

The Return of Ahimsazine and a Gentle Anarchism-

- for the Twenty-first Century - by Dave Greenfield

Back in 1998, some young people began publishing Ahimsazine, as a zine promoting the unique perspectives of anarcho-pacifism. Between 1998 and 2001, some six issues of Ahimsazine were published, four of which are available in the archive on our site. Now, after an eight year pause, Ahimsazine is back.

Before writing any further, I should probably say a few words about the terminology we choose to use to describe our perspective. The terms, pacifist anarchism, anarchist pacifism, and anarcho-pacifism, may all be used to describe our perspective. As well, the terms, nonviolent anarchism, and gentle or peaceful anarchism, may also sometimes be used, to break the monotony of using the same word all the time. The various terms, for the most part, mean the same thing, though using anarchism as the noun suggests that we are primarily a type of anarchism with the descriptive modifier of pacifist or nonviolent, while using pacifism as the noun suggests that we are an anarchist type of pacifism. Nonetheless, the above range of terms signifies a tradition and perspective which brings together and relates to several historical strands of thought and action.

We are anarchists, and believe in the anarchist vision of a society comprised of a loose-knit federation of self-managing communes. As anarchists, we are opposed to both the centralized state and state power, and to capitalism and class power. Anarchism, whether it is socialist, eco-communalist or mutualist, envisions an economy based on egalitarian cooperation and mutual aid, an economy in which the capitalist corporation does not exist. As anarchists, we have a relationship with the historical left, and particularly anarchist and communitarian strands of the left, which have resisted capitalist power in all its forms.

As pacifists, we also have a relationship to the historical and contemporary movement for peace and in opposition to militarism and empire, and relate particularly to those who have used, and continue to use, nonviolence as a means for achieving social justice, peace and ecological well-being.

Our closest relatives historically would include Tolstoy, who is

often considered to be the father of pacifist anarchism, Kropotkin, who said he agreed with Tolstoy about almost everything but didn't think the ruling class would give up their power through nonviolent conviction, Gandhi, who self-identified as a type of nonviolent anarchist and whose ultimate vision for India was one of a land of a million self-governing and self-reliant villages, Vinoba Bhave and the Sarvodaya movement who carried on Gandhi's work in post-independence India, the Catholic Worker movement, which, since 1933, has sought to live out a pacifist anarcho-communalism on a human scale, and in deed much of the intentional communities movement of the past forty years, which has sought, in various ways, to put nonviolence, self-governance, cooperation and self-reliance into action.

George Woodcock, known best as an anarchist historian, was a pacifist anarchist, and there was also much of a pacifist anarchist spirit in the writing of his friend, the anarchist artist, Herbert Read. Gustav Landauer, Martin Buber and Erich Fromm, together gave the twentieth century a communitarian socialist anarchism which focused on an evolutionary road to social anarchism, rather than a revolutionary one.

Anarcho-pacifism is not simply something that relates to the past. We are very much alive in the present. We have much in common with such movements as the bioregional movement,

Ahimsazine - Voice of Anarcho-pacifism

Editors: Dick Martin, David Greenfield

This is a zine produced by a network of peace activists committed to social justice and peaceful change. We believe that creating a better world is not possible through the powers of social authority, government and political sanction, but arises from the spirit of the people who, as keepers of the inner power of conscience can define a consensus to overcome the sources of social malaise at every level.

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which envision moving to a radically decentralized, ecologically sound economy and society rooted in local, self-managing, cooperative community, rather than in industrial production and corporate control. Christian anarchism, with which we have some overlap, has made a resurgence since 2000, with the rise of the Jesus Radicals network in the U.S. and Britain, and the South Pacific Christian Anarchists, (SPCA), in the Australia Pacific region.

Two other terms that are sometimes used to signify approaches to anarchism fairly close to our perspective, are constructive anarchism and evolutionary anarchism. The study of constructive anarchism focuses on the constructive alternative forms that anarchism has developed over the years. Examples of this would include worker collectives, intentional communities, progressive schooling methods, affinity groups and credit unions. Evolutionary anarchism is a term used to imply the vision of a cooperative libertarian society that evolves over time through a shift in human thought and action, rather than suddenly by way of revolution.

