

## SGI PRESIDENT IKEDA'S ESSAY ON SEPT. 11 RENEWING OUR FAITH IN HUMANITY

**'I am utterly convinced that we were not born into this world to hate and destroy each other,' writes SGI President Ikeda. 'We must restore and renew our faith in humanity and in each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we can still make the 21st century an era free from the flames of war and violence—an era in which all people may live in peace.'**

*SGI President Ikeda wrote the following essay in response to the tragedy of Sept. 11.*

In the aftermath of the terrible shock of the tragic events of Sept. 11, I extend my deepest sympathies to all those affected. From the bottom of my heart, I pray for the victims, and I pray that their families may find inner strength, healing and, eventually, renewed happiness.

It is impossible not to be outraged at the senseless loss of so many lives. And yet it is not the numbers that make this tragedy so horrific. Every single person lost was irreplaceable and immensely precious—a much-loved sister, father, son, mother or friend. Each individual's life contained infinite possibilities waiting to be realized. In the most terrible manner imaginable, we have been reminded of the immense value of human life.

In all its teachings Buddhism stresses how sacred and precious life—especially human life—is. One scripture reads: "A single day of life is worth more than all the treasures of the universe." Terrorism, which so cruelly robs people of life, can never be excused or justified by any reason or cause. It is an absolute evil. And when such acts are committed in the name of religion, it demonstrates the utter spiritual bankruptcy of the perpetrators.

As human beings sharing a common home, we have all been impacted by this terrible deed. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." We must unite across differences of nationality and faith in order to create a world free of injustice, violence and terror.

While it is vitally important that all efforts be made to identify responsibility for this heinous act and bring those involved to justice, international cooperation against terrorism cannot be limited to the short-term. At a deeper level, it requires a profound reexamination of the nature of human civilization. For much of our history, humanity has been trapped in vicious cycles of hatred and reprisal. We must redouble our efforts to break this cycle and transform distrust into trust. I believe that this is the most effective and fundamental antidote to terrorism and its repugnant worship of violence.

It is the function of evil to divide; to alienate people from each other and divide one country from another. The universe, this world and our own lives, are the stage for a ceaseless struggle between hatred and compassion, the destructive and constructive aspects of life. We must never let up, confronting evil at every turn.

This attack was an ultimate manifestation of evil and shows us the vilest depths to which human nature can sink.

In the end, the evil over which we must triumph is the impulse toward hatred and destruction that resides in us all.

Unless we can achieve a fundamental transformation within our own lives, so that we

are able to perceive our intimate connection with all our fellow human beings and feel their sufferings as our own, we will never be free of conflict and war. In this sense, I feel that a “hard power” approach, one that relies on military might, will not lead to a long-term, fundamental resolution.

I believe that dialogue holds the key to any lasting solution. Now, more than ever, we must reach out in a further effort to understand each other and engage in genuine dialogue. Words spoken from the heart have the power to change a person’s life. They can even melt the icy walls of mistrust that separate peoples and nations. We must expand our efforts to promote dialogue between and among civilizations.

I am utterly convinced that we were not born into this world to hate and destroy each other. We must restore and renew our faith in humanity and in each other. We must never lose sight of the fact that we can still make the 21st century an era free from the flames of war and violence—an era in which all people may live in peace. To this end, we must strive to make a profound reverence for life the prevailing spirit of our times and our planet. I believe that this is the greatest and most enduring way to honor the memory of the victims of this enormous tragedy.

*This essay appears in From the Ashes: A Spiritual Response to the Attack on America from Rodale Press, a book providing perspectives and wisdom from a variety of spiritual and religious thinkers around the world in the wake of Sept. 11. Contributors include Thich Nhat Hanh, Paul Ferrini, President Ikeda and others. For more information, please visit the publisher’s Web site at [www.rodale.com](http://www.rodale.com).*