at the beach.

This is what happens when the “sky” and the “earth” have become one. May all beings be happy!

Appendix

Balinese Art of Peace

Balinese Art of Peace: A Simple Introduction

James Redfield's notion in *The Celestine Prophecy* about the non existence of coincidence is indeed a truth, and that kind of cosmic message was also the one guided my childhood in Tajun Village, North Bali, Indonesia. The idea (the non-existence of coincidence) encouraged my quest to reveal meanings within most of life's details.

Whenever a tree comes into vision I contemplate that the tree is not only beautiful because of its green, but because it grows toward the light in gratitude. Gazing at a wide ocean generating comprehension that an ocean is not gentle merely by its blue, but also because it accepts anything comes without any resistance. Sunrise is not only warm but also inspires about life that supposed to progress from darkness to light. Smiling to the full moon is perhaps an awkward thing for common children, but I did it many times. It was later during the days of adulthood that I understand how full moon is a actually symbol of enlightenment. The case is about the same with star gazing. I was convinced that they are more than planets ornamenting the

sky for I often “heard” that they symbolize a brilliant life.

That was my childhood in Tajun village. Calm, peaceful, silence, enlightening. When I begun knowing how to read, I thought that the peacefulness of Bali is merely a result of tourism industry’s effort in making it more marketable. Evidently, Balinese elders have plenty of teachings about peace they are trying to bequeath to the next generations. In the more comprehensible universal language, the teachings can be summarized as the following:

The ground: *Rwa Bhineda* (the all encompassing purity)

The path: *Bhakti Yoga* (the path of love and devotion)

The fruition: *Parama Shanti* (the ultimate peace)

Rwa Bhineda

Without any intention to judge different approaches are wrong, Balinese elders comprehend God in a quite unique way. While in many places God is positioned as the direct opponent of the devil, in Bali God and evil are not a pair of battling dichotomy. *Dewa ya kala ya* (the presence of both the divine and the evil aspects), is how Balinese elders explain the basic substance of humankind. In more profound way, the philosophy of *Rwa Bhineda* synthesizes all dualities into one perfect unity. Similar to the duality of day and night. Day exists because of the presence of the night, and both have their own purpose. Daytime is for laboring and praying while nighttime is for resting. Losing one of them means loosing both.

This is perhaps the one that makes Balinese custom in

the matter of offering is a bit unique. Whereas in many places offerings are served only for heavenly beings, Balinese elders dedicate offerings to the inhabitants of all the low, middle, and upper realms. This means an obvious admittance that saintliness is not the opposite of wickedness. The dwellers of the heavenly realms are not the enemies of those belong to the underworld. In Tantric language this is termed as *the all encompassing purity*.

With this kind of starting point, a wanderer may undertake an boundless, buoyant, and bright spiritual journey, particularly because it is not burdened with arguments and quarrels (devil – God, *mara* - Buddha, unholy - holy, wrong - right, fail - success, rebuke - praise, etc.). In Tantric language, all are Buddhas. For the Sufis, all are Gods. Heed the message of Tulku Urgyen Rinpoche in *Vajra Speech: Someone who has pacified and purified the obstructing force of ego-fixation enjoys the elixir of Vajrayana teachings*.

Bhakti Yoga

With the foundation of the all encompassing purity, Balinese elders teach to do everything (praying, working, maintaining household) with the spirit of devotion (*bhakti*). Therefore some fellows in the West translate *Bhakti Yoga* as *the path of love and devotion*.

There is no need to worry about understanding in the initial steps, no need to discriminate right - wrong, and there is also no need to determine the direction of the journey. The significant matter is to do everything with *devotion*. Therefore, if

the Balinese people are asked about the meaning of their offerings, more than half will admit that they do not know. Even so, still they perform it with an amazing spirit of devotion.

There are numerous sequences of rituals in Bali. There are a lot of ceremonies related to human's life since the birth until the death of a person. There are also great numbers of rituals related to the *buta*, ancestors, gods, until the unimaginable beings, all are so many. However, there is one thing impossible be bargained in all of them that is to conduct the ritual with the spirit of devotion.

Perhaps that is the reason why there are so many Balinese find happiness by performing rituals. Borrowing the opinion of many writers, *happiness is the journey*. There are certainly result, output, and destination, yet, in the spirit of love and devotion, the journey itself is also the destination.

Parama Shanti

As how will be discussed more elaborately in the following contemplations, there are many activities (ceremonies, speaking, praying, greeting) performed by Balinese people in order to gain peacefulness.

