

Inspiring the World to Care— *Igniting the will to act for the climate*

by Masami Saionji

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Inspiring the world to care, and igniting the will to act for the climate. When I first saw these words, describing the theme of the Third Plenary, I was filled with a deep sense of awe and admiration.

When I reflect upon the daily lives of the earth's people, it seems to me that inspiring ourselves to care is the most important, most precious thing we can do. Indeed, I feel that inspiring ourselves to care may be our primary purpose in living. After all, what could be more worthwhile than making moment-to-moment efforts to bring out the best in ourselves and in the people around us, so that we may contribute something positive to the health and happiness of the planet?

When we strive to inspire ourselves and inspire others, I think we can be greatly encouraged by observing the lives of people we admire and respect. For me, one such person is my husband's great-grandfather, Kinmochi Saionji, a dedicated pacifist who served twice as Prime Minister of Japan. He served his country under three emperors—Meiji, Taisho, and Showa—and his guiding wish was to preserve the peace-loving nature of the Japanese people. Before the outbreak of World War II he made strenuous efforts to prevent Japan from entering the war.

Kinmochi Saionji was a student of French, and while in his twenties he spent several years in France and other parts of Europe. He became a close friend of Georges Clémenceau, who later served as Prime Minister of France. Like Clémenceau, he was firmly opposed to all forms of racial discrimination. Until his death he dedicated his life to inspiring the world to care, and when he passed away at the age of 91 he was honored at a state funeral. Even today he is well remembered for his last, dying words: *There is no need at all for Japan to become a military power. Rather, Japan must go down in history as an honorable nation, a nation that everyone can respect.*

What I admire most about Kinmochi Saionji is his steadfast belief in the dignity of life. More than anything else, I feel that the world's people need to revive and develop this sense of dignity and respect for all forms of life.

What is it that inhibits the blossoming of this inborn sense of dignity? The answer, I think, is borders—borders that separate one nation from another, one religion from another, one ethnic group from another. Although it is vital for us to respect and encourage diversity, I think it is also essential for us to sense that we all share in the one, all-encompassing life of the universe. If we continue to identify ourselves in terms of the borders that divide us, always thinking, *I am Japanese! I am French! I am Greek! I am a Catholic! I am an atheist! I am a democrat!* or *I am member of this group or that party!* peace and harmony will never take root in our society.

What is the one thought that continues to wreak havoc in each person's mind? It is the thought of conflict and discrimination. We are always running a race against someone. We are always competing with someone. We are always seeing ourselves in terms of oppositions: the winners versus the losers, the rich versus the poor, the hungry versus the well-fed. For as long as we see ourselves only as members of a particular group or nation, there will always be some who are prideful and arrogant, and others who feel inferior and resentful.

To put an end to this way of living, I feel that we need to change our perspective. We need to start seeing ourselves as citizens of Earth and the universe. We need to calm our emotions and return to a deeper awareness. We need to recognize each individual as a sublime, noble spirit— a “divine spark of the universe.” I can clearly state from my own experience that this is absolutely true. It is just that we have forgotten it. We fell into a path of ignorance when we deserted our spiritual nature and began devoting ourselves to materialism.

In our deeper, more spiritual nature, we are filled with an expansive sense of beauty and richness. Our minds overflow with a bright, healthy feeling. Our spiritual self is totally unlike the materialistic one. The materialistic mind is what created the notion of scarcity. A lack of goods, a lack of money, a lack of food, a lack of land, a lack of respect, a lack of education, a lack of love: the materialistic mind believes only in what is finite, and sees everything as being in short supply. This fixed idea— this notion that something is lacking—produces painful effects on the world of nature. It creates a lack of water, a lack of clean air, a lack of natural resources, a lack of vegetation. It then focuses its attention on what is lacking, and tries to seize more of it.

How can we put an end to this vicious cycle? How can we change direction?

Before we can resolve issues like climate change and environmental destruction, I feel that each of us must return to our innate, expansive self and abandon our belief in scarcity. We must return to the immense world of our untapped talents. When we do, a new world will open up for us. Once we can think of ourselves as unlimited beings, all our anxieties will be transcended. Our greed will be transcended. The borders that divide us will be transcended.

What good does it do to continue chasing after finite resources? Even if wealthy people continue to acquire more and more property and more and more money, until the end of their lives they will never feel satisfied. This is because their inner, noble spirit is being stifled. This noble spirit, this divine spark of the universe, is the voice that keeps saying to us, *I want to contribute something! I want to be of service to others! I want to live with gratitude! I want to feel at one with the land, the trees, the mountains, and the oceans!* This inner voice is the source of our life power and the guide to our happiness.

When we take a narrow, self-serving perspective, we can never find true solutions. It is like trying to treat an ailment simply by relieving its symptoms. In the same way, if we try to relieve the effects of climate change only for the benefit of our own nation, it can bring no lasting improvement.

It is time to inspire ourselves to care deeply about Great Nature. Testing atomic weapons, digging into the earth in search of fossil fuels, conducting dangerous tests in the ocean— this kind of selfish behavior kills innocent insects, animals, plants, and microorganisms. How can we think that nature will continue to tolerate such behavior?

In many traditional cultures, like that of the Ainu people of northern Japan, human beings naturally feel grateful for the blessings of nature. From generation to generation, they developed sustainable cultures based on give-and-take, affectionate relationships with nature. The prayerful thoughts of human beings, the feelings of admiration and gratitude they send out, turn into light-filled vibrations that flow into the animals, the air, the mountains and seas. I cannot help but feel that if modern-day people had imitated this way of life, we would never have done such harm to our environment.

But let us take heart. It is not too late to make a new start. Simply by listening to our inner sacred voice, we can inspire ourselves to take a step forward. For my part, I would like to invite you to read my online book, **The Earth Healer's Handbook** (earthhealershandbook.net) a dialogue and workbook about gratitude to nature. It can be read online in French, English, and Spanish.

I would also like to invite you to visit the website fujideclaration.org. It talks about enlivening the divine spark in each individual's consciousness. Large numbers of people have endorsed this declaration as a springboard for creating a new, sustainable world civilization.

We human beings seldom transform ourselves overnight. But if even one person takes a step forward it will surely influence others. Starting with just one step, let us make up our minds to inspire ourselves to care, and inspire the world to take action.

Thank you very much!

May Peace Prevail on Earth

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