

(English translation)

Chiang Mai (Thailand), 6 January 1997

Chiara to the Student Monks at the Manachulalongkorn Buddhist University: Some answers

Luce Ardente: As a Christian, what do you think of Buddhism?

Chiara: I cannot judge Buddhism because I know too little about it.

When I had met the Great Teacher and Luce Ardente for the first time, I realized that Buddhism possesses immense riches. For example... the need to abolish suffering, to live always detached from everything - this is something wonderful.

For example, love for meditation. In meeting them, I met two people who are truly exceptional, who have a great inner wealth from whom we can all learn.

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Luce Ardente: **Here is another question.**

In your opinion, what is the most elevated, the true goal of life?

Chiara: The ultimate goal of human life is perfection. We must be perfect.

We Christians believe in God, in God who is very perfect. We must live perfectly and be perfect, if possible, be similar to Him, as He is: "Be perfect as my Father is perfect" is written in our books.

But perfection is reached only through compassion, only through love. Not by egoism, by remaining closed in oneself, but by being dedicated to others. This is perfection.

I read - I don't know if it's true, because there are many books on Buddha - that every morning, when Buddha woke up, he always thought: "For whom will I do good today?"

We too must do the same always: every morning when we wake up, we should say: "For whom will I do good today?" And then do it.

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In today's world there is much consumerism. What do you think of this? What does your religion say about this?

Chiara: Oh, my religion goes against consumerism saying that we must have the culture of "giving".

It is written in our book, which is the Gospel: "Give and gifts will be given to you". Consumerism is having. Instead, giving really makes us true religious. We must always give. And it is written - since you ask me what my religion thinks about this - it is written: "Give and gifts will be given to you."

I'll give you an example: once when we were young like you, we were in our small apartment and it was during the war. Of course, because of the war there was also hunger. One day someone brought us an egg. We were happy, because we had at least an egg, but then at a certain point, someone knocked at the door. It was a poor man who said: "Give us something." And we all agreed to give him the egg.

Very well, as soon as we gave him this egg, someone else came and gave us a bag of eggs. You see, "Give...". We had given the egg... "and gifts will be given to you"... a bag of eggs.

Another time, something even more wonderful happened. We had only a few potatoes in the house, and a poor person came and asked us for something to eat. We gave him this small sack of potatoes. Shortly afterwards, a lady arrived and she brought us a big sack of potatoes. But there were many poor people and they came to our door asking for food, and so we gave that big sack of potatoes too. At a certain point, a man arrived, I think it was the father of one of us, I don't remember, and he brought us a suitcase full of potatoes: "Give and gifts will be given to you", "Give and gifts will be given to you". It's a law.

And this cures our consumerism, by giving, by what we call the culture of giving.

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What meaning does the word perfection have in everyday life? In what does perfection consist?

Chiara: Perfection consists essentially in loving.

Because perfection consists in not being ourselves, but in order to not be ourselves, we must live the others, have love for the others; therefore, we don't think of ourselves, we annihilate ourselves, we deny ourselves.

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All religions teach people to do good. So then, why is there this fragmentation into many religions.

Chiara: Well, it depends on the different cultures. In other words, Buddha was born a few hundred years before Christ, so it depends on the different cultures and also on the fact that only now are the communications media so developed. Now, through the means of communication, we can know what is happening in America, in Asia, everywhere. Once, they didn't exist. So we had to go by donkey, by horse, by camel, by elephant, and so we arrived slowly. In the meantime, different civilizations developed, and every civilization might have brought its own religion.

But now we are meeting one another - it's completely different.

Luce Ardente: We thank you very much, Mamma. There are really very many questions, but our time is limited. We would be happy now if you would accept a gift, and I invite all the monks to thank Mamma who came to speak to us today.

Chiara: Thank you.

Chiara: You are very young. Aim high in life, ask everything of life, no mediocrity! Aim high! Thank you for your attention. I saw much serenity in your faces. Thank you very much.