A ceremony is concluded with *Parama Shanti* (the ultimate peace) by pronouncing the word *shanti* three times before the participants leave the site. A ritual is arranged so that it is started with emptiness (as a symbol of the ultimate peace) and also concluded with emptiness. The end of every conversation is also marked by uttering the word *shanti* three

times.

This manner presents a vivid inspiration that, whatever happens in life, whatever conducted in life, always maintain a peaceful heart in performing all activities. Perhaps that is why Balinese elders refer to God as *Hyang Embang* (The Ultimate Silence), and celebrate every coming of the new year with *Nyepi* (the silence day) when people stop doing most of worldly routines (speaking, working, praying, etc.).

A triggering conclusion

With this kind of objects to be contemplated, actually Balinese elders bequeath abundant spiritual legacies. One among the heritages worth to be deeply comprehended is that Balinese people ritual (*Panca Sembah*) is started with emptiness and also concluded with emptiness. This certainly presents a clear illustration that everything starts from emptiness and ended with emptiness. And it is definitely not an emptiness which is without meaning. Since the path taken is *Bhakti Yoga*, thus emptiness here is the one which is embraced with compassion. In the perspective of a Tantra master, it is that: *the true shunyata is karuna*.

The Ultimate Peace I

Every place has its own spiritual uniqueness. The one in Peru has been narrated in a very fascinating way by James Redfield in *The Celestine Prophecy*. Tibetan's is exquisitely discussed by Sogyal Rinpoche in *The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying*. Japan's spiritual heritage was neatly written by Inazo Nitobe in *Bushido, The Soul of Japan*, and India's has been elaborated by so many writers such as Osho in *India My Love*.

Balinese spirituality has also been written by many. Hopefully, one day someone will write the beauty of Bali's spiritual way by referring to *Parama Shanti* (the ultimate peace), an activity which is conducted by most Balinese upon the closing of a ritual in *Pura*.

In the ceremonial arrangement, *Parama Shanti* is placed at the end of a ceremony, right before devotees prepare to leave the site. There are two possibilities of message here. First, it is the highest point of the ritual itself. Second, it is that the spiritual blessing the devotees bring to their worldly life after praying in *Pura* is the peace of mind (*Shanti*).

Bhur Bwah Swah

There are a lot of ways available for humanity to validate a conclusion. The scientists is by combining logic (rationalism) and historical fact (empirics) while those who are fond of holy scriptures referring to the verses. And all ways must be respected. However, for the lovers of sensitivity, sincerity, and acceptance, the way is by opening their physical eyes, ears, and inner eyes widely in order to receive the message of the inner master.

Anyone often pray in Hindu shrines, especially in Bali, will notice that the mantra most frequently pronounced is the one with *Bhur Bwah Swah* words. Lower, middle, and upper realms as a unity. Many Padma Sana even illustrate the lower realm with the horrible faces, the middle one as where the fear begins to cease, and for the upper one, it is carved beautifully.

Speaking frankly, this is a chronicle of *Parama Shanti*. By still respecting different opinions, more than ninety percents of debates in the spiritual matter is confronting God with the devil. God is worshipped and the devil is condemned. Again, this point of view must be respected. But in *Bhur Bwah Swah*, there is no opposition between God and the devil. Particularly because both are not placed in contradiction but admitted as parts of the same thing.

A Catholic priest has an interesting story about God. One day a boy took his mother's candy without any notice. His mother was angry and asked him moodily: "Didn't you see God when you stole my candy?" Calmly the boy answered: "I did

mommy”. The mother got even angrier with such answer. She interrogated: “And what did He say to you?” Composedly the child replied: “He told me that I may take two”. With this answer, his mother was hysterical: “You don’t know that God will be angry because of your stealing!”

It is an inspiring story that God is in the eye of the beholder, depends on the person’s state of mind. In the mind of an innocent and sheer person like the boy, God is merciful. In her short-tempered mother’s mind, God is full of wrath. And whoever deeply understand *Bhur Bwah Swah* will has the *shanti* mind, especially because he/she is no longer contradicting God with the devil.

Nyegara gunung

In accordance with *Bhur Bwah Swah*, Balinese elders build religious sites with the concept of *Nyegara Gunung*. They construct spiritual structures in the place where mountain or hill is embraced by lake or sea. Pura Luhur Uluwatu, Tanah Lot, Ponjok Batu, Ulun Danu Batur, Ulun Danu Beratan, Sila Yukti, and Pulaki, are merely some evidences in this matter. In Balinese shrine, usually one will be able to witness the rising and setting of the sun which is blended with beauty.

