

**Cover photo:** Participants in the 31st World Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) joined in roundtable discussions, in which they shared religious beliefs and experiences. Some 650 IARF member religiousists and scholars of religion from 25 countries took part in the Congress held in Budapest from July 28 through August 2.

DHARMA WORLD presents Buddhism as a practical living religion and promotes inter-religious dialogue for world peace. It espouses views that emphasize the dignity of life, seeks to rediscover our inner nature and bring our lives more in accord with it, and investigates causes of human suffering. It tries to show how religious principles help solve problems in daily life and how the least application of such principles has wholesome effects on the world around us. It seeks to demonstrate truths that are fundamental to all religions, truths on which all people can act.

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**Note:** Because of their scholarly nature, some essays use diacritical marks or alternative spellings for foreign names and terms; other essays do not, for easier reading.

## Captives of Our Own Thoughts

In December of 1970, during the height of the Vietnam War, I went to South Vietnam to deliver a consignment of relief goods. I recall that we distributed food and medicine in a village close to the North Vietnamese border, to the joy of the villagers.

Because most of the main trunk roads were full of land mines, we generally chose to drive on roads that passed through the jungle. It was an old car, and on the way we suffered a punctured tire. The ones who were most put out and thrown into confusion at this time were those of us from the big cities, centers of overflowing scientific civilization. Even if we wanted to call someone, of course there were no public telephones anywhere.

We had a spare tire, but no jack. Just as we started to think we were really in a fix, the local driver took out a shovel and started to very carefully dig out the ground from under the punctured tire. That is, he planned to dig out a space under the tire so he could change it. Accustomed to the single mode of dealing with a puncture by lifting up the car body with a jack, I was surprised by the approach of digging under the car to free the tire. This situation showed me how much we are the captives of our own thoughts.

I had seen the bullfights of Spain in the movies, where at last the matador swiftly dispatches the bull with a thrust of his sword between the bull's shoulder blades, whereupon the bull dies forthwith. Witnessing the superb skill of the matador, the crowd erupts in massive applause. I actually witnessed a bullfight in Madrid, and perhaps because the matador was not very skilled, he failed to kill the bull with one stroke.

At this, the half-dead bull was surrounded and taken

out of the ring, a new, fresh bull brought in, and the bullfight started over. When the bullfight does not progress smoothly, it causes suffering to the bull, and leaves the spectators with a bad taste in their mouth.

However, among a group of Japanese tourists who had come to Spain to see the bullfight was one man who thought the killing of the bull was a staged performance.

So, after seeing this bullfight, he remarked, "Wow, that was really something! I keep cows myself and so I know them well, and to tell the truth, cows are not very smart, you see. No way they could learn tricks. You'll never see a cow act in a circus, I'll guarantee you that. But these Spanish bulls! They know just how to feint death, be carried off, and then come back on again! Amazing that they could teach them that! These Spaniards are really something!"

You may find this unbelievable, but this fellow really had convinced himself that the bull was putting on a performance. In fact, people tend to see things from a fixed and prejudicial viewpoint more often than you would expect. Buddhism teaches that we approach enlightenment by seeing, hearing, touching, and knowing. The deeper the tree puts down roots, the taller its trunk will grow. I think being alive means to learn from the various things we encounter. □



Kinzo Takemura

We would like to share readers' thoughts and experiences of faith and also welcome your comments on the contents of this magazine. We would also appreciate your reports on recent events of interreligious collaboration in which you took part. All letters are subject to editing. Letters can be forwarded to us by regular mail, fax, or e-mail. Our mailing address, fax number, and e-mail address are:

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*In July a retired Unitarian Universalist minister, Rev. Frank Robertson, from the United States, participated in the 31st World Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom held in Budapest. At one of the roundtable discussions, he told a small group of fellow participants the story of his former wife, who died at the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001. The tale of his experience, which was told in forgiving calmness, deeply moved his fellow participants. Learning of this, DHARMA WORLD wrote to him, asking him to share his experience for greater understanding among people of different religious faiths.*

Again thank you for your loving request for more information about the loss of my ex-wife, Valerie Joan Hanna, who died on September 11, 2001, while working in her office on the 97th floor of Tower One of the World Trade Center. Almost a year has passed, and it is a good thing to reflect on that incredible time in the light of our religious values and to gain some perspective about the events that centered about our great loss and the thousands of other families that suffered losses too.

The word "dharma" means "meaningful living" to me. Among the stories that suggest meaningful living from our family's experience of September 11 are my daughter Lydia Robertson's making sure that her Muslim friends be honored guests at her mother's memorial service. Her worry was that those friends might suffer prejudice because the terrorists claimed to be doing their violent acts in the name of Islam. Of course, I share her concern. One of the first things I found myself doing in the midst of all the tragic chaos of that day was to get into my car and drive up to a small store where I knew Pakistani Americans were working and to offer them support from me and my church. I am a retired Minister of Religious Education and help out from time to time at First Parish (Unitarian Universalist) of Plymouth.

Another story from our family in-

volves a cherry tree. Several weeks before September 11, Valerie and Lydia were discussing plans to plant a cherry tree in front of a house that Lydia had bought in Park Slope in Brooklyn, New York. Valerie intended to buy the tree as a house-warming gift. She also intended to live in that house too.

Lydia knew of my interest in horticulture and asked me to buy a cherry tree and bring it from Plymouth, Massachusetts, down to Brooklyn to be planted in front of the house during the memorial service. I called 70-year-old Edward DeNike of Plymouth's Center Hill Nursery and he said that he did not have a cherry tree in stock at the present time but he would get one for us. We went to pick up the tree when the time came for us to drive

Photo: Yomiuri Shimbun

*On September 11, citizens paid tribute to the victims of the terrorist attacks of a year ago before the American embassy in Tokyo.*

our van to Brooklyn for the service, but Ed was not at the nursery and no tree could be found. We did not know what to do! After several calls and messages left, we finally reached Ed on his cell phone. He was way down in the southern part of the state of New Jersey, where he had finally found a tree like the one Valerie had wanted. All the cherry trees had been sold out by that time from the dozens of nurseries of New England and he had traveled in his search in his old truck hundreds of miles to Camden, New Jersey, to get a tree for us. He delivered the tree in person to Brooklyn the morning of the service and refused payment for it. The service took place on September 29 last year, outside on the street with hundreds of people attending and many neighbors and friends donating food for the reception. My grand-

daughter, seven-year-old Charlotte, wrote a story and illustrated it, telling the story of the heroic firefighters who worked so hard to help people at the World Trade Center. She read the story during the service and presented the little booklet with drawings to four firefighters who attended the service.

Among the other events that illustrate dharma or meaningful living is Valerie's nephew Michael Hanna's heroic search for his aunt by riding his bicycle around the ruins of the World Trade Center day and night just after the collapse of the buildings, going from emergency center to emergency center, distributing pictures of his aunt and covered with ashes from head to foot from the inferno. There was even a time when he discovered her name on a list of people in a hospital in New Jersey, but when he went there, he found that it was another person with the same name. All the phone lines were jammed and the roads were impossible to travel on by car during the first few days following the attack. Michael is one of our family's heroes.

As I speak with my family members now, most of them have the spirit of forgiveness in their hearts and realize that the attacks of September 11 a year ago were misguided and horribly wrong but that revenge is not the answer; violence just breeds more violence. One of our greatest challenges in trying to live meaningful lives is to find a way to say no to violence while relating to all others with loving understanding.

