

## FULFILLMENT

I want you to go with me to Java. Let us drive out of the big city to the village and toward the mountains that rise up in central Java. As you look up the side of the mountains you see the terraced rice paddies. As far as you can see there is two toned green. Then you see the geometry, the pattern of the various rice paddies. I want you to come closer so you can see between the rice paddies. There are little ridges which are the paths on which the village people walk. If you come close enough you can see that the ridges are alive with activity. In the rice paddies, there are water buffalo, and men walking behind the water buffalo with plows. On the paths you see men, women, and children.

Today, let us follow one particular woman. As we get close to this woman we see she is about forty years old, but she looks to be at least sixty. Her face has many lines. As she smiles at you and says, "Good afternoon," you see she has no teeth. She is wearing the traditional kebaya. On her back is a huge bag of rice and she is walking with her back bent over from her burden. I would invite you to follow her with me to her village. She dumps her load down, getting rid of her rice, and she stands up straight. However, guess what! She does not stand up straight! She straightens up part way and that is as far as she can go. She continues to talk as she walks and we follow her. If we stayed with her for a couple of months we would see her scurrying around from one rice field to another. In every rice field she plants, she stands in the water up to the calf of her leg or higher. She is down in the water planting with the other women, taking the rice seedlings and planting them in a straight line. If we would stay with her and follow her for a couple of months more, we would see her out there in the same rice paddies stamping out the weeds with her feet. In a couple more months, we would watch her harvest the rice. After that, she takes that rice out with all the other women, and does a dance to separate it from the stalk, and then lets it dry. Finally, it ends up on her back again, and she goes on down to the next village, the next road, the next town.

Now this woman is a smart woman. She knows how to plant. She knows when to harvest. She knows how to use insecticides. She knows how to use fertilizers. If she had a hand tractor, she would know how to use that. At the end of the day, or at the end of her life - or maybe it is in the middle of the day or the middle of her life, many people stop her and ask, "Old woman, old woman, why do you do this? Why do you go around in the fields all the time, planting, weeding, harvesting? You have a husband and you have children. Why, old woman do you do this?" She tries to answer saying, "Well, because it has to be done. People are hungry." Or she may say, "Because I wanted to do it. Because I did not want to see people without food." Or she might even say, "Because I care. I care that people eat." As if that was not enough she finally says, "What else could I do?" But people always ask again, "Why do you do what you do, old woman?" She just shakes her head and says, "You will never understand, will you?" Then she keeps on going. Now some people ask another question. They come up to this old woman and say, "Ibu, how do you do what you are doing? How do you do it?" And then Ibu smiles and she giggles, and you see her toothless laugh as she says, "Come with me and I will show you. Follow me." So they go together. Sometimes there are many women. There is no field too far away; there is no field too large; there is no field too infested with snakes; there is no field too shallow; there is no field too deep; they go everywhere. They go up on high mountains and they go in valleys; they go to rich men's fields and they go to poor people's fields; they go to every field.

Sometimes you can hear these women singing and sometimes, if you are close enough, you can hear them moaning under the unbelievable burden of the task. If you watch them, you can see them shivering on the cold nights. You can see them crying over the death of one of their many children. You can watch them sometimes squatting down to have a baby - on the mud floor. And the baby rolls out fine and they take it and they bless it three times with cold water, and they go on. Sometimes, you hear them scolding their husbands, but there is one thing you never, never see: these women never quit. They never retire from their work. They always go on planting, weeding, harvesting, distributing the rice. This is fulfillment. I can not think of any other way to talk about it.

You and I are that woman. On her back and on our back, history rides. History is created by the fulfilled ones - by the ones who are continually bent over. History is created by the ones who show people how to plant rice, how to use a toilet, how to build a comprehensive curriculum, and how to figure out what the vision is for a

community. History is built by people who enable people to discern the blocks and to create the proposals in their community. Tomorrow, next year, this woman may have a different mask; you and I may have a different mask. Our task may look different. Our faces will change as the needs of the world change. However, you can always count on the bent over ones, the burdened ones, the fulfilled ones; they will be there. Who knows; maybe they will be writing recipe books, drilling oil wells, or exploring the ocean depths. But they will be there. They will fall down, and they will make mistakes. They will say the wrong things, they will get cancer, they will die in their sleep, and they will watch their children go away. It does not really matter, for when they fall down they will get up, they will learn from their mistakes, they will learn to live as useful people with cancer, and they will experience in their dying as meaningful a time as they did in their living.

I want to talk about fulfillment in four ways. First, fulfillment occurs when the signs of the times are fully disclosed. The images of effulgence come to my mind. Effulgence -- fulfillment -- is a feeling; it is a thought; it is a resolve. Other cultures have pointed to fulfillment as nirvana, heaven, the happy hunting ground. We live in a time of the fullness of Being. It is the convergence of awakening and engagement. It is the convergence of the spirit. Each situation is pregnant with possibility. It is like standing anywhere in the world in any situation, and seeing someone get pregnant and having a baby - real quick - right in front of your eyes - in five seconds - men and women.