Mount and hill are symbols of masculine, while sea or lake are of feminine. When the two are embracing each other intimately, this is not only the origin of creation, but also the cause of beauty. Either there is any relationship with the previous or not, all of Balinese’ offerings are also arranged in beautiful manner. Spectators viewing with mortal eyes will see

fruits, flowers, and *janur* (young coconut leaf) lovingly arranged so humanity may perceive the beauty of life. The seers with inner eyes will see a lot of beautiful messages hidden within the lovely offerings.

This is again about *Parama Shanti*. Dualities like good-bad, right-wrong etc. (symbolized by the *Nyegara Gunung* concept) are present not in order to be confronted, but to be tidily arranged into loveliness. Health is beautiful because by a healthiness there are more tasks of life can be done. Sick is also beautiful, because sickness is an opportunity to compensate karmic debts. Wealth is good because there are a lot of positive things might be done with it. Poverty is good as well, particularly because it is the guidance to modesty.

This is *Parama Shanti*. The state of mind that perceives everything as beauty and good. Once a university student asked the lecturer, if all things are good, what about corruptions and affairs? Smiling gently the lecturer replied: "Gaze like the sky and act like the Mother Earth". *Parama Shanti* happens when humans have insight as high as the sky and act as humble as the Mother Earth. When the sky teaches that all things are beautiful, Earth demonstrates the existence of a law which is as simple as touching water will get wet and touching fire will get burned. Those who plant banana will get banana while those plant cassava will get cassava. An agent of compassion will receive kindness while a corruptor will receive summons from police station. The union of the sky and the earth, that is *Parama Santhi*.

Parama Shanti in daily life

Western model of healing is based on the assumption that life is incomplete. Therefore it provides solution in therapy, operation, and medication by which many things in human system are taken away and a lot of outer substances, like medicine, are injected. And humanity has witnessed what happened in this year (2009). Global warming, war, disaster, terrorism, financial ruin, suicides, divorce, and an ex president of the United States of America whose retirement was celebrated by the throwing of a shoe.

We are all greatly indebted to the Western culture, together with their science and technology. It is certainly impossible for humanity to be as advanced as in these days without science and technology. However, in the midst of a quaking civilization, perhaps this is the moment when Easterners should return to their origin.

In Bali, when there is a great difficulty, the elders will give example to return to Pura. Discussing about Pura is impossible if not to mention about Besakih. And it is in Besakih where a profound spiritual teaching is inherited. The center point of Pura Besakih is Pura Penataran Agung. The uppermost part of Pura Penataran Agung quarter is named *Kiwa-Tengen*, where it is clearly shown that *Kiwa* (the left hand path, frequently given negative term like *black magic*) is not positioned lower than Tengen (the right hand path, often regarded as the positive). Both are given the very similar *pelinggih* (base) with the same *luan-teben* (height). And between the two, there is nothing.

Some refer to the empty space in the middle of *kiwa-tengen* as *shunya* (silence), some other as *sesarining Dharma* (the core of the teaching). Balinese elders name this *Hyang Embang* (The Supreme Silent).

In the light of *Kiwa-Tengen*, perhaps this is the moment to educate the self that the cycle of life has been completed from the beginning to the end. There are proper place and time for everything. It is only the acceptance that might lead humanity to the wonderful expression of life.

This is the reason why all religions teach their devotees to be grateful. There are God's fingerprints and guidance in every happenings. This is the *Parama Shanti* in daily life. There is no coincidence, only guidance. There is no mistake, only meaning that has not been understood. A master once gave the following message to his student: "*Be kind when you meet the power of darkness, they're not bad. Simply understand that they're uninformed*". In time, the dark forces will also find the bright light of understanding.

Perhaps that is why in Bali we celebrate the coming of the new year by *Nyepi* day. When all (good-bad, success-failure, holy-unholy) are useful and meaningful, tongue is speechless. There is no more left to be questioned, moreover to be argued. In this condition, aren't the things left are only the profound silence, calamness, and *shanti*?

The Ultimate Peace 2

In many issues, the West gives clues of the direction of the civilization. A lot of things happened in the West before they plagued the entire world, such as industrialization and democracy. One prominent sign taking place in the West for a half century is the severe necessity for peace, indicated among others by the abundant numbers of books suggesting peace in their title such as one of Thich Nhat Hanh's works entitled *Peace is A Step*, Thomas Merton's *Thought in Solitude*, and the most beautiful work of Eckhart Tolle which is *Stillness Speaks*. All are discussing about the wonderful peace and silence.

