

Rick Fields

is a Buddhist activist; he was the Whole Earth Catalog's original "religion" editor. He wrote a history of Buddhism in America, *How the Swans Came to the Lake*, and later a book of practical approaches to spirituality, *Chop Wood, Carry Water*. [By phone.]

I'm less interested in change than I used to be. Change has gotten to be kind of an overrated commodity. That which happens occasionally when I sit in meditation is not what I would call "change." It's not what I would call "not-change," either. Instead we have cultivated a sort of fetishism of change. Once when I was working at *New Age Journal* this person called up and said, "you've gotta come and take this seminar. It will completely change your life in just one weekend." And I said, "Well, I don't really want to completely change my life this weekend. I've got a lot of things to do on Monday."

The things to do are always right at hand. Change is constant. It's something to be surfed on, rather than something to be sought after.

I've been working on a book about the concept of the warrior. A warrior is someone who can dance with change and hold his and her ground at the same time. The notion of a warrior has evolved along with the evolution of our institutions of defense and warfare. Warfare at the agricultural village level had a very different function than warfare at the state level. The task of the warrior in this state of development is to figure out a way to defend the Earth, the big frog pond. That's the compassionate call to arms these days.

There is a common misunderstanding that there is no conflict in spirituality. The myth is that if you're involved in spirituality then you shouldn't be involved in conflict. The problem, of course, is that there's a lot of conflict involved in being alive. People have shut off whatever strength they have cultivated in their spiritual life from their life of action. The task of the warrior is to bring silence and gentleness and nonaggression into the realm of action.

There is an old tradition that a warrior would go out to the battlefield to find a worthy opponent. Rather than say, "I'm gonna save the planet," it's more interesting and probably more fun to pick one particular opponent, and engage it intelligently. (Possibly anonymously, taking a hint from *Earth First!* It's called nonattachment to the fruits of your action in one of the early warrior texts, the *Bhagavad Gita*.) It's not done alone. It's kind of a lonely journey that you take with everybody else. In Buddhism, the bodhisattva is someone who doesn't enter enlightenment until everybody else enters enlightenment.



I'm hoping that people become more disillusioned than they are. Because if we can actually become disillusioned we'll find what Thoreau called "the bedrock of existence." The problem continues to be that we're expecting the bedrock of existence to be something solid. When in actuality it has something to do with the capacity for silence and the wind of clear action. ■

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