

Fairness — An End to Economic Corruption

In Japan, a gunman holds a Tokyo Stock Exchange official hostage for six hours. In Thailand, protests over the troubled economy drive the prime minister out of office. In South Korea, laid-off workers threaten to riot. People's life savings are being lost in the blink of an eye.

And the economic crisis is not limited to Asian countries. The past few months' turmoil in Thailand, Indonesia, South Korea, Japan and Malaysia shows just how interconnected the world is. Stock market fluctuations in the East have created great havoc in European and American stock exchanges. Currency devaluations in Asia have made it harder to sell American goods there, which in turn has affected company profits, jobs and consumer prices here in the States.

At the root of much of the crisis lies corruption, greed and unsound fiscal policies, according to reports. *Newsweek* says that South Korea's crisis "stems directly from the collusive and corrupt ties between politicians, bankers and top businessmen." Another report blames Japan's "reckless use of the world's capital, which it has accumulated in staggering amounts." Indonesia's woes, analysts say, stem in large part from President Suharto's unwillingness to impose needed reforms, afraid such measures would harm his six children's business interests.

It seems that the cause of the crisis is found in what Gandhi called one of society's seven major blunders — commerce without morality. Writer and scholar Eknath Easwaran defines Gandhi's point this way: "A way of life in which all our nobler goals and aspirations are subsumed in the desire to produce and consume more and more."

SGI President Ikeda says that the morality of fairness should be the "spiritual backbone for business people who aspire for peace." Speaking to University of the Philippines College of Business Administration graduates in April 1991, Mr. Ikeda explained that the universal spirit of fairness allows economic imperatives to be controlled by more humanistic principles:

In the world of business, such a universal spirit would not be exceedingly attached to parochial concerns for the good of only one's own venture or nation but would always consider the greater, holistic interest of the entire planet and of humankind; it would even enable one to make correct judgments based on the willingness to rise to the nobility of self-sacrifice that transcends personal gain and profit.

This pertains not only to multinational corporations and international investment brokers — it pertains to each of us. As Gandhi said, "We must be the change we want to see." As much as government bureaucracies and boardrooms must change, ultimately a change in ordinary people will effect the longest-lasting change. Basing our lives on Buddhist values, transcending our own desires for personal gain and profit, can set an example for others, and slowly values of universal fairness will seep into our society's psyche.

When we are not ruled by material, profit-driven motives alone — when we put our "nobler goals and aspirations" at the top of our priority list — we go farther than we think we can toward changing the world's habits.

Based on our inner reformation, our human revolution, we can create a world where economics ruled by fairness play a positive role in bringing happiness to the people — not the misery they so often do now.

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