One day in Gibson, North Carolina, the Mayor and his wife were looking at the old beat-up depot, and he said, "Myrtle, what do you see?" She said, "Bill, I see that old beat-up depot that hasn't had a train come through for fifty years." And he said, "Myrtle, look again. What do you see?" She said, "Bill, I see that the depot needs a lot of work." And he said, "Myrtle, do you know what I see? I see a community center. I see paint on the outside, paneling on the inside, a place where the youth could come, and we could have dances, and a place where we could eat. That is what I see, Myrtle." And she said, "You don't say!" Right before your very eyes, the situation is transformed. And he continued, "People will come from miles around to eat at this restaurant. The kids will not get in trouble, because they can come here." This fullness is a way of perceiving things. I talk about it as aggressive thinking. It is always looking for the opening in the line to carry the ball through - always looking for where the present and future converge. It is the "What if?" question. Seven people in Gibson said, "What if we take that old depot and make something out of it? What if we believe it is possible to transform the old depot?" These seven people went to the town council, and risked their reputation and jobs. They had decided that the town needed something. And, you know what? There is a community center there now, and it is beautiful! It is everything that anybody ever imagined, and more. It was, "Goodbye dark night and long march. Look out! I am coming through!" There were a few things that got in the way, but finally, there were no problems. Fulfillment is knowing and believing that local people control their own destiny. They do not need help, except in the same way you and I need help, that is in transforming our imaginations from, "I can't" to "I can." That is the only help anybody needs, and we all need that.

There is a wholeness to our times. In fulfillment, one sees through the fragmentation, the isolation, the loneliness and the complexity to the wholeness of life. It is not simple, but it is there. It is the inter-relatedness of life. I do not mean simply that my bracelet came from Egypt, my ring from Maliwada, and my earrings from Sears. It is more than that. Today, there is a move for people to return to small towns and villages out of a belief that there is an aliveness in the communities. A possibility is seen that a community can be whole. The inter-relatedness has to do with all of life. Every moment is important; there is no moment that has more meaning than any other moment. We have four youth in our house, and I feel responsible for those youth. I feel like we have to care for their health and watch their education. It is not that they cannot be self-reliant. My care for them has as much meaning for me as doing town meetings. I have to figure out how I do all things.

Sometimes I image care as a big giant dart. You get on this dart, and push a button. This dart heads right toward the contradictions of the time. Suddenly, you and the dart are one. You are beyond yourself. You are more than a dart. You are thrown out beyond yourself. You see the significance of all human beings. The statement, "all the earth belongs to all the people," is true. Some people do not believe this statement, but it is true for you. You care about the quality of everything. You care about how the table is set. You care about the quality of education your child is getting. You care about all the other children, too. You care about whether or not fifty people come to a town meeting instead of twelve. You care about how good these town meetings are. You care about assignments. If you are making assignments you may look at one name and realize that it would be easy to reduce that person to a magnetic piece of plastic stud on a board. I look at this person's name, and suddenly I say, "Oh God!" Suddenly

the whole assignment board lights up. You are not just dealing with that person as someone to do a job. You are dealing with her past and her future. You are dealing with her children. You are dealing with her health. You are dealing with her covenant with the nation where she is a citizen. You are dealing with her wardrobe. You are dealing with everything about that person. You just care? Yet you know, you do not care any more about that one person than you do for any other person. Why do you care? You just do.

In Mississippi, over 8000 people came to town meetings this year, were awakened and got engaged. Five hundred came to the Assembly. This 500 met together in their town clusters, and reflected on what had happened in their town. As they talked about what was going to happen in the future, suddenly the crumbiness of their towns just faded away. These little communities became like giant stallions running through the air. People were saying, "We can do this. We are going to do this." You found yourself saying, "What is going on?" They were not participating because the Governor had said, "You can have a sewer system." They were saying, "We are going to have a sewer system." They knew it was their own sweat and blood that had enabled this, nothing else. They also saw miles down the line that the only way their community was going to make it was by their own sweat and blood.

I talked with one woman after the Assembly and she said, "This has been the finest day of my life. I have been waiting for this day all of my life. Do you know that Mississippi really is leading the way?" And I said to myself, "She believes this." I tell you, you care! You care for all, all the time. Why do you care? Ask the bent over old woman in Java. There is a resolve there. I will not go to sleep until all the people of the world are fed. I will not go to sleep until there are adequate health facilities for every village and every town in the world. I will not go to sleep until -- you name it. Suddenly you realize you have turned into a big resolve. You are a resolve, and you move out. I cannot explain that, but I know there is movement there. You do not intellectualize the experience. You just move.

The third point is that fulfillment happens when the vocational question is no longer, "Why do I? What do I? or Who am I?", but "How do I?" This stance of "How do I?" transforms a maybe into a Yes, an unqualified Yes. It assumes trust, it assumes forgiveness. You do not have to prove yourself or compete with anybody. There are no problems. You just keep riding that big dart of care.