In closing, let me add a few basic facts about Valerie Hanna. She was born on September 6, 1944. She worked as a vice president for Marsh and McLennan, a reinsurance firm. She worked actively for women's rights and took into her home dozens of foster children over the years and provided them with love and care when otherwise they would have been homeless. Today, there is a garden seat near the cherry tree planted in her memory where anyone walking along 13th Street in Brooklyn can sit and meditate or just rest for a while.

**Frank Robertson**  
Plymouth, Massachusetts  
August 26



# Problems the Sangha Must Tackle

by Nikkyo Niwano

*This essay is part of a continuing series of translations from a volume of inspirational writings by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. DHARMA WORLD will continue to publish these essays because of their lasting value as guidance for the practice of one's faith in daily life.*

In the past, fathers passed on to their children through their own example the severe demands of living in society, the importance of obeying its rules, and the seriousness of work. Today such fathers are scarcely to be seen.

Many fathers seem to think it a nuisance to have to deal with their children, and many mothers, forgetting that it is the father whose work supports the family economically, grumble to their children not to become like their fathers. Given this situation, it is scarcely to be wondered that children do not know where to look to find a model as a member of society and have no knowledge of the need to strive to attain goals. This is truly a sad state of affairs.

Mothers should not tell their children that it is best when fathers are healthy but not at home, but that the whole family is a unit existing through the father. Fathers in turn should teach them the importance of their mother's contribution to the family from behind the scenes. What is extremely important therefore is that children should be taught the various responsibilities of individuals within the family unit centering on the parents. This emphasis on the centrality of the family is by no means old-fashioned.

We recite as part of the Members' Vow the words, "To bring peace to our families, communities, and countries, and to the world." The basis of this is first and foremost peace within the family. Thus will the Realm of Tranquil Light be extended and manifested in our communities, nations, and finally the whole world. If the family is scattered and has lost all bonds of trust, it is not surprising that society too suffers. It is far more difficult to seek trust within society if it has already been lost in the family. The family is the very basis of society.

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*Nikkyo Niwano, the late founder of the Buddhist association Rissho Kosei-kai, was an honorary president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and was honorary chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) at the time of his death in October 1999.*

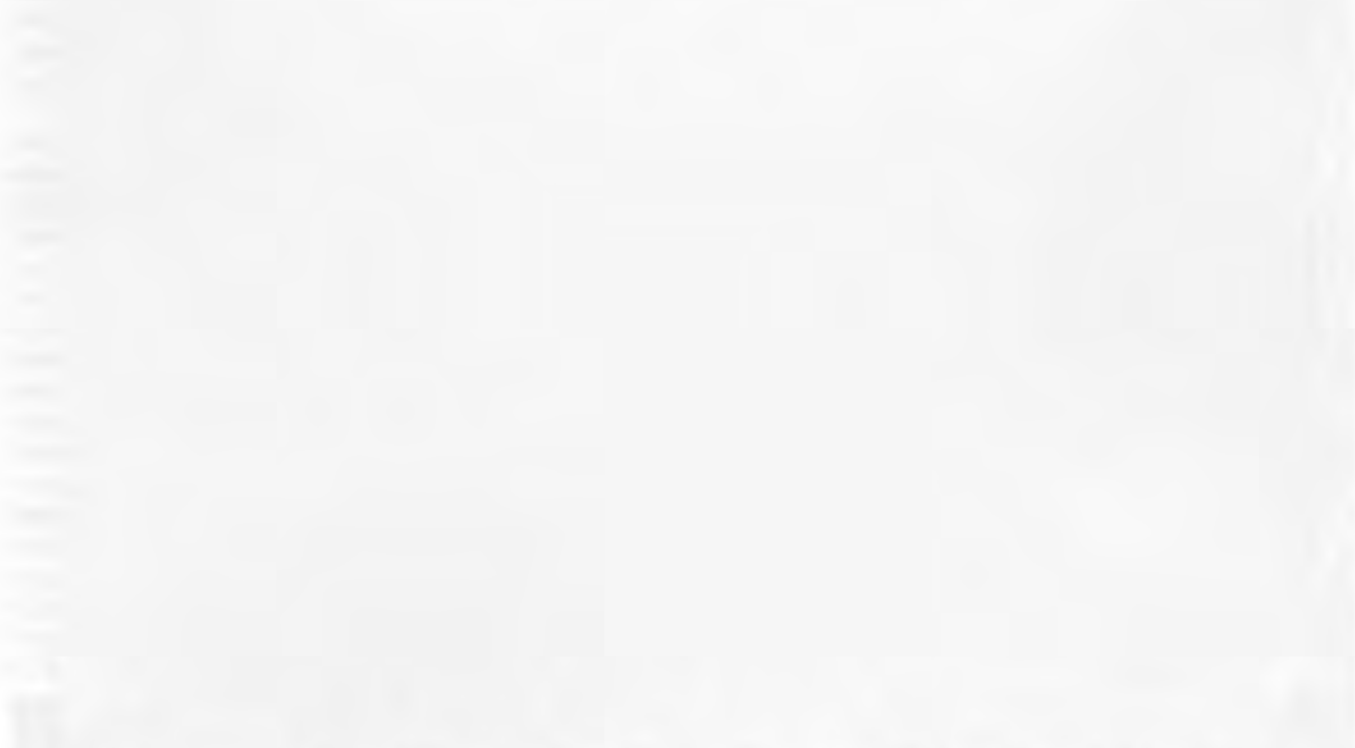
Greetings like "good morning" and quick responses are fundamental to human relations. Children must be taught them as part of their upbringing. In this way, human hearts are trained. Dwelling in modern industrialized countries, we must tackle the problem of contemporary society in which human hearts have been sorely injured, with due reflection that noncaring adult generations have joint responsibility for this state of affairs.

Within human hearts lies a latent brutality, an ignobility, that may reveal itself when we happen to take a false step. This must be confronted. In the postwar period, educators in Japan for a time popularized the concept of education without admonishment. Unfortunately, it often gave rise to an irresponsible hands-off policy. Preaching to children to be thoughtful toward others is not enough to create considerate human beings. First of all, parents must show by their own example what considerate behavior is. I hope that this is engraved in the hearts and minds of everyone, for it is through this that the seeds of consideration will sprout in children. This is not something that can be taught unilaterally; rather, it must be passed on naturally.

## Who Is Responsible for Raising Children

It was the psychiatrist Susumu Oda who introduced the observations of behavioral psychologists concerning the pecking order among hens. Some hens peck others, while others are pecked. In the pecking order, there is inevitably one hen that has no one to peck, and, without anyone to attack, she pecks at the ground continually, even if there is no food to be found there.

It seems that a similar pecking order has arisen among the society of children, as we see in instances of bullying. In the past, if an older child caused a younger one to cry, he or she would be reprimanded and told not to tease someone weaker and to remember who was the elder. However, in the modern nuclear family, there is little fighting among siblings and so there is little chance for children to be taught that it is a deviation from the human way to



*Founder Niwano greets children of Rissho Kosei-kai members with a casual salute at the Horin-kaku Guest Hall in 1985.*

prey on the weak. This is why, I think, there has been an upsurge of bullying in schools.

Parents tend to get very upset if their children are bullied, but are not worried as long as this does not occur. It seems that they do not even consider the possibility that their own children might be the bullies or the silent observers who enjoy watching the bullying.

The major reason given by Japanese children for refusing to go to school is that they have been bullied. In fact, more than 30 percent of all children have experienced bullying at school. This means that 70 percent of the children are bullies or silent observers. What are their parents thinking of?

Professor Takao Mori, a well-known educator, remarked, "There has been a great commotion about bad children, but who is it who is giving parental training? Infantilized adults are educating adult-sized children and this seems to be the very cause of the problems." If there are parents who are happy because their children are not being bullied, then we have to ask, with Professor Mori, who it is who is providing parental training?