Bali also frequently identified with peace and silence. This is not merely a result of tourism promotion, for it is also related to the Balinese elders' spiritual legacy. Observing the way the elders conclude a conversation (especially in formal circumstance), one will distinguish the pronouncing of *Om, Shanti, Shanti, Shanti*. *Om* is a sacred word. It represents many things, those are all symbolizing holiness and peacefulness. The word *shanti* (peace) is even pronounced three times, as if inspiring that the purpose of the discourse (spoken, written, prayer) is to invite peace and tranquility into the heart.

All beings want to be peaceful and serene. Pay attention to the names parents give to their child those are all beautiful. Never will a Hindu name his/her child Rahwana or Duryodana. No Buddhist is given the name Devadatta (Gautama Buddha's cousin that many times attempted to kill him out of envy). This means that in the aspiration level all people desire peacefulness. In Bali traditional villages, people still have the names like Wayan Sabar, Nengah Tenang, Nyoman Terima, and Ketut Polos. As if delivering a message that anyone wants to be peaceful should not forget to be patient. Patience is the key into calmness and the one enables human to accept life without wailing. Finally, life flows innocently as it is.

Tumpek Landep

Among many religious days in Bali, Tumpek Landep is a sign. In common language, Tumpek Landep is a day to consecrate sharp objects like *keris*. A point of view deserves to be respected. From another perspective, sharpness is similar to the summit of a mountain which can be climbed both from the left and the right side. This reminds to the story of two mountain climbers making their journey from different directions; one from the east while the other is from the west. From the summit, the teacher asked the direction of the sun rise. The one climbing on the eastern side answered that it is from the back, while the one from the west replied that it is from the front. And loud was the argument between the two. Front-back, back-front... Meanwhile, the master silently smiles and prays on the summit. When both climbers arrived at the summit, they understood and were embarrassed for their blaming each-other.

Speaking frankly. The story of the two climbers is the story of most people. In Bali no one dares to claim him/herself walking the left path; in a case of misfortune one could get his/her house burned down by such statement. Most people will declare that they are walking on the right path, and busy judging people they hate with the “left” predicate.

And the story clearly illustrates that not all people traveling on the left-hand path end up in hell. Walmiki in Hinduism is a beautiful story. After spending a lot of times robbing and killing, one day he was happened to rob the house of a holy sage. The wise requested Walmiki to go home and asked whether his families were willing to compensate his sin. And eventually they weren't. Thus Walmiki prostrated in the feet of the saintly figure, and then meditated until his sins were redeemed. After some times, his body was covered by ants thus one among the meanings of Walmiki is “nest of ants”. At that point, a new horizon of Walmiki's life was revealed so he was then able to write Ramayana.

Jetsun Milarepa in Tantra experienced the similar thing. After his father passed away, all of his inheritances were confiscated by his uncle and aunt thus her mother was consumed by grudge. When Milarepa grew older, his mother sent him to learn witchcraft in order to take revenge. After accomplishing his training, Milarepa sent evil energy to his uncle and aunt's house. As the result, a festive wedding party was turned into a bloody incident by the crumbling of the house. Tens of people died.

Grave remorse made Milarepa swore to compensate his

evils. And he did. In the hands of his master he experienced years of literally bloody training. In the end, Milarepa experienced advanced spiritual realization. Many times people saw him fly to the sky. When he was old, there was a gathering on the summit of a mountain and it was impossible for him to go up there. However, the power of his prayer made the mountain bow before him. When he passed away, lights were emerging from every directions. In the lineage of Tantra masters, Milarepa is recorded as one of the most prominent masters after Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa.

The point of this story is certainly not to practice black magic, but a sequence of inspirations that not all of the so called “evil” people conclude their life terribly. In the stories of Walmiki and Milarepa, wickedness was merely an opening door to repentance, followed by the using of the remorse as an energy to practice in order to experience high level realization. This is also a contemplation material for those who like to judge, so they are not easily stain their self with rebuke and revilement.

