
The voiceless voice

IF WE OBSERVE THE HUMAN WORLD closely, we can hear a very deep sound. It is a kind of voice, yet it is voiceless. If we are very quiet, we can hear this voiceless voice in the bottom of the human heart. Wherever you may be, whatever you experience, if you are present, you will immediately hear it. But you can't hear it with your ears. Does it express pleasure? Is it sad? Is it good? You can't evaluate it. It is just there; and you are there, too. Whether you are in the middle of success or failure, your life cries.

There is a famous bodhisattva named Avalokiteshvara, whose name means "regarder of the cries of the world." Avalokiteshvara is all of us, but not any one of us in particular. We are all present in the middle of the human world at once, in the middle of good, bad, suffering, pleasure, emptiness, and kindness. So the Regarder of the Cries of the World never focuses on a particular person or situation. Nor does she pray for human desire to be satisfied. Avalokiteshvara's concerns are always focused on us all.

We have to listen for the voice that she hears deep within us—the cries of the world. It is the basis of our existence. Though we try to explain it psychologically or philosophically, all explanations are secondary. The immediate Reality is that, day by day, we are here, we are present. And so, with our whole body and mind, we have to hear the voiceless voice, the cryless cry, which comes from very deep within the human world. To hear it, all we have to do is be present.

Even now you are suffering. But what can you say about your suffering? There is nothing to pin down, nothing to say. The voiceless voice, which comes from the depths of human life, can't be measured. Yet it is always there. It is what you actually experience. Somehow—in a word, through your body, with your mind—you must express it.

If you just sit down in the midst of this quiet suffering, you become Avalokiteshvara, and you can listen to the voiceless voice of the world. You can open yourself to whatever situation you may be in. It's no use saying that the suffering out there in the world is foreign, that it doesn't belong to you. You have to take care of it every day, because it has already appeared. Just keep yourself open to it. This is true compassion.

Compassion is always with us, but ordinarily we let our heads come first. We evaluate each situation, we single out certain people, talk about them, put them down, and so forth. But though we like to talk about others, though it seems to make us feel good, this is not the way out of our suffering. If we would deal with our suffering, we can't talk about particular people. Actual suffering—the voiceless voice of the world—does not belong to any particular person. While the world of human suffering is infinite, particular people are not infinite.

To regard the cries of the world, we have to be open to all situations. We can't put a price on our life or on the lives of others. We have to see our life and the lives of others in a completely different kind of world than our usual world of this and that. Otherwise, we will never understand Reality in its fullness. In other words, do your best without looking around. Just concentrate on what needs to be done.