Peace to all Beings

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

"Whoever thinks evil of it in his heart,
Let his heart rot!
Whoever stretches his hand towards it,
Let his hand be cut off!
Whoever harms it with his eye,
May his eye become blind!
Whoever does any harm to this bridge
May that creature be born in Hell!"

These lines were written on the first bridge across the Indus, by Naglug the Buddhist ruler of Ladak, who ever tried to instil into the population a respect for all that is constructive.

The good king Asoka also gave the first place to construction, and the Blessed One himself was never tired of sounding the call to constructive effort.

A short time before He passed away He exclaimed: "How beautiful is Vaisali!"

Such holy teachings were spread abroad by Buddhist preachers, and no one can point to destruction on the part of a Buddhist.

Enlightenment and Construction are the panacea which is at the basis of all Buddhist teachings.

Is it the moment to talk of peace when wars are raging? Certainly, it is now that we ought to proclaim, on all hands, the doctrine of peace, enlightenment and goodwill.

Peace cannot be imposed by government decrees. True peace will only be secured when the nations realize the vanity of quarrelling and mutual destruction.

Peace that results in dishonour and enslavement can never bring happiness.

Only peace which arises from tireless efforts to construction and enlightenment can bring happiness.

Some people think that so long as the cannon is not roaring, peace can be maintained. It is the roar of the heart however, and not the noise of the cannon which provokes war.

Many are never tired of repeating 'What is the use of preaching peace in these days when, as in the case of China, we see hecatombs of cruelty and bloodshed. Such calls to peace are only hollow phrases, abstract ideals'.

One could answer that murderers and destroyers have always existed, on our long suffering earth, and alas! they will last for a long time yet, but, let us hope, not for ever.
Meanwhile the penal laws and commandments are not only being decreed but applied to life. And so it is with peace. Even if we allow that this blessed word ‘peace’ is for many a mere abstraction, nevertheless we know that the order ‘Peace to all beings’ has been proclaimed. And the order is not merely an abstract idea but something which we have to apply.

He who gave such an order knew very well the true path for humanity.

Only active enlightenment can give us a proper perception of the world.

“Peace through Culture”—we shall never be tired of repeating this truth. If it has not yet become a truism, this is because the consciousness of all nations has not been saturated with this sole way of reaching the highest good.

To understand the real meaning of peace one ought to be conscious of the real treasures of humanity, for he who is conscious of such values and really understands them will know how to preserve them.

Museums and Universities, in which history and archaeology are taught, are not enough, because they only deal with the formal aspect of these subjects. What we have in mind is not the dead letter and the formal side of these studies but rather the awakening of consciousness in the hearts of the nations.

Many times we have had occasion with our own eyes to see these senseless ruins which are the shameful monuments of human ignorance. We have seen the most beautiful monuments ruined, the finest sculpture shattered or destroyed, and all through criminal ignorance of their value.

Such vestiges of the destructive mania ought to warn us to be careful with these irreplaceable treasures.

We have recently heard of a plan to bury all artistic monuments under sand bags. Quite apart from the practical inconvenience of such a project, we should realize that sand bags alone, will never suffice, and that only Culture is powerful enough to protect the beautiful. Thus we should hasten to repeat on all hands “Peace through Culture.”

Why do I speak of the protection of Art treasures on this memorable day? It is not merely to avail myself of such an occasion. I have other reasons. On memorable days people recall the highest principles. When therefore, all our friends are ready to repeat the commandment “Peace to all Beings” let them think of the way that leads to Peace. Let them remember how carefully all cultural treasures ought to be preserved, because this alone can lead towards the future gateway of Peace.

“Peace to all Beings”.

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