In the language of the sages, all are growing. Walmiki and Milarepa started on the left path. Even though experienced insults and intimidations, in the end they attained the advanced realization. Most of the holy persons indeed take the right path: stop doing bad things, do more kindness, and purify the mind. Mahatma Gandhi and Vivekananda in Hinduism, His Holiness Dalai Lama and Thich Nhat Hanh in Buddhism, Jalalludin Rumi and Kabir Sahib in Islam, Thomas Merton and Santo Fransiscus in Christianity were only some examples of holy persons walked the right path. But criticizing the left path disciples overly is not

the characteristic of right path people who have found wisdom.

In Tajun village, Northern Bali, there is a tradition that every oldest son is addressed as *kolok* (mute). Pay a careful attention to the word *kolok*. It reads the same both from left to right and from the opposite way. As if giving a message that left and right will end at the same place. Perhaps that is the cause why in the last days of his life, Ida Danghyang Dwijendra wrote a beautiful work entitled *Dharma Shunya*. Dharma does not exist only in the hilarity of words but also in the depth of the silence.

Panca sembah: from emptiness to emptiness

Every Balinese who frequently prays in Pura knows the elders' teaching to do *panca sembah* (paying homage five times). The unique thing is, it is started and finished empty-handed (*sembah puyung*). Nevertheless, the perfect emptiness is something nearly impossible to be described by words. In a friend's message, *constructing emptiness is a mistake*. However, no matter how a mistake it is, a lot of masters have to do so for words are the communication means for most people. And especially because the teaching has to go full circle.

There is a story about a wise man who lived on the edge of a forest. His daily life was filled with only silence, smile, and prayers so all villagers respected and loved him. One day, a girl in the village was found pregnant, and people did not know who should be responsible. In the midst of intense public anger, the frightened girl put the blame on the old man. Spontaneously people got mad and brought the girl to the man. They cursed,

abused, called him a hypocrite, and then left the girl to live with him. The man simply said: “Okay!”

A few years after the child was born, the young mother was depressed with deep feeling of guilt. She went to her parents crying and admitted: “It was not him. I’m really touched by his kindness in all these years. He never disturbed me for even once”.

With the girl’s confession, the villagers again came to the old man and begged for his forgiveness, to which the man replied with the same “Okay!” This is the true emptiness! The state of mind which is perfectly clean and clear, unshakeable by any rebuke and intimidation.

In the path of Advaita Vedanta, this is called *Nirvikalva Samadhi*. In simple way, Advaita means the condition without duality (good - bad, holy - unholy). And *Nirvikalva Samadhi* in meditation term is simplified into the fourth position. Not the left, the right, and also not the middle, that is *Nirvikalva Samadhi*.

In the paths of Tantra, it is termed as *Rigpa* (nothing positive to accept, nothing negative to reject). There is no pleasure that bonds and leaves suffering upon its departure, as well as there is no sadness that makes the adept suffer. It is a state of mind which is free and liberated.

Parama Shanti in daily life

In one scene of the life of little Rama, the little Sugriwa wailed because he never win a fight against Subali. Taking pity on

Sugriwa, when Sugriwa and Subali were exchanging blows Rama shot an arrow to Subali's foot from behind a tree.

Later on, when a holy person was distinguished by a shining golden mark of lotus on the feet, Rama was reincarnated as Shri Krishna. One day while he was sleeping in a forest, a hunter saw the mark on his foot from afar and mistakenly recognized it as an eye of a deer thus he shot it with an arrow. When he realized his mistake, the hunter knelt and begged for forgiveness while Shri Krishna merely smiled seeing how the wheel of karma works.

This is the value of a master with advanced spiritual realization. No advantage that may cause arrogance and no misfortune that might arouse anger. It is as well presenting a beautiful secret: flow with karma, because there lies hidden the secret of the beauty of life. Balinese elders open the gate through Rwa Binedha. Two things those are different and yet the same. Happiness and sadness are different still they are actually the same, and so does with the couple of heaven and hell. For ordinary people, they seem different (happiness is sought, sadness is banished, heaven is worshipped and hell is condemned) thus they experience turbulences throughout their life. For the Yogis, happiness becomes more profound/meaningful because there is sadness, and heaven is shining because there is the darkness of hell. When there is no happiness to be sought after, there is no sadness to be thrown away. No heaven to be worshipped nor hell to be denounced. By this, Yogis experience the calm and balanced mind. This is also why one among the fruits of meditation is the boundless capacity to suffer. All things are greeted in silence, smile, and

prayer for the happiness of all beings. In Balinese elders' word this is called *Embang* (the most silence), a state might happen when someone has flown perfectly with karma. It also brings inspiration, this is the *Parama Shanti*.

