

A PASSAGE TO PEACE—A GLOBAL SOUL AND TOLERANCE TO DIVERSITY

The Graduate Institute of the Future Studies of TKU invited Pico Iyer, Sohail Inayatulla and many other eminent writers and scholars to Tamkang for a series of lectures and presentations over the past week. Iyer, Inayatullah and Dr. Clement Chang, the Founder of TKU met last Thursday for a round table discussion with the students.

Pico Iyer is a column writer of Time magazine, and is an epitome of a true global soul. He was born in England of Indian parents, but went to school in California, in the U.S. He now lives and works in Japan and is happily married to a Japanese woman. His ethnic ties to the different continents and his work as a writer often require him to travel to different corners of the world and experience various cultures. Although he is a seasoned traveler by now, he does not let any preconceptions or cultural stereotypes affect his experience. He would always try to have a fresh perspective for each journey he makes by being an observer silently watching things that go around him. Only through this kind of uninvolved and neutral attitude, he says, can one find the equilibrium that is necessary for any soul-searching introspection.

Dr. Clement Chang, who was deeply impressed by the rich tales of cultural alienations and assimilations told in Iyer's book "The Global Soul" while reading it three years ago, asked Iyer if he had solutions to today's global conflicts caused by cultural clashes in an era of great transformation? Iyer responded by pointing out that the key to peace lies with tolerance and respect. He maintained that different cultures should learn to tolerate and complement one another without thinking one's own culture is superior to the other. Inayatullah added that despite living in an era of great changes, we should not forget to ensure a free and happy environment for our children to grow up in. Only through such

cultivation, can children learn to respect and tolerate other people.

Some interesting questions and comments also came from the audiences. One student, Chiang Hui-ru would like to know how Iyer reconciled many of his identities so as to find his inner peace. Iyer gave a simple answer to this complex question—that one should look at the world as an observer with a neutral perspective. Several comments, similarly, dealt with discovering one's own identity and peace of mind. One student, Yeh Ren-how, for example, commented on the need of having confidence in one's own culture by recognizing the uniqueness in its heritage. Only through knowing ourselves, he added, could we learn to know others and explore the world further. Hsu Zhi-jay, another student, agreed and stressed that it was vital to know what our mission was in this life. Life without goals, as he sees it, is meaningless.

Iyer was the only visitor who could not stay for the Conference on Future Studies that pursued this round table session due to his time constraint. Nonetheless, what he saw at the Chueh Sheng Library, Chinese Lantern Avenue, Chinese Palace-styled classrooms as well as gardens and the international student population at the discussion during his short stay, must have left him with the impression that Tamkang is a bridge between modernity and tradition and has a comfortable marriage of locality and internationalization. Dr Flora Chang joked to him about having him incorporating this experience into any of his future writing.

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Pico Iyer (Center) the writer of the book "The Global Soul" held a round table talk with Dr. Clement Chang, the Founder of TKU (right) and Sohail Inayatullah (left), the research fellow of the Graduate Institute of Future Studies of TKU last Thursday at the Ching Sheng International Conference Hall. During which, Dr. Chang asked Iyer for the solutions to the worldwide conflicts we are witnessing today.