Even though we know there is not a person on earth who is not endowed with the buddha-nature, crimes and

incidents are occurring in today's world that make us wonder if the children involved really do possess the buddha-nature after all. This is indeed disturbing. I remember that when I spoke with Mumon Yamada of the Rinzai sect of Japanese Zen Buddhism, the roshi said, "Everyone has the buddha-nature, but it is too late to begin polishing it even as a baby or even as a fetus in the mother's womb. If we say that the education of the parents is important, it is still too late. The unsullied buddha-nature exists even before parents are born, which Zen expresses as the conundrum 'Before your parents were born, what was your original face?' Indeed, we have to go back, not just to the state before our parents were born, but to the time before humankind appeared."

Yamada Roshi is saying here that we must make a thorough investigation of the great life force that is the basis of our own existence, and he warns us that if we do not raise our awareness to understand that the buddha-nature that comes from the great life force is shared by all, we cannot create a marvelous human realm. To respond to the social problems concerning children is a great challenge for the Sangha and it remains one of the problems that the members of Rissho Kosei-kai must tackle. □

## 15th Anniversary of Religious Summit Meeting on Mount Hiei Observed

From August 3 through 4, the Inter-religious Gathering of Prayer for World Peace: Dialogue between World Religions and Islam was held in Kyoto to commemorate the 15th anniversary of the Religious Summit Meeting on Mount Hiei in 1987. Some 1,300 religionists of Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, and Shinto, as well as of interreligious organizations from 10 countries all over the world, took part. From Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nichiko Niwano, president, and Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, chairman, participated.

This gathering was organized by the Japanese religious leaders to clarify the misunderstanding about Islam among the public, which was the basic cause of the world climate of prejudice and hatred against Muslims after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks against

the United States. The executive committee members of the gathering as well as the participating religious leaders wished that it would serve as a new beginning to promote a deeper friendship, to establish a world of coexistence by living and working together.

On August 3, the opening ceremony was observed in the Kyoto International Conference Hall. The opening address, delivered by the chairman of the executive committee of the gathering, was followed by the introduction of the participants from overseas. The message of congratulations was given by Dr. Hayao Kawai, director-general of Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, and a message from Rev. Kunio Nitta, chairman of the Japan Religions League, was read by proxy. Other messages from Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro

Koizumi, Pope John Paul II, and Dr. Muhammad Sayed Tantawi, grand sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, were read to the participants.

A commemorative lecture was subsequently delivered by Dr. Muhammad Saad al-Salem, chancellor of the Islamic University of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud in Saudi Arabia. In his lecture, entitled "Islam and Peace," he explained that Islam was a religion of love that advocates peace and fraternity to the benefit of the people and strives for human happiness. He pointed out that the teachings of Islam and actions attributed to a few Muslims were transmitted indiscriminately and this confused people of the world about the true nature of Islam. In conclusion, he said that his university had built and managed many facilities around

the world as a base of dialogue through education. He introduced an example in Japan, saying that such a facility not only contributed to mutual understanding between Japan and Saudi Arabia, but also enabled the holding of symposiums and conferences in an effort to realize world peace.

After the opening ceremony, the participants joined a symposium in the same conference hall with the theme "Dialogue and Understanding of Islam." In the symposium, Dr. Muhammad Abdulfadel Abdulaziz, vice dean of the Faculty of Creed and Theology at Al-Azhar University; Mr. Mir Nawaz Khan Marwat, moderator of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace; and Dr. Musa Zeid Keilani, member of the Executive Committee of the Islamic Congress for Jerusalem in Jordan delivered speeches. They explained Islam, pointing out such of its characteristics as egalitarianism, appreciation for human life, practice of compassion, and tolerance of other religions. According to their explanations, Islam strongly decries terrorism and violence toward others. Furthermore, they put emphasis on, and had hopes for, the role of Japanese religionists in helping to convey the correct knowledge of Islam to mediate between Muslims and people of other faiths.

On August 4, a forum entitled "Reconciliation of Conflicts and Religions" was convened at a hotel near the conference hall with some 270 religionists participating. Chaired by Rev. Gijun Sugitani, secretary-general of the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP/Japan); Canon Michael Ipgrave, advisor on Inter-faith Relations to the Archbishops Council of the Church of England; Mr. Ifet Mustafic, secretary-general of the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina; Dr. Abdalla Mabrouk Al-Nagar, professor in the Faculty of Islamic Jurisprudence and Law at Al-Azhar University; Rabbi Albert Friedlander, former honorary international president of the WCRP; and Dr. William F. Vendley, secretary-general of the WCRP, introduced examples in the former Yugoslavia and the Middle East, where religionists had contributed

*A group of world religionists led a prayer service during the Interreligious Prayer for World Peace held at Enryakuji on Mount Hiei.*

to conflict reconciliation among people of different nationalities and faiths.

On the afternoon of that day, some 600 religionists assembled before the Kompon Chudo hall of Enryakuji on Mount Hiei near Kyoto to join in a ceremony of Interreligious Prayer for World Peace. Rev. Eshin Watanabe, head priest of the Tendai Buddhist Denomination and honorary president of the Japan Conference of Religious Representatives, delivered greetings as the sponsor of the ceremony, then all participants joined in the silent prayer while the temple's Peace Bell tolled.

This was followed by prayers offered by representatives of seven religious faiths and organizations from Islam, Judaism, the Association of Shinto Shrines, Buddhism, Christianity, the Federation of Sectarian Shinto, and Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). The representatives took the platform by turns and prayed for peace in the form of their own religious traditions. In this prayer ceremony, Rev. Nichiko Niwano, who also serves as vice-chairman of Shinshuren, led the prayer of the federation and delivered the words of the prayer. In his address, Rev. Niwano said that he would offer prayers together with other religionists as they were all "children of life," in order to

help bring about true peace in the world as soon as possible.

At the end of the prayer ceremony, Peter Cardinal Seiichi Shirayanagi, president of WCRP/Japan, took the platform and made a declaration of the "Message from Mount Hiei." In that message, all the participants in the prayer ceremony hoped and called for world peace, saying: "We believe in reconfirming the promotion of interreligious dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect among all religions, as we have continued during this summit, as the basis of alleviating problems." The message also asked for "the guidance of God and Buddha that we should continue to work and pray together, to have meaningful dialogue, and to raise our spiritual potentiality toward the goal that all beings on earth can coexist peacefully."

The Religious Summit Meeting on Mount Hiei was first held in 1987 to continue the spirit of the Day of Prayer for World Peace held the previous year in Assisi at the initiative of Pope John Paul II. At that time, the late Rev. Etai Yamada, then supreme priest of the Tendai Buddhist Denomination, took the lead in forming the Japan Conference of Religious Representatives, composed of five Japanese interreligious organizations. □



## IARF Holds Its 31st World Congress in Hungary

From July 28 through August 2, the 31st World Congress of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) was held in Budapest. Some 650 IARF member religionists and scholars of religion from 25 countries took part in the congress, held in the Budapest University of Economic Sciences and Public Administration. On behalf of Rissho Kosei-kai, 70 members took part in the congress, headed by Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, the organization's chairman. During the six-day congress, the main theme of which was "Religious Freedom: Europe's Story for Today's World," the participants engaged in insightful discussions on such issues as discrimination against religious minorities and seeking concrete ways to realize and ensure religious freedom. The congress was also an opportunity for the participants from the world's religious traditions to work

together more closely in the interfaith spirit through such programs as morning demonstrations of respective religious practices and roundtable discussions, in which some participants shared beliefs and experiences while others discussed ideas presented in the lectures.