A couple terms which it may be best to distance ourselves from are philosophical anarchism, anarchist individualism and anarchist egoism. These terms, often associated with particular individuals like Benjamin Tucker and Max Stirner, tend to denote a so-called anarchism which limits itself to the freeing of the individual and doesn't tend to get involved in broader social struggle.

Pacifist anarchists, including Gandhi, Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy and George Woodcock, did in fact involve themselves in broader struggles for peace, justice and self-determination, and recognized that the anarchist struggle is about both the individual and the collective. The historical and contemporary work of pacifist anarchism deserves to be distinguished from the traditions of philosophical, individualist and egoist anarchism. Pacifist anarchism is definitely a type of social anarchism. We share, with other social anarchists, a critical analysis of capitalism, militarism and imperialism. We simply choose the methods of nonviolence to bring about the multi-faceted social transformation that we seek.

Today, in 2009, with over two centuries of anarchist and pacifist heritage behind us, and with a world very much in need of peace-building, justice-building and ecological wisdom, there is much to talk about. I hope there will continue to be many conversations on these topics around Planet Earth, and that our newly revived zine will be part of those conversations.

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The Yogi and the Commissar Revisited

by Dave Greenfield

In 1945, the writer and journalist, Arthur Koestler, wrote an essay called "The Yogi and the Commissar", which explored the question of how one goes about trying to change the world. Does one change the world outwardly, by force, as a commissar does, or does one change the world inwardly as a yogi does. Koestler had been active in the Communist party between 1931 and 1938, and had experienced war and imprisonment first hand during the Spanish Civil War, and later during World War Two. His disillusionment with Stalinism from 1938 onward, led him, by 1941, to write his signature novel, "Darkness at Noon".

In 1945, he still considered himself a socialist, but had fairly strong criticisms for both Stalinism and capitalism. Having experienced the way of the commissar, he looked to its apparent polar opposite, the inward way of the yogi, as a possible alternative, in a world dominated by large and brutal systems. Later, around 1959 to 1960, he would explore the way of the yogi during an extended visit to southern and eastern Asia, and would become fairly disillusioned with the literal way of yoga and related eastern thought.

It has always struck me that, by posing these two apparent polar opposites, of the yogi and commissar, Koestler tended to define the discussion too rigidly and to leave out additional alternative paths that lie somewhere between the extremes. The alternative path that has always spoken loudest to me is that of the nonviolent warrior or mystic activist.

This third path, which, in one way or another, has made its presence felt at various points in western spiritual history, involves an intertwining of both inward and outward struggle, and embraces a deep commitment to nonviolence. It is the path of John Woolman, Lucretia Mott, A. J. Muste, Dorothy Day, Ammon Hennacy, M. K. Gandhi, the Sarvodaya movement, the Plowshares actions, the Christian Peacemaker Teams, and so forth.

The yogi and the commissar, though they appear to be polar opposites, are really complementary to each other, since the traditional yogi, by his nature, does not lift a hand to prevent the plunder and rule by the commissar, and the ideological structure that gives the yogi his social legitimacy, also gives the commissar, at least the traditional commissar, his legitimacy. The yogi, in fact, both serves and is served by the commissar.

It is really only the third path of the nonviolent warrior, which engages politically while being deeply rooted in the inward journey, that has some hope of challenging oppressive structures.

Lucretia Mott, Gandhi, King, the advocates of liberation theology, and others who followed some variation of the third path, all faced resistance from those elements in their respective religious traditions who liked things the way they were. The words and actions of these mystic activists challenged both social structures and mental structures far more profoundly than either the fully outward, secular warrior, or the fully inward religious recluse.

In the following sonnet, I express my belief in this third path of the nonviolent warrior or mystic activist, and express my hope that such a third path may continue to be walked and be effective in bringing positive change to the world.

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Contemplative Sonnet on a Third Way of Change

The yogi and the commissar have crashed,
For neither he with mantra, still with bliss,
Nor he whose armed rebellion could not miss,
Have kept the tortured world from being trashed.
Neither the gun nor yogic mat have smashed,
The shadow of the iron clamp and fist,
Or stopped the electronic drone and hiss,
Of sweet seductive tyranny rehashed.