Now the question is, "How do I keep saying yes? How do I keep on caring? How do I enable other people to keep saying yes?" When we leave a project we sometimes say to ourselves, "Who is going to build curriculum? Who is going to train the imaginal educators?" I did not want to leave Houston because we have fifteen people who are meeting every week planning how we are going to have 100 impact events in Houston next year. They are out "ridding the city. I say to myself, "How are they going to do that? Will they continue to struggle with the issues? Will they make mistakes?" I believe this is the struggle of the third campaign, the question of the Global Servant Force. When we leave a project, or a Global Women's Forum, or a town meeting, we ask, "Will they still believe?" One woman said to me after the Global Women's Forum, "Today, my life is changed. I am going to go home and be a real woman." I do not know what she had in mind, but something happened to that woman. You say to yourself, "Will that continue?" Now, it is nice to have visible signs: outhouses with murals painted on them, patios, fences or industries, but that is not necessarily development. It is only part of it -- the residue. It is great to have trained people to lead workshops and to do magic tricks with contradictions so that they appear as possibility. However, finally, the question is, "Will these people continue to struggle with the issues and believe that when they see the old depot, that it is not really an old beat-up depot, but it is a beautiful community center? That is the question of development. That is what we are talking about with fulfillment. We are talking about a human factor. I do not know what else to call it. It is that factor within every person that if sparked, can release new life. This factor gives a person courage to risk effective action. This factor is what shows one that corporateness and teamwork are essential to effective action. This factor is that which allows one to marry his or her care. This factor is what pushes one to create the new, wherever it is needed.

We had a workday -- the first workday in Kelapa Dua Human Development Project. It was a terrible day. It was 100°. We were building an irrigation wall. The old wall had been built more than thirty years ago but now had fallen apart. The farmers needed this wall so they could irrigate their fields. It was a hard day. By 10:00 a.m. we were hot and had not gotten to working the concrete yet. About thirty of us were lined up with the job of picking up big blocks and handing them down the line. It was hard. We took turns picking them up, because it was harder to bend and pick them up than to pass them along. I thought to myself, "I hope it rains." I was hot, and sweaty,

and my hair was a mess. My glasses kept sliding off my nose. After the blocks were moved, the cement was next. It poured and we had to pass the buckets along the line. I was standing next to Pak Anang. Pak Anang is about 5' 2" tall but looks shorter. He is the skinniest person I have ever seen. His legs are very skinny; his veins stand out, and he wears a big hat. The day before we built the wall, his wife had given birth to twins and they had both died. But, Pak Anang was standing next to me and he was passing me the cement. I said to him, "Pak, do you think we are going to finish today?" He said, "Well, I don't know if we will finish today, but if we don't we will finish tomorrow. We have to finish." Now that is the human factor -- the resolve. I intend and I resolve to be about the task of building the new earth for the rest of my life. It is not easy, to keep on passing the cement. How does one keep from opting out? Something keeps whispering in my ear, "Kay, you know you have a bad leg, and you have bad eyes. You should take care of yourself; maybe a month in the sun would do you good." It would do me good. This is true. I hear a whisper about my son, "Jack is eight years old. He is going to an inner-city school. What kind of education is he going to get? Where are you going to send him to college? He cannot read very well. What are you doing to your son? Are you ruining him for life?" Or again, I hear a whisper, "Now Kay, you have a great profession. Dr. Widell himself, Supt. of Schools at Jakarta International Schools, was just asking about you the other day. He said you are a great counselor, and he would like to have you come back and be a vice-principal. That is a step up in your career." And it would be' What am I doing in Houston, running errands, picking up inkind items and washing dishes? Temptation is always there.

Finally, fulfillment is a transformation in one's thinking and acting. As the fulfilled one, you are completely detached. Nothing owns you, and you own nothing. You do not need anything to live a significant life. You have everything. Only the Mystery owns you. That is all that owns you; no thing owns you. I remember the first time it dawned on me that I did not own my child. He was eleven months old, and I had brought him to the Summer '71 program. I had him in Infant School. I was going to meetings, going to Infant School, taking Jack up to the room and feeding him, taking him back to Infant School, and going to more meetings. I said, "I can't take this. What am I going to do?" And I answered myself, "You are going to get rid of that child." It was hard. My mother said, "Sure, I will take that darling little boy. My sister came to take him and after they left, I cried. I realized that what I was crying about was not that Jack was going to be uncared for, but because Jack never belonged to me anyway. He does not belong to me or to my husband or my parents. He will always be leaving. That was a real revelation.

Fulfillment is also being obedient obedient to riding that dart of care. You are obedient. I am obedient. My obedience is not to my husband, the religious house, the ICA, my Job, my task force, nor to my child. I am obedient to God - to the mystery, depth, and greatness that is me. That is painful and it is also joyful. It does not really matter where you are located. It can be Christmas Island or a human development project in Latin America, or in Houston, Bombay, Langub, or in Shang-hai. It can be with the ICA or not with the ICA. It does not really matter. Fulfillment is available to you. It does not really matter who you are. You can work in the kitchen, you can work in the bank, you do not have to work at all. You can be yellow, black, brown, white, or any color. Fulfillment is available to everyone' Fulfillment is walking with Being, hand in hand. I believe our question today is, "How do we, as the fulfilled ones, assist each other and others in living fulfilled lives?" And I pray that we always have that option.