The Budapest congress marked the first world congress in the second century of the history of the IARF, one of the oldest interfaith organizations, established in 1900 in Boston. Against the backdrop of new political and economic developments in Europe, in which Hungary is soon to join the European Union, the Budapest congress also provided the participants with opportunities to learn about the history and potential of religions in Europe. Dr. Karel Blei, past general secretary of the Dutch Reformed Church and a member of the Central Committee of

the World Council of Churches, gave the participants an overview of the past and present situations of religious freedom in Europe, explaining why religious freedom is the basis of all freedom in society.

Some of the facts of ongoing discrimination against religious minorities by nation-states and the larger public affiliated with mainstream religious traditions were reported by participants from different parts of the world. During the opening ceremony, for example, representatives of Tibetan Buddhism, the Baha'i faith, and the Cao Dai community in Vietnam reported on several facets of discrimination against their faiths.

The public suspicion and discrimination against Muslims, which has increased because of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, was one of the pressing con-



## Korean Youth Join Peace Seminar in Hiroshima

Forty-three South Korean youths participating in the "Hiroshima Peace Tour," a program sponsored by the Korean Conference on Religion and Peace (the national committee of the WCRP in the Republic of Korea), visited Hiroshima, August 4-7. The program aimed to have them reiterate their determination to uphold their pledge to work for the total abolition of nuclear weapons and also to foster a realization of world peace through their learning of the damage done by the atomic bomb. It was also aimed at deepening the ties of friendship between South Korea and Japan through an interchange with Japanese youth of the Buddhist faith.

Thus, on August 5, following the visit to the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, they joined a seminar organized by the Hiroshima Religious Cooperation and Peace Center, and had a dialogue with 40 youth members from five branches of Rissho Kosei-kai in Hiroshima Prefecture. On August 6, they attended the memorial service for the repose of the spirits of atomic bomb victims in Hiroshima and the prayer for peace, and also paid reverent respect at the memorial for Korean victims of the atomic bomb, where they performed a religious service following a Buddhist ritual. The participants divided into three groups to experience home-stays in the homes of Rissho Kosei-kai members in Hiroshima, Kita-Hiroshima, and Kure. □

## Japan-China Friendship Memorial Unveiled

With the participation of more than 200 Chinese officials and local people, and 58 members of Rissho Kosei-kai, a memorial to the friendship between Japan and China was unveiled in China on August 15.

*Participants engaged in insightful discussions in line with the Congress theme, "Religious Freedom: Europe's Story for Today's World."*

cerns among the participants. Speaking about terrorism, IARF General Secretary Andrew C. Clark pointed out the IARF's new responsibility in one of his speeches, saying that while the IARF continues to save people suffering from oppression and persecution on account of their beliefs, it must work as well to prevent violence and murder perpetrated in the name of religion.

To work out concrete plans together to promote religious freedom, the participants heard lectures on such themes as "Teaching Tolerance," "Promoting

Voluntary Codes [of conduct for religious and belief communities]," "Using Information Technology for Religious Freedom," and "Building Strategic Plans." They then participated in workshops to develop project ideas and turn them into more concrete plans.

During the final plenary session, it was decided that the next World Congress will be held in 2006 and Mr. Eimert van Herwijnen, former chairman of the board of the Remonstrant church in the Netherlands, will continue to serve as president of the IARF International Council until 2004. □

*Participants from many parts of the world deepen understanding of one another's faith during a roundtable discussion.*

Serving also as an appeal for world peace, the memorial is located in the Sino-Japanese Friendship Memorial Park (a cemetery for Japanese war victims), in Fangzheng County, about 160 kilometers east of Harbin in Heilongjiang Province, where more than 300,000 Japanese immigrants settled between 1931 and 1944. The Soviet invasion and the aftermath of the Japanese surrender in World War II led to harsh conditions for many of the immigrants; it is said that in the cold some 4,500 Japanese died from illness and starvation, leaving a number of war orphans and widows.

In 1963, local people began voluntarily to gather from the fields the bones of Japanese who had died; they buried them in the area that later became the memorial park. Responding to this spirit of mercy and generosity, Rissho Kosei-kai members in the Kansai District have visited the cemetery since 1987 to perform religious services and deepen their friendship with the local people, as well as with Japanese who remained there. On the memorial is engraved "Japan-China Friendship and World Peace" in calligraphy. The construction cost was contributed by the Rissho Kosei-kai Peace Fund. □

## Shinshuren Holds Service for War Dead

On August 14 the 37th annual memorial service for Japan's war dead and prayer for peace was held at Tokyo's Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, which is not affiliated with any religion. Some 2,800 people from member organizations of Shinshuren, including Rissho Kosei-kai, participated in the ceremony under the sponsorship of Shinshuren and its Youth League. Following an address by Rev. Mitsuhiro Fukata, Shinshuren chairman, 61 young women members of Shinshuren offered lighted candles. The representatives of different religious organizations conducted separate prayers at the hexagonal building where the ashes of the war dead are enshrined. Then Rev. Michiomi Rikihisa, chairman of Shin-

*Young women members of Shinshuren offer lighted candles at the service.*

shuren's Youth League, pronounced a message for peace, and a silent prayer for the war dead was offered. Finally, all the participants presented a floral tribute at the cemetery. □

## Members Collect 159,642 Blankets for Africa

From May 1 through June 30, members of Rissho Kosei-kai actively took part in the Campaign for Sharing Blankets with People in Africa. In this annual activity, members all over Japan donate blankets themselves and collect many more from well-wishers. The number of blankets gathered during the campaign period this year totaled 159,642. Members asked citizens to participate at busy street corners and visited private homes to explain the aims of the campaign. The campaign was widely publicized through newspapers, radio, the Internet, and community bulletins. Many citizens who wanted to contribute telephoned the shipping agency in a suburb of Tokyo where all the blankets were gathered and packed. The blankets are being shipped to such countries as Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Angola. In late October, volunteers from Rissho Kosei-kai were to personally present some 30,000 blankets to Ethiopian recipients. Members also collected the shipping cost for the blankets, which had reached 52.7 million yen as of August

12. For eighteen years, in the spirit of sharing in suffering, offering prayer, and making donations, Rissho Kosei-kai has been promoting aid to refugees and poor villagers in Africa. These villagers endure severe living conditions brought about by civil wars and prolonged drought. Blankets are essential for their life in highland and desert climates, where daytime and nighttime temperatures differ greatly. □

## A Call for Peace from Palermo

From September 1 to 3, the Community of Saint Egidio, a Roman Catholic movement committed to the promotion of peace through interreligious dialogue and past recipient of the Niwano Peace Prize, held its 16th International "Peoples and Religions" Meeting. It took place in Palermo, Italy, and was titled "Faiths and Cultures between Conflict and Dialogue."

Almost 4,000 people attended the 24 interreligious discussion panels held by 465 religious representatives from all over the world. The roundtable discussions were held in various parts of the city. Religious delegates included Catholics, Jews, Muslims, Russian Orthodox Christians, Soto Zen Buddhists, Rinzaï Zen Buddhists, Shintoists, Sikhs, and Katsuji Suzuki from the Japanese Committee of the WCRP, as well as 57 delegates of international organizations and 19 representatives of the diplomatic corps. Andrea Riccardi, who founded Saint Egidio in 1968, said, "Each roundtable discussion creates a meeting point for people of different spiritual traditions and is based on the method of sincere encounter that has enriched us over the years."