So what is to be done, the question screams.
We know, within our hearts, within our dreams.
The yogi and the commissar shall pass,
As time rolls back and Joshua plays jazz.
The Jerichos shall fall before the song,
Of tens of thousands in a peaceful throng.

-- by Dave Greenfield

Principles of Non-Violence and Mutual Respect for Social Change

Challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviors. Ignoring issues will NOT make them go away, and being quiet may lead others to think you actually agree with them. As Audre Lorde warns, "Your silence will not protect you."

Be aware of your own attitudes and stereotypes. We have ALL been socialized to accept myths and misconceptions about others - be honest with yourself, be ready to learn based upon new knowledge or experience, and be ready to change!

Seek and share accurate information to counter discrimination. Take responsibility for educating yourself about cultures and communities that are not your own. Don't expect others facing oppression to provide you awareness - that's YOUR job!

Expect tension or conflict and learn to manage it. Actively listen to those who may disagree and seeking common ground will help. Face your own fear and realize that many people often discover great empowerment in the face of adversity.

Establish community expectations for mutual respect and social responsibility, and hold yourself and others accountable. Hate crimes become tolerated and then eventually accepted as "normal" when people fail to publically challenge them.

“Work collectively to organize against racism, xenophobia, and all other forms of oppression. Social change is a long term struggle and its easy to get discouraged working in isolation. Besides, there is great strength and creative synergy working together.

"Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction ... The chain reaction of evil -- hate begetting hate, wars producing more wars -- must be broken, or we shall be plunged into the dark abyss of annihilation." -- Martin Luther King, Jr. "Strength to Love" 1963

"Nonviolence is the constant awareness of the dignity and humanity of oneself and others; it seeks truth and justice, it renounces violence both in method and attitude; it is courageous acceptance of active love and good will as the instrument with which to overcome evil and transform both oneself and others. It is the willingness to undergo suffering rather than inflict it. It excludes retaliation and flight." Wally Nelson

"Violence is impractical because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for all. The old law of an "eye for an eye" leaves everyone blind. It is immoral because it seeks to humiliate the opponent rather than win his understanding; it seeks to annihilate rather than convert. It thrives on hatred rather than love. It destroys community and makes brotherhood impossible. It leaves society in monologue rather than dialog. Violence ends by defeating itself. It creates bitterness in the survivors and brutality in the destroyers." -- Dr Martin Luther King Jr. "Nobel Lecture" 1964

Thanks to the Madison Infoshop -- www.madisoninfoshop.org

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The Autumn Man

**There is an old mystic
Who appears,
Walking, sighing
Wandering the world,
For only a few days
Out of the year,
Toward the end of September.**

**You'll see him on side streets
Where there are lots of trees,
Where there are small children
Playing
Beneath darkening skies,
Experiencing, perhaps,
Their third or fourth
Rememberable autumn.**

**The parental voices
That inhabit the houses, eternally,
Will soon call the children inside
As living room, kitchen
And front porch lights
Are switched on,
And the smell
Of post-equinox rain
Drifts in, on the nostrils.**

**Usually not, however,
Before the old man
Can drop a candy or two
Into the left ear or eye
Of each child,
Hoping it will reach the mind**

***Turn on the inner light
And burst into fire food
For the still forming
Child's eye soul.***

***In the morning
If the children remember anything,
They will tell their parents
At the fast breakfast table
That the night before,
In their very own
Green rug front yards,
They met Santa Claus.
Only he was dressed in green
Instead of red
had long flowing white hair
Instead of a toque and beard.***

- by Dave Greenfield

Unsimplifying and Concisely Explaining "Socialism"

-- by Mike Morin

There is a long-standing social and economic theory known as cooperative communitarianism, mutualism, (and incorporating the word socialism to impart the idea that we need take care of the elderly, the infirm, the displaced, in essence each other) predating Marx by centuries, and contemporary to the bearded one in the form of some gentlemanly disagreement. Certainly, if one follows closely the evolution of "socialist" thought, one would see the errors of their jumping to conclusions about simplifying "isms".

There are two fundamental fronts in the struggle for equity and economic and environmental justice. There are the necessary anti-Capitalist forces and there are theorists, who hope to become practitioners, who study the history of the equity/economic justice and environmental justice movements, the arguments both for and against "socialism" and try to come up with a peaceful mission, plans, programs, and policies, to try to build consensus, and hope that there is time for the sufficient education, reorganization, and implementation of such.

