



玄奘大學

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Dear members of the International Committee for the Niwano Peace Prize:

I am very honored to be selected for this year's Niwano Peace Prize. For decades, the Foundation has been a visionary leader, in Asia and across the world, for advancing peace. I am humbled to be among the other pioneering figures who have bravely and diligently committed themselves toward the well-being and harmony of our planet. And I vow to steward and carry forth this legacy with all my devotion and effort.

The world post-COVID19 is an altered one. Globally, we've shared a powerful common experience but there are also worrying trends that point to new fractures and deepening divisions. Therefore, we must contemplate how these ongoing transformations can be steered toward societal healing and peace-building. I propose that we look to lessons from the Dharma, which may be more urgent and critical than ever before.

One lesson draws from the path of the Bodhisattva, a manner of living centered around the mandate to care for all sentient beings. No single being is below or outside the scope of our concern. And we demonstrate this concern by actively working for the happiness and benefit of every living thing, as well as to lessen their suffering. This is what every life deserves, without question. Because there is no true peace if those around you are suffering.

What's doubly inspiring about the Bodhisattva path is that every moment of every day is a chance to practice. No matter what work or task one undertakes, one can always amplify the benefits of that work by making it meaningful for others beyond oneself, without any expectation of reward or recognition. This is also a practice of letting go self-interest and ego, which is at the base of so much conflict seen in human societies today.

A second lesson from the Dharma is the insight of dependent origination, which helps us understand that there is no self independent from others. Any achievement in our lives is due to a multitude of forces and elements, so we can only thank them all—those we've liked and disliked, those which have overtly helped us or hinder us.

Finally, the Dharma empowers each of us to question and to think critically. At times, to alleviate



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suffering and to promote active peace, we are required to say “No,” when we see harm being done. This may even mean “No” to the government and to Buddhist institutions. We cannot avoid looking at the big systems that are responsible for the creation and potentially reduction of suffering for so many. But to stand firm in right action and right speech, against such huge institutional forces, also means that we need the power of many.

Therefore, since the 1990s, I have been part of movements against gambling, against the cruelty of animals, against the proliferation of nuclear energy, and against discriminatory interpretations of love and family, because I have seen how they have caused great harm.

Of course, speaking out does not come without risk but true peace comes only when we can see past the illusions of superficial harmony and serenity. When we see injustice and do not act, then we experience a kind of torment, too. Taking action allows a more profound serenity and peace to emerge in our heart and in our world.

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed long-held illusions and shattered old patterns. What we are presented with is an unprecedented opportunity for building better for all sentient beings. It is with this dedication toward an active and more lasting peace that I humbly accept the Niwano Peace Prize.

With deep gratitude,

*Chao-hwei Shih*

January 10, 2021