The International Interreligious Meetings of Saint Egidio were set up in the wake of the World Day of Prayer called by Pope John Paul II in Assisi, Italy, in 1986. Since then, the Community has promoted encounters for peace in various European and Mediterranean cities such as Warsaw (1989), Brussels (1992), and Jerusalem (1995).

In his opening speech, Mr. Riccardi recalled the then forthcoming anniversary of the terrible terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. He said: "After September 11, we heard the question: Has the season of dialogue come to an end? What is the use of dialogue among cultures, peoples, religions?" To these rhetorical questions, which many have considered, Mr. Riccardi sharply replied, "These observations ripen in a soil of pessimism. This pessimism influences international relationships, and inside the different societies it generates a climate that heightens tensions." He pointed out that although our times seem to be more characterized by tense relationships than gratuitous meetings, and although September 11, 2001, would definitely seem to have buried the climate of hope that arose after the 1989 events ending the rule of communism in the East, "this time has also been a time of trial, which has strengthened what is more genuine in men's hearts and in peoples' lives." He added that he believes that "meetings among the spiritual traditions and the religions of our contemporary world are even more necessary now than yesterday."

In the main Cathedral of Palermo, in the presence of thousands of people, Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi emphasized that only by placing humanity at the center of our society can dialogue be fruitful.

Africa was also in the limelight, especially when Pierre Buyoya, president of the Republic of Burundi, affirmed that the difficult coexistence of different ethnic groups in his country and the ethnic conflicts that followed were the result of colonization, since it had "divided one group from another in order to better dominate us." He also recalled that the peace process in Burundi was born under the auspices of the Community of Saint Egidio.

The Community also promoted the negotiations that led to the signing of the Mozambique Peace Agreement on October 4, 1992. The Peace Agreement was signed by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the then-Secretary-General of the United Nations, and two of the nego-

tiators were members of the Saint Egidio movement.

The organizers said that it was hard to bring together people who are engaged in armed conflict against one another, "but we understood that we had hit our target when we saw that so many Muslims and Jews had accepted our invitation to attend." At the end of the meeting, organizers announced the decision to host a conference on antisemitism on October 16 in the Rome headquarters of the Community of Saint Egidio.

One of the roundtable discussions, devoted to "Asia and Peace: The Contribution of Eastern Religions," was chaired by Peter Cardinal Shirayanagi of Tokyo. Mr. Katsuji Suzuki shared the experience of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace, explaining that by deciding to choose Indonesia, a country "still confronted with various regional conflicts," as the seat of the Sixth Assembly in June 2002, the Conference "clearly demonstrated its stance to respond to the challenge of reconciliation." He noted that the successful gathering helped to rectify one-sided and prejudiced views on Islam through mutual respect and a sharing of views on how to move toward reconciliation in the spirit of religious cooperation.

Mr. Suzuki informed participants that ACRP VI issued the Yogyakarta Declaration, "which confirmed the stance of religious leaders confronting the challenging issues of human survival and expressed further commitment to promote multireligious cooperation."

Monsignor Felix A. Machado, undersecretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue of the Holy See, noted that the September 11, 2001, attacks "brought a radically new awareness to people all over the world." The Asian continent, "the cradle of the world's major religions and birthplace of many other spiritual traditions," he said, is affected acutely, as religion was thought to be obviously implicated in these attacks. "Consequently, all realized that the ancient tradition of harmony and peace in Asia could no longer be taken for granted;

they have urgently called for all efforts for peace to be intensified and multiplied." Monsignor Machado noted that the focus of Asian societies has shifted from transcendental values to material profit and consumerism. Therefore, he added, "interreligious dialogue has become a way of rediscovering common values that all possess, such as peace, justice, love, caring, and forgiveness." In quoting Pope John Paul II, who said that "Asian people are known for their spirit of religious tolerance and peaceful coexistence," Monsignor Machado stated that what is urgently needed today is for all religious traditions to come together to defend religious values in human life.

This year in Palermo great expectations were placed on the discussion panel on "Israelis and Palestinians: Dialogue for the Future," moderated by Cardinal Roger Etchegaray. The encounter did bear some fruit, since Israeli Minister Dan Meridor and his Palestinian interlocutor, Leila Shahid, delegate of the Palestinian Authority in Paris, agreed that the Community of Saint Egidio should come to Jerusalem to participate in the dialogue between the two parties. Rabbi David Rosen, international director of interreligious relations of the American Jewish Committee, pointed out that "even if religion is not to be part of the problem, it has to be part of the solution," affirming that it was "with this understanding in mind that the summit of Christian, Muslim, and Jewish religious leaders was convened half a year ago in Alexandria, Egypt."

In the closing ceremony, participants pronounced a unanimous Peace Appeal, signed by all religious leaders, to an audience of 2,000 in a positive and warm atmosphere of love and peace. In the final proclamation, religious leaders reaffirmed that in these times it is all the more urgent to pursue the path of dialogue with great resolution. "We know that there are those who invoke God's name to justify hatred and violence. Therefore, even more solemnly than yesterday, we state: religions should never justify hatred and violence. God's name is peace." □

*Eva Ruth Palmieri*



# A Conversation about the Lotus Sutra and Zen

by Stephen Covell

There are few opportunities for scholars to gather together in intimate surroundings and discuss in depth a topic of mutual concern for a period of several days. The Eighth International Conference on the Lotus Sutra, sponsored by Rissho Kosei-kai and held in the Sun Valley Hotel in Nagano Prefecture from July 12 through 17 of this year, was just such an event. Twelve scholars gathered to discuss the Lotus Sutra and Zen. The result was a greater understanding of the role of the Lotus Sutra in the teachings of Chinese and Japanese Zen and the lineage of Zen meditation within the Lotus tradition of East Asia.

The goal of the conference, as expressed by its lead organizer, Dr. Gene Reeves, was to create "good conversations." Like the Buddha gently preparing his listeners, Reeves and the staff of Rissho Kosei-kai's Chuo Academic Research Institute and the organization's main headquarters endeavored to create the perfect atmos-

phere for a good conversation about the Lotus Sutra.

The "conversation" was created from nine papers presented over two full days, with one day off from presentations to continue the discussion in the more informal setting of sight-seeing, and to meet with local Rissho Kosei-kai practitioners.

The first paper presented, "Truth and Deception in the Lotus Sutra," was by John Schroeder (St. Mary's College of Maryland) and sparked a theme of conversation that carried on throughout the conference: namely, how can we understand the Lotus in relation to the teaching of skillful means? Did the Buddha teach one truth higher than others, or recommend one practice over others? Schroeder argued no, or more precisely, he argued that the category of truth as understood in the West is not appropriate to understanding the Buddha's teachings. The paper's central thesis was that the Buddha emphasized a performative sense of truth as compassion and not a dichotomous sense of truth as in true versus false.

The second paper presented was by Paul Swanson (Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture) and entitled "Ch'an and Chih-kuan: T'ien-t'ai's View of Zen." Swanson began by questioning the title of the conference asking, "What is meant by the term 'Zen' (or Ch'an in Chinese)?" Does Zen refer to meditation or a state of being? Or, does it connote one of the many schools that call themselves Zen? In an effort to put some boundaries on the developing conversation, he limited his talk to Chih-i's use of the term "Ch'an" (Chih-i is the founder of the T'ien-t'ai/Tiantai Lotus tradition in China;

hereafter, the Japanese reading, Tendai, will be used). Swanson found that for Chih-i, Zen as meditation is a crucial practice. But Chih-i also taught that Zen must be part of a well-rounded practice that also emphasizes wisdom and compassion in an integrated fashion.