The most enlightened school of thought is perhaps those of the libertarian socialists. Foolishly, some of these folks cling to the term anarcho-syndicalist, not understanding that anarchist was a derogatory term used against the early cooperative communitarians, mutualists, and socialists to turn the average citizen against them in a reactionary manner.

The libertarian socialist believes in a minimum of government intervention and participation. They believe in an economic democracy that comes from the people in their local "villages", encourages and promotes inter-community, inter-regional, and world unity and cooperation. The libertarian socialist believes that consensus must be reached with respect to the local to world mission, principles, policies, and programs and that any form of government would be transitioning from the military and economic dominance of today to one of peaceful inter-community cooperation. The modern libertarian socialist purview recognizes the need to fundamentally change the ways and means by which resources are allocated to and within communities and within and among economic sectors. It is not centralized planning. It is decentralized consensus. Inclusion, equity, humanity, quality of life, environmental health and wellness, sustainability, and peace are fundamental principles to be accepted, inculcated, implemented, and maintained in all aspects of the "plan and implement" modus operandi.

I hope this essay is helpful for any of you attempting to understand the alternatives.

In Peace, Friendship, Cooperation, and Solidarity,

-- Mike Morin

Every life is lived only once.
Past and future only in our minds.
Forever a "NOW" to live,
Are not restricted by time and space..

Filiz Kansu – Turkey

A Resolute Voice Opposed to War



Cindy Sheehan the California mother who became an anti-war leader after her son was killed in Iraq continues to stand in protest against war. This is inspired by the statement she made two years earlier and a failing of support for her campaign by peace movement leaders. Cindy was disillusioned by the failure of Democratic politicians to

bring the unpopular war to an end and tired of a peace movement she said "often puts personal egos above peace and human life."

Cindy Sheehan traveled to Martha's Vineyard this last Aug, where she protested the Iraq and Afghanistan wars while President Obama was vacationing there. Her message was to "wake up" and realize that Pres. Obama is escalating the war in Afghanistan. We have to realize, it is not the president who is in power, it is not the party that is in power, it is the system that stays the same, no matter who is in charge. We are here to make the wars unpopular again. Cindy has further stated:

"One thing that the Obama presidency has put into even sharper focus for me, is that most of the leaders of the world do not want peace. People can try and fool themselves that unlike Bush (or Clinton, or Bush, or Reagan, or Carter, or Ford, or Nixon...etc) Obama truly wants peace. The reality of facts on the ground dispute this. We are deceiving ourselves if we think otherwise. Obama is fully on the trajectory of the Empire, there is no denying this....I do not place the blame for imperial violence on any president: It is the system. Government of almost every countries are in on this."

Cindy is writing an international declaration of peace which will be presented at the gathering on Oct 5th

" We will be gathering in front of the White House to protest Democratic wars of aggression (especially Af-Pak, since the 8th is the anniversary of the US invasion) and there will be opportunity for civil disobedience that is not just symbolic. We will also be reading the International People's Declaration of Peace (IPDoP) in front of the White House that day and kicking off the campaign to build an effective grassroots movement against all violence, but particularly, state-sanctioned violence."

September 4, 2009

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Inspiration in the Daily

by Dick Martin

As we are searching for fresh ways of pursuing a society based upon cooperation and freedom. In current practice there is little more than standard and worn ways of organizing and the intellectual side of our movement drags us back to replay over and over scenarios which are increasingly irrelevant to today's social situation. Our lack of imagination ever draws us back to the way it has been, and we fail to enter the future and be the catalyst of liberation. There is great value in keeping anarchist ideas alive, to develop the intellectual forum while we live in times that afford only small opportunities to really do what we are talking about. It is more likely, however, that we are failing to see the multitude of things anarchists could really be doing. In reality there are unlimited possibilities to increase social freedom and bring about a greater realization of the living culture we aspire to. Dogged by the now proven inadequate assumptions of the political left and personalities and historical events of another era, we have become blind to the possibilities of the future.

