

# Fifth World Buddhist Summit in Japan

## 3rd November 2008

Venerable monks and nuns, your Royal Highnesses, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters,

the inauguration of Royal Grand Hall is a remarkable event in the history of Buddhism. In this temple there are magnificent Buddha halls, a Sutra hall containing holy scriptures of all traditions and great conference halls for international meetings. Surrounded by eight mountains it represents the Noble Eightfold Path, the way to real happiness and liberation.

All beings are seeking for happiness in their lives. In the ancient Finnish mythology happiness was symbolized by a mysterious thing called Sampo. It was some kind of secret treasure – maybe a shamanistic drum or a holy tree which symbolized the harmony of existence. In the course of time Finnish people lost Sampo, but the ancient poems say that in future they will discover a new Sampo.

For Buddhists the greatest happiness is manifested in the Triple Gem of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha. Maybe the Triple Gem is the new Sampo? As you may know, in Chinese, Korean and Japanese languages, the Three Jewels are Sanbao, Sambo and Sanbo respectively. We Buddhists have the greatest treasure in the world. We must be grateful for this treasure. Since we have this spiritual wealth we must think what we can do for others. How can we contribute to world peace and human rights?

The Buddhadharma is essentially the practice of morality, meditation and wisdom. Meditative silence is necessary to be able to look, to observe. In this way we can see directly, without mental constructions, and such a deep understanding can arise in our minds. We should use that wisdom to resolve our personal problems and the problems in the world.

One great problem in the world nowadays is the ecological catastrophe. Venerable Kuyse Enshinjoh pointed out this clearly in his keynote speech. Every person has a responsibility to act correctly. Because Buddhadharma is a teaching of clear awareness, Buddhists should be the first ones to promote sustainable ways of living. This means practising loving-kindness concretely in modern times. We need to make swift changes in our lifestyle to preserve this planet. (A small country like the Kingdom of Bhutan is ecologically more advanced than many big and rich countries!). I think that Buddhist temples everywhere should follow environment-friendly principles in everyday matters, for example by using water, fuels and electricity mindfully.

Practising mindfulness, we are also aware how billions of animals are suffering. Buddhist texts tell us that we should treat animals with compassion and especially Mahayana sutras invite us to be vegetarians. It has been calculated that if the human kind reduced meat eating to half of its quantity, the world economy would change radically, famine would be overcome and the ecological situation would improve remarkably. Eating meat causes suffering to animals as they are raised aiming for maximum profits and treated with infinite cruelties.

Besides of these sufferings, according to Jeremy Rifkin and other famous researchers meat-based diet is a cause of 18% of the greenhouse gas emissions. So we must deeply reflect what means in practice the first Buddhist precept: not to kill sentient beings. When we try to avoid creating unnecessary suffering, we need loving-kindness, mindfulness and also knowledge about causes and effects.

Buddhadharma is a science of life and a science of mind. It is not in conflict with scientific knowledge. In the last centuries science has drastically changed our view of the world. In the Buddhist tradition there have been intuitions about matters of physics and psychology, and about inter-dependence of all phenomena which modern research has validated. In a deeper level we all are truly interconnected. It is very fruitful to develop the dialogue between Buddhist teachers and scientists. The unification of spirituality and scientific research helps us to understand mysteries of existence.

Buddhadharma is a teaching for all sentient beings, for all nations, for men and women. One question of current interest is how to improve the Dharma education and monastic training of Buddhist women. Hundreds of millions of practitioners are women. They support monasteries with works and donations. Their dedication for Buddhadharma should be well recognized and women should receive better opportunities as practitioners, were they laywomen, fully ordained bhikshuni-nuns or Dharma teachers.

The points that I have mentioned here are what many Finnish practitioners consider deeply. Buddhism in Finland is quite young. There are only about 5000 Buddhists in Finland. The first Buddhist association was founded in 1947. Nowadays there are about 20 different groups. In our delegation here we have representatives of Bodhidharma Association, Friends of Western Buddhist Order, Buddhist Dharma Center and Tibetan Buddhist Rokpa Association. Buddhadharma is a way of continuous learning. We Western Buddhists, can learn from Eastern Buddhists about devotion and selfless cooperation. Eastern Buddhists can learn some fresh and questioning spirit from Western Buddhists.

Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana Buddhists can learn from each other. All those who take refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha are brothers and sisters in the great family of Buddha Shakyamuni.

We are all followers of the Buddhayana or, we can say also, Dharmayana. Together we should work diligently for the benefit of all beings. In this respect the most Venerable Kyuse Enshinjoh and the whole Nenbutsu organization sets us a wonderful example. They work hard with altruistic motivation. I wish the greatest success for the Royal Grand Hall.

I hope that this temple and the future Nalanda University will be a meeting place for all Buddhists to gather and discuss what it means to practise Buddhadharma today, how to promote freedom and humanistic values in every country and how to live in harmony with the nature.

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