The paper by John McRae (Indiana University), "The Interface of Early Chan and Tiantai Meditation," was the third paper presented. McRae brought the world of high-tech to the program by offering an account of Zen-Tendai interaction in China gleaned from a computer search of the Lotus Sutra and Chinese Zen and Tendai texts. This analysis led to a picture of selective influence. He noted that Tendai meditation texts were so commonly used that their influence on Zen is without question. Yet, regarding the Lotus Sutra itself, McRae's search found that there are no detailed descriptions of meditation in the Lotus and that key Tendai vocabulary does not appear as such in the Lotus, but that when the Lotus refers to meditation it is in a positive light. His preliminary analysis of the Northern School text *Wu fangbian*, or Five Expedient Means, shows that while the school is indebted to Tendai for its "contemplative analysis" style, it appears that there was a move to avoid any further identification with Tendai. Much of the discussion centered on translation. McRae's search results brought into question previous scholarly interpretations of how certain words should be interpreted.

The fourth paper narrowed the focus further by looking at Dogen's understanding of the Lotus Sutra. The paper by Michiko Yusa (Western Washington University), "The Lotus

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Sutra and Dogen's Zen Hermeneutics," set off a lively debate that harked back to Swanson's initial call for contextualizing the term "Zen." Yusa brought to light the way in which the Lotus Sutra permeated much of Dogen's teachings. Moreover, she challenged the participants to see what Dogen might offer contemporary Japanese Buddhism—a dynamic spirituality that could help Japanese Buddhism escape the realm of funeral Buddhism in which she, and many others, believe it is trapped. A critical point raised in the discussion had to do with the playful way in which both Dogen and the Lotus

Dogen's view of awakening, and Dogen made extensive use of the Lotus Sutra in making this clear. Dogen relied on the Lotus Sutra as a means to express his own worldview (as opposed to others, such as Nichiren, who specifically sought to propagate the Lotus). For example, Leighton noted that "Dogen uses the time frame of Shakyamuni as teacher of the seemingly much older underground bodhisattvas to discuss the inclusion of all beings, regardless of spiritual maturity, as children of the Buddha, and the potential of all beings as themselves developing Buddhas." Elsewhere, Dogen builds

Dogen to express this worldview.

The sixth paper was by Yukako Matsuoka (Hanazono University) and entitled "Dogen's Interpretation of *Juki* in the Lotus Sutra." Matsuoka's work continued the exploration of notions of time, practice, and buddhahood through an analysis of Dogen's use of the term *juki*, which is variously interpreted to mean "prediction," "confirmation," or "assurance." The discussion of Matsuoka's paper fleshed out the development of the understanding of *juki* within the teachings of Dogen as well as within the Buddhist tradition more broadly. For example, it was noted that in early Mahayana prediction was absolutely critical to bodhisattva practices. The Lotus Sutra built on this trend by giving the prediction/assurance of buddhahood to all. *Juki* in the Lotus Sutra is another way of telling people that they are bodhisattvas and thus has major implications for how they should live. In fact, one critique raised of Dogen was that where the Lotus Sutra can be understood as teaching people how to behave, for Dogen the Lotus was used to help explain more abstract notions regarding practice and buddhahood.

The paper by Ruben Habito (Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University), "Nichiren on Zen, Dogen on the Lotus Sutra: Bodily Readings of Buddhist Scriptures," brought Nichiren into the discussion through a comparative examination of Nichiren and Dogen's readings of the Lotus Sutra. Habito pointed out that while both Dogen and Nichiren held the Lotus Sutra in the highest esteem, Nichiren's bodily reading of the Lotus Sutra required of him full engagement with the society and politics of his time, whereas for Dogen the Lotus Sutra was a support for the practice of seated meditation and was embodied in meditative practice. Put another way, Dogen's reading was ahistorical when compared to Nichiren's thorough engagement with his time. Much of the

*Conversations ran well over the length of each session throughout the conference.*

Sutra use language. The playful nature of the language was found to be a key way in which the teaching and experience of Buddhist compassion could be expressed. This brought participants back to the question of translation. How can modern translators capture the culture of the living text and the subtle use of metaphor that mark the Lotus Sutra and the writings of Dogen?

The fifth paper, "Dogen's Appropriation of the Lotus Sutra Ground and Space," by Dan Leighton (Graduate Theological Union), examined how the Lotus Sutra worked to define Dogen's worldview. Space and time were essential factors in

on the Lotus idea of the eternal immanent Buddha by teaching "that it is necessary for his descendants to actively continue Buddha's practice" and that work of the underground bodhisattvas described in the Lotus Sutra is to be carried out by "current practitioners." Moreover, for Dogen, practice was the "ritual embodiment and expression" of the Buddha. For Dogen, then, time and space were collapsed and with them the linear understanding of progression down a path toward enlightenment. The Lotus Sutra, in which time and space are also collapsed in a variety of ways (such as through the prediction of buddhahood), was a crucial tool for

pursuant conversation focused on the ways in which the social engagement of Nichiren could be incorporated into modern Zen practice. In other words, could a Lotus-based social ethic be drawn upon by Zen Buddhists to transform their practices? Whereas modern Zen was seen as in need of an engaged social ethic, Rissho Kosei-kai participants were quick to point out that today there is a growing demand among young members of the Lotus tradition for more sitting meditation.

The call for an engaged social ethic raised in Habito's paper set the stage for "Backbone in Buddhism: Japan's Resistance to a Utilitarian Bioethics" presented by William LaFleur (University of Pennsylvania). LaFleur argued that Buddhism in Japan provides a moral "backbone" to Japanese thought on important ethical questions, such as organ transplants and brain death. LaFleur outlined how Japanese have argued against Western utilitarian views in which the body has become fully commercialized. Based on concepts of purity and on a nondualistic view of the body and mind inspired by Buddhist thought, many Japanese have argued against the use of brain death as a determinant of death. LaFleur also

finds that Japanese have come to argue against organ transplants based on the mind set not of the donor, as is common in the West, (i.e., "Should I donate?") but of the receiver (i.e., "What are the implications of receiving?"). Within Japanese Buddhism, he notes, there is a disdain for calculated utilitarianism and an "emphasis on immediacy." This point was taken up in the discussion period with a special focus on the teaching of skillful means. Skillful means, it was determined, does not imply a utilitarian view, but is based instead on compassion.

The eye-opening analysis by Natalie Gummer (Beloit College) in the final paper, "*Upayakausalya* and *Sandhabhasa*: Hermeneutics and Literary Efficacy in the Translation of the Lotus Sutra," of the Sanskrit version of the Lotus Sutra and of Kumarajiva's Chinese translation brought to light the often overlooked importance of language. Gummer noted that in the West language is often seen as a means, but what we must remember when engaging a text such as the Lotus is that in the world of the sutras language is an agent—it is potent and performative. Gummer focused her attention on the term(s) "allusive speech" and

"expedient means," noting that Kumarajiva's translation placed an emphasis on "expedient means," whereas the Sanskrit version emphasized "allusive speech." Both, she stated, were highly effective transformative texts, but Kumarajiva's emphasis on expedient means greatly altered the potential ways in which the text could be understood.

Together the papers acted as seeds from which conversations blossomed over the length of the conference. In fact, although the official schedule kept participants at the table from 8:30 in the morning until 8:00 at night, without fail participants carried on the conversation late into the night.