We should find more inspiration in the daily activities of our own times, there is no format for freedom, it is of its own nature, free, as a common spirit that is shared, a process which unfolds from one moment to the next. If what we are attempting to do as anarchists were a winning activity; we would embrace the living efforts of most people through our activity. So we must try to unleash the spirit of freedom in simple and common social activity, and we must be unconventional in our analysis but true to our aims and convictions which give life to social cooperation and freedom. This is in reality a very simple thing. It does not take a great study of social theory to understand what anarchy is really about, we know it because we live by it, feel it because we share it.

Our process of social change has to be involved in change itself. We cannot trust ideals, but rather put our enthusiasm toward the pulse of social activity which the people themselves create as the rhythm of daily activity. To effect any real social movement and create new social directions our efforts have to become real through action as a living process as it relates to people's lives, and deny the political partition of humanity. It is not productive or

with any political group or ideology. The fulfillment of our aspirations needs to come from the liberation of society from the sectarian activities of politics and the factional differences between tendencies. The fulfillment of the anarchist inspiration shall arrive from the liberation of society from the activities of politics, and ideological and religious illusions.

The means must be cooperative and the aims be allied to the welfare of all. We must approach anarchy in universal terms, the realization of our goal must be inclusively holistic. Once we realize the foolishness of political causes that conspire and argue to exclude one another, we will find a way to include adversaries and differing advocates such that society can benefit from the best intentions of all. This is to go even further than the consensus process which seeks a communion of agreement. We seek change by proposing social communion through shared activity.

It is government that thrives on politics, take this away and it will fail. Our revolution is freedom from the political process and ideological illusions. Governments and the political process are clouds that obscure the power of the state which reaches out in the garb of any of a multitude of forms to extend social power over the people. We must realize new enlightened ways of organizing which first of all are inclusive, unlike the political process through which various factions vie to exclude each other from the process. A successful outcome is not, which side is right, but when all share in the process allowing all who may wish to participate to do so. Elections exclude people and the idea that we can elect the best person to represent us is a deception, Political democracy is a power game of social control. Political democracy claims to represent you ,but what it really does is exclude all those who would also wish to work for the common good in their own and different ways. A free society cannot be seen as a contest of differing ideologies, political tendencies or spiritual beliefs. Most importantly we need to recognize that society is a form of universality. humanity is a wholeness, all life on our planet is coexisting in a wholeness. It is political behavior which keeps us apart;, this is the danger.

Anarchy is a living process of social order, you will not find it written in constitutions; espoused in manifestos, or be the result of the outcome of ideologies.

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'Freedom Through Non-Violence'

by Sulak Sivaraksa

<http://www.friendsoftibet.org/sofar/speech.html>

Non-violence does not mean inaction or apathy. Sometimes, the consequence of one's inaction may be as terrible as that of one's action. Moreover, not infrequently, 'Killing with the mind' is as a sine qua non for participating in direct violence. The victim must first be victimized, demonized and dehumanized. Consequently, violence is redeemed, if not glorified. Non-violence means engaging in an outgoing struggle or movement for justice, freedom and peace mindfully and compassionately. At present, non-violence is not merely ethically and morally pertinent and essential: it is the very prerequisite for human survival and environmental sustainability. Put another way, non-violence is closely related to the democratic participation of ordinary citizens in matters that affect their lives, the more an issue impacts a group of people, the more influence that group must have in influencing it. Non-violence entails a re-examination of the concept of citizenship. For example, the citizen must know when to obey and when to challenge the state.

There is a kernel of truth in the saying that with the end of the cold war, democracy is spreading worldwide. But one need not be political scientist to realize that there is (much) more to the story. In my view, the dominant form of democracy is one in which the risk has been taken out; the risk, that is, of undermining the vested interest of the rich and powerful. A 'safe' and hollow form of democracy is spreading worldwide: a democracy that shockingly tolerates gross income inequalities, that narrowly circumscribes dissent in the mainstream, that marginalizes democratic grassroots movements, that is top-down, that is geared towards advancing the interest of property and not of the people, that treats the poor dismissively as if they are not worthy citizens, etc. As such, freedom has increasingly become a devil's gift: it refers to the freedom to starve, the freedom to lead unfulfilling, unrewarding, and humiliating lives, the freedom to work in hazardous conditions with terrible pay, the freedom to die for lack of rudimentary medical attention, the freedom not to have anything to save, and so on. Needless to say, this form of democracy is politically unstable. In so doing, the ruling circles may even employ reactionary means to tow the rabble in line. Non-violence is a crucial way to help restore

meaning and substance to what we call democracy today, to constructively answer the reverberating wails or cries of suffering in the world.