The Ultimate Peace 3

In many occasions, His Holiness Dalai Lama mentioned that regardless of the religion, race, or ideology, there is one likeness among us: “wish for happiness, denial for suffering”. Most people pray, work, and maintain household, in order to be happy and to avoid suffering. Perhaps this is why all works related to happiness are highly demanded by public.

In Bali, it is the same. Long time before meditation centers become a trend in the West, Balinese elders have been teaching about happiness and peacefulness. Balinese people pronounce the word *shanti* (peace) three times before leaving a shrine, and conclude a conversation in the same manner. Many elders also write the word *shanti* before his/her name in the bottom of a letter. This is similar to the word *love* in English.

Gong drama and Raja Buduh

In the past when television and other electronics were not yet present, the most popular entertainment in Bali was the gong drama. The plays performed were various, but in most plays there was an appearance of a character named *raja buduh*

(raja: king, buduh: crazy) that brings the stories into tension. In the end of the plays, through the power of goodness and wisdom, the king's madness was cured.

In different setting, in every cycle of the time, there is always someone who takes the role as *raja buduh*. No matter how strong the government, how firm the police officers, how severe the judge, how clean the courts, *raja buduh* is always present. As is leaving a message to all of us that there is no life cycle filled only by righteousness, honesty, and wisdom.

There was Rahwana in Rama's time, Duryodana in Krishna, Devadatta in Buddha's. Jesus was tempted by Judas, The Prophet Mohammed by Quraishi tribe. His Holiness Dalai Lama made shining by Chinese government's cruelty. All of those inspire that whenever life gives birth to holiness, it will be followed by the born of unholiness. In all stories it is shown that evil does not exist in order to destroy holiness, but to make it more shining instead.

In the language of an acknowledged Dharma master, Atisha Dipankara, *the best spiritual teacher in the one who attacks your hidden fault*. This can be understood, particularly because through attacks, derision, and insults, our mind is being tempered into a shining diamond. But this can only happen if we keep silence, stay away from resentment, and even radiate loving-kindness. A master once said that, if you are unable yet to radiate compassion to those who insult you, it means that your mind is not completely purified yet.

In this kind of spiritual attainment, peacefulness is not

merely a temporary visitor in life for peacefulness is the life itself. Balinese elders provide signs through a great number of spiritual legacies: *Rwa Bhinendha*, *Nyegara-Gunung*, *Bhur Bwah Swah*, *Nyepi* day, and *Hyang Embang*. The point is that dualities (right - wrong, good - bad, holy - unholy, etc.) exist not as warring parties, but as one unity that enlivens one another. Those who embodied this in daily life will not spare even a single darkness of anger and hatred in his/her life. This is *Parama Shanti*.

Segehan and offerings

Tibetan people own a lot of rituals, and so do Balinese. Ceremonies are certainly not merely about material offerings. There are outer offerings in the form of physical objects, inner offering in the form of service, and innermost secret offering. In the language of the elders: *benefiting others, having a kind heart, that is the supreme offering*. Do anything for other beings, possess a clean, clear, and helpful heart, and then personally experience the opening of the secret gate.

Perhaps that is why offerings in Bali are not dedicated only for heavenly beings but also for our fellows in the underworld (inhabitants of hell, hungry spirits, etc.). This inspires that good deeds are not only worth for good people but also for those who hurt.

Speaking frankly, the cursing and intimidating people actually play vital roles in the spiritual path. First, they very effectively help indicating the true quality of the mind. Look inside when being insulted and abused. If there are still anger

and annoyance it means that the mind is still contaminated.

Secondly, the abusers and intimidators are actually so very kind that they are even willing to go to hell in order to make us patient and wise. Perhaps that is why Balinese elders hand down the tradition of *segehan*. It is a treat for our friends in the underworld (hell, hungry spirits, animals).

Pay heed to one of the elders' messages: *mebakti, mebakti, mebakti*. Give, give, and give, without arguing. One day an adept will understand that actually there are no giver, receiver, and the process of giving. That is the true peacefulness (*Parama Shanti*).

In the West there was once a research on the subject of healing. And in one corner of the findings it was found out that people with someone/something they love at home (child, pet, tree) have less stress and live longer. This lets us know that giving is healing! Those who often give will one day understand that giving is not only healing but also liberating. Therefore it is easy to be understood if some Tantric masters swore to their teachers (*samaya*) to pay all evils with kindness. Because, by this way, a person is not only being liberated but also eliminating obstacles along the journey (karmic obscuration).