The primary goal of the conference was to create "good conversation," and this goal was not simply confined to the papers presented. Indeed, the conference was designed so that the invited scholars could become involved in a dialogue with Rissho Kosei-kai. On the second day of the stay in Nagano, participants visited the members of the Nagano Chuo branch. Participants were welcomed by branch members, offered a delicious lunch, and invited to participate in their Bon service. Through this experience participants were able to learn first-hand of Rissho Kosei-kai activities, and the branch members were able to see the worldwide interest in the Lotus Sutra.

On the final evening in Nagano, participants were treated to an introduction to Rissho Kosei-kai by leading members of the organization. Participants learned of Rissho Kosei-kai activities to develop missions abroad and of the efforts of the Niwano Peace Foundation. Finally, at the headquarters in Tokyo, the participants held an open discussion with Rissho Kosei-kai members. And, on the last day, participants were invited to meet with the president of Rissho Kosei-kai. All in all, the conference was a success and the conversations began there will no doubt continue in the future. □

*During a break in the conference schedule, participants visited Zenkoji temple in Nagano City, where a priest explained the historical background of the temple to them.*

# Gethsemani Encounter II

by James Wiseman

Photo: Jim and Marina Funk

*This article recounts an important dialogue between Buddhists and Christians that was held this past spring. The author is a Benedictine monk of Saint Anselm's Abbey in Washington, D.C., and chairman of the theology department at the Catholic University of America.*

*He participated in a conference on the Lotus Sutra that was sponsored by Rissho Kosei-kai in July 1994.*

Gethsemani Encounter II, a sequel to the historic dialogue on the spiritual life between Buddhists and Christians held in the summer of 1996, took place at the same Trappist Abbey of Gethsemani in Nelson County, Kentucky, between April 13–18, 2002. About sixty participants entered into dialogue on the overall theme of suffering and its transformation, with special attention given to four of the major causes of suffering in the world today: suffering caused by a sense of unworthiness and alienation, suffering

brought on by greed and consumerism, suffering arising from personal and structural violence, and the suffering that eventually faces everyone in the form of sickness, aging, and approaching death.

There were about twenty Buddhist participants, representing the Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen traditions. From the Christian side there were twelve current and three former members of the board of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue, seven members of the advisory board, several monks from the Gethsemani com-

munity, and some specially invited guests. All of the sessions were taken down verbatim by a court reporter and were also audiotaped. Unlike the first Gethsemani Encounter, there was no division into participants and observers this time. Everyone present was welcome to speak and happily there was no reluctance in doing so; almost everyone made at least one comment and many made several. The resulting transcript of the dialogue is therefore lengthy and rich.

Abbot Damien Thompson of the host abbey set the tone on the opening evening with a warm address of welcome, in which he said: "You are an ecumenical people in the truest sense of the word, and it is helpful for all of us in this era to stretch ourselves to attain what you are expressing. You have a listening heart and are willing to extend yourselves over walls that society has always used to exclude others for the sake of their own identity."

Abbot Damien was followed by two keynote speakers, Fr. Thomas Keating, OCSO, of Snowmass Abbey in Colorado, and the Venerable Henepola Gunaratana of the Bhavana Society, a Theravada Buddhist center in West Virginia. Fr. Keating spoke of the suffering brought about when, at an early age, our understanding of happiness gets translated into the pleasure of instant gratification of our innate desires for security, approval, power, and control. In the Christian understanding, release from this illusion about true happiness and from the suffering that it causes can take place only when we face up to the need of letting go of ourselves as a fixed point of reference and allow God to remake us. Only then will the yearnings of the "false self" be transformed according to the values of the Gospel, so that eventually "love penetrates the whole of our life at every level."

At one point in his talk, Fr. Keating said that the other great world religions have the same insight into the basic illness of the human



condition. This was exemplified in the address of Bhante Gunaratana, for even though Buddhist doctrine is in many respects very different from Christian, there were certain points of convergence, as when he said that suffering exists “because of the core of clinging or attachment to self.” This suffering can be minimized through the practice of *metta*, a Pali word that he translated as “loving friendliness,” a practice that transcends all religions, cultures, and geographical boundaries since it is “the fundamental principle of all high religions: loving all living beings, respecting them in a very basic way.”

On the following four days—each of which focused on one of the four causes of suffering mentioned above—the participants gathered in the monastery’s chapter room for two morning sessions and two more in the afternoon. Each session began with a brief extemporaneous talk by an assigned speaker, after which any member of the group was free to add his or her own reflections on the topic at hand. An atmosphere of trust arose quickly, not least because many of the participants knew each other from the encounter six years earlier, so the comments were frank, often challenging, and occasionally humorous. There was usually not enough time at a given session to hear from everyone who wished to speak, but the conversation begun in the chapter room was able to be continued over the midday and evening meals, which were vegetarian fare similar to that of the Trappist monks themselves.

There is no space in this short article to give extensive excerpts from the many things said in the chapter room, but the following passages will give a sense of the kind of wisdom that was shared. On Sunday, April 14, Fr. Mark Delery of the Trappist abbey in Berryville, Virginia, spoke as follows:

“About ten years ago a nun approached me and said, ‘Do you remember the advice you gave me

when I was a college student?’ I didn’t remember. I was sweating, wiping my brow, because I thought maybe I had told her not to get married. But when she finally told me what it was, I said, ‘I would give you the very same advice today,’ which was twenty years later. I’ve used that advice quite a bit, without saying it’s a complete answer. My statement to her was, ‘Agree to be vulnerable.’ She had lived by that advice for many years and ultimately applied to and was accepted by the Trappistines.

“In most of the people that come to see me for counseling—people going through divorces and facing cancer and things like that—my observation has been that if they use prayer and vulnerability in imitation of Christ, it helps God take over. And when they turn things over to God the Father in true vulnerability and stop being aggressive about whatever is bothering them, then there is a certain answer that comes and they begin to get a freedom and dignity that they didn’t have before.”

The next day’s sessions centered on the kinds of suffering that are caused by greed and consumerism. Among the opening presentations was one by the Tibetan Buddhist nun Ven. Thubten Chodron, who spoke of how consumerism can infect the very ways in which our spiritual teachings are advertised and received. She pointed out that “on the one hand, we need to let people know these spiritual events are happening. But what I find is that the advertisements for religious events often make claims like the following: This is the highest teaching, the most exotic teaching, the most realized master who has done this miracle and that miracle, and you can’t miss this teaching because it’s being given to a select group of students, and if you pay \$99.99 you will be one of this select group.” And why, she asked, does this kind of approach cause suffering? Because it means we are teaching one thing but not practicing what we are teaching, and also

because our desire to attract numerous students and the financial and emotional support they provide can easily lead to watering down the teaching to make it seem more appealing. In her words, “We talk a lot about adapting things to the mentality of the students, but how much do we water down the Dharma or leave out certain points, or in the Christian faith water down certain things to make it all the more appealing so that you get more people coming? Are we really being true to the deep spiritual meanings in which we’ve been trained, or are we just making things available in a consumeristic way to a large number of people so everybody buys our product?”

Many of the comments made during the encounter were anecdotal. On the last full day, focused on the kinds of suffering caused by aging and sickness, Sr. Margaret Michaud, OSB, began by speaking of the ways in which our society regularly takes a very negative view of sickness and pain as realities to be avoided at all costs, whereas the Christian scriptures present a very different attitude, one that can profoundly affect the way a Christian approaches even a fatal illness. Sr. Margaret illustrated her point with the following story of a sister of her community, Sr. Marilyn, who died in November 2001:

“We had been doctoring Sister all last summer, as she had anemia and some pain and we weren’t quite sure what this was all about. Finally it was diagnosed as lung cancer. I was with her when the doctor gave her the news. He told her very gently and appropriately that she was very ill and that there was really no treatment because the disease had progressed so far. I wasn’t sure that she had understood what he had said, so after he left the room I said, ‘Sister Marilyn, you know this is very serious, this news that you have received.’ And she sat straight up in bed, looked me right in the eye, and said, ‘I am so glad that I had some time here on planet earth.’ This



*Participants in the Gethsemani Encounter II. The author stands third from left in the front row.*

floored me at the moment. She was an artist and a true contemplative spirit. She loved nature and was always wandering outside, listening to the birds and watching the deer, but she looked forward to her death with the greatest joy. In all the deaths that I've been part of, this was the happiest, the most joyful.