Before we engage in non-violent direct action we first need to understand that violence is often the culmination of greed, hatred and delusion. As Thich Nhat Hahn has consistently pointed out, mindful breathing is a means that can develop greed, hatred and delusion that arise within oneself. Once enveloped and irradiated with metta or loving kindness, these feelings will gradually crack, and it will be possible to see their root causes. Henceforth, the mind begins to blossom like a flower that is unable to resist blossoming when the sun shines into its heart. Applied broadly, mindfulness can be used to overcome negative forces that undermine the wholesomeness of life such as consumerism, sexism, militarism, and so on. Equipped with mindfulness, we would not fall into the trap of hating the oppressors and we would be able to use our newfound understanding to destroy oppressive systems and violent structures. Pursuing the noble eight-fold path will help one cultivate seeds of peace. Peace is something that will fantastically emerge like a jack-in-the-box. With seeds of peace within ourselves, the process of transformation into wholesome thoughts begins, contributing to renunciation, compassion and wisdom.

Equally important, simultaneously with the cultivation of seeds of peace within, we need to envisage and struggle for alternative futures, relying on non-violence. Working from the grassroots- that is organizing from the bottom up -- we must endeavor to challenge the centers of power, to show that the emperor has no clothes on. As Elise Boulding has observed, "We need images of peoples of the planet living gently but adventurously on the earth, walking the ways of peace in a future still filled with challenges. It is essential to spend time dreaming the possible shapes of that future as it is to learn the skills of peace-building to maintain it..."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has long been "living gently but adventurously on the earth" and has admirably been "walking the ways of peace," that is, promoting peace and non-violence. He has cultivated seeds of peace within and has continuously striven to redress the suffering in the world, not only that of his people. As a simple monk like the Buddha, His Holiness is ever humble, chaste and mindful and practices Boundless Love. As a simple monk, he leads a noble and celibate life. He wants so little for himself that all his time and energy are sacrificed for the happiness and welfare of

other sentient beings. In a way his happiness depends on his thoughts, his speeches and his actions first and foremost for the well being of others. Furthermore, his life is so harmonious within himself, physically, mentally and spiritually. And this harmony leads to harmonious relationships with other monks and nuns, as well as to lay persons. His lifestyle would influence his lifestyle of the laity who try to imitate the simple way of living mindfully of the monks. His lifestyle would also influence natural phenomena, making them more harmonious and wholesome. Even beasts and bees would learn to be less harmful and more compassionate.

Some social ills are so damaging and horrendous such as the Chinese invasion of Tibet and all the dreadful events in that country. Yet to have a simple monk like His Holiness and his followers insisting that we all learn to love and empathize the Chinese people and to forgive the Chinese government which has committed acts of aggression out of ignorance or delusion, not to mention out of greed and hatred, is profoundly illuminating.

Even when a simple monk is tortured physically or mentally he practices his mindfulness of loving kindness and compassion. Although His Holiness has not been tortured physically he is mutilated mentally every time he learns the hard fact that his subjects, monks and nuns are being tortured mercilessly. Yet he bears this pain magnanimously. And he reminds us all that the only way to overcome suffering is to cultivate seeds of peace within and to work nonviolently and patiently.

Being a simple monk in exile for over four decades, His Holiness has shown to the world that truth, beauty and goodness are not merely rhetorical flourishes but highly practical ideas. His influence and appeal lie in being a simple monk who wants so little for himself and who is devoting most of his time and energy to help the peoples of the world struggle against greed, hatred and delusion. A simple monk with good humor and humility like His Holiness, despite bearing so much social ills of his people and his country, is showing to the world that truth, forgiveness, love and compassion really have powers beyond the present worldly values. With seeds of peace within, a simple monk like His Holiness is in an excellent position to guide others who are aspiring for world peace, social justice and environmental sustainability.

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