"On the final evening when she died, after she had received the Eucharist and the sisters were all with her, we sang and prayed and then sat with her through the night. About midnight she became unresponsive, and just as the sun was coming up she left us. I think what made her death such a wonderful experience was largely her own attitude, her joyousness, but it was also the presence of the community supporting her and the fact that we were able to do it in our own healthcare facility, a very humane kind of situation."

As in 1996, the encounter was marked not only by spirited dialogue in the chapter room but also by rituals held either in the abbey church, in a small adjacent chapel, or outdoors. One evening Fr. William Skudlarek, OSB, and Sr. Mary Margaret Funk, OSB, the chair and

executive director of MID, respectively, presided at a foot-washing ceremony similar to that which marks the Holy Thursday liturgy of the Last Supper, while on another evening the participants walked in silent procession about a mile to the outdoor statues depicting the Gospel scene of Jesus and the three sleeping disciples in the Garden of Gethsemani. At other times there were Buddhist rituals, one each from the Theravada, Tibetan, and Zen traditions. The Theravadins performed a ritual of chanting to help address and overcome greed, the Tibetans offered Tonglen Prayer to cultivate compassion, and the Zen practitioners performed a healing rite. Music also played an important part, for at the beginning of each dialogue and at some of the rituals the group listened attentively to recorder music expertly played by Dennis Skelton of Louisville. In a final summing-up on Thursday morning, April 18, MID advisor Fr. Leo Lefebure referred to the music that Mr. Skelton had played at the beginning of that session and then went on to quote one of the Buddhist participants. Fr. Lefebure said:

"The beautiful music with which we began this morning's session was from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, in which the chorus thunders out over and over again the words from Schiller's *Ode to Joy*: 'Alle Menschen werden Brüder'—All human beings will be sisters and brothers. Or, more broadly, all forms of life on this planet will be brothers and sisters. This remains as a challenge for all of us.

"And the final thought I'd like to take away is from Zen Abbot John Daido Looi, which moved me very deeply: 'In the critical moments of life and death, we transcend traditions. Whatever we do, regardless of method, it is the heart behind it that matters.'" □

All of the sessions of dialogue were recorded on audiotape and will be available for sale. In addition, Professor Donald Mitchell of Purdue University and Fr. James Wiseman are currently co-editing a book containing extensive excerpts from the dialogue, these being arranged according to some of the major themes that marked the group's five days together. The volume will be published by Doubleday under the title *Finding Peace in Troubled Times* and will probably be available in the spring of 2003.

# Shakespeare and Globalization

by Peter Milward

*Globalization is not just something that affects us in today's world. Indeed, with the great voyages of discovery of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Shakespeare's age was one in which men thought to put "a girdle round about the earth." This article takes a look at what globalization was then and what it should be today.*

The word "globalization," as it has come to be used today, is very ambiguous. For some it has the connotation of "It's a small world" and the popular attraction at Disneyland. What with air travel and e-mail and the Internet, we seem to be getting closer and closer together. Whatever differences we may have in age and occupation, in race and religion, we are all one as human beings. We are all brothers and sisters in one human family, under one heavenly Father. And now the European nations that were always fighting one another are asserting a common identity as the EU and have even created a common currency, the Euro. How encouraging it all seems to be in view of the new century and the new millennium!

Alas! If only that were all! But it is not all. Globalization brings freedom for all men and all nations, yes! But it

also brings freedom and equality of opportunity for those who wish and know how to seize it. And the result? The rich, those who are familiar with the open market and have the ability to manipulate it, get richer; while conversely, the poor, those who know nothing about the mysteries of high finance and are helpless victims of market forces, get poorer. And so we have the recent situation in which, whenever the financial ministers of the developed countries meet to discuss matters affecting globalization, they are besieged by deputations of those opposed to globalization and all it implies. And the outcome is often mayhem!

This is not just one among many problems affecting the lives of ordinary people today. It may be called the basic economic problem of the modern world, the problem of social justice. Never before in the history of humankind has there been such a glaring inequality between the few rich and the many poor, or between the fully developed countries in the First World and the slowly developing countries in the Third World—with no Second World any longer in between. And this is a situation that has largely come about within living memory, as a result of forces unleashed by the Second World War, and even more as a result of the liberalizing and globalizing of the world market. What are we going to do about it?

Ah, as Hamlet says, "there's the question!" For many people today it is indeed a question of "To be, or not to be," a question of how to endure "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune" in this harsh world, without resorting to the terrorist tactics of an Osama bin Laden. But at least this reference to Hamlet's famous speech may remind us that we need not limit ourselves to current ideas or ideologies in our search for an answer. Not all we read in the daily newspapers, or in political commentaries by the pundits, is necessarily reliable, not least because we find them sooner or later contradicting themselves or one another. Maybe we are all too close to our problems to see them with a requisite impartiality. In order to understand them,

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in order to diagnose them correctly and to prescribe the right remedy, we must know why they have come about. We must delve into the past, going back from cause to cause, and from century to century, into what Shakespeare aptly calls "the dark backward and abysm of time." We must learn something of the wisdom of the ancients, not only of Shakespeare himself, but also (as I have learned since coming to Japan) of Confucius, who says, "It is by studying the past that we understand the present."

Confucius, however, lived a long, long time ago, five

the adventures not just of Marco Polo, but of Christopher Columbus and Vasco da Gama, of Ferdinand Magellan and Sir Francis Drake. It was no doubt with such voyages in mind that the dramatist speaks of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as putting "a girdle round about the earth," though he is more forward-looking to our own age in his optimistic estimate of "forty minutes." Such voyages not merely revealed something of the genius of Renaissance Man, as we fondly imagine, but also brought back immense riches from the newly discovered lands for the benefits not of the common man but of the rulers and merchants. And there precisely, on a scale undreamed of before, in the darkest of the dark age, we find the rich becoming immensely richer and the poor becoming conversely poorer—the very source and origin of our problem of social justice today.

Then what, we may ask, does Shakespeare have to say about it in his plays? How does he reflect this problem, and what solution has he to offer? If we restrict our attention to Tudor England in the sixteenth century, we find all the elements of our problem today, in a series of statutes passed by successive Tudor governments against the proliferating presence of "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars." All through the Middle Ages there were beggars in England; but their numbers were vastly swelled by that "revolution of the rich against the poor" that was the reality behind Henry VIII's disastrous attempts at reformation, when he dissolved all the monasteries up and down the lands. The problem he then created as "supreme head of the Church in England" remained essentially unsolved until it was pitifully described by William Cobbett in 1824, in his *History of the Protestant 'Reformation'* and echoed with indignation by Karl Marx in one of the later chapters of *Das Kapital*. Such was the economic situation of England inherited by Shakespeare in his Elizabethan age, when he looks with sadness at the "bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang"—all the abbey choirs once echoing with the divine praises, now silent and sorrowful.

Strangely enough, however, Shakespeare never speaks in his plays of the contemporary situation in Elizabethan England. Perhaps he feels too sad for words. Perhaps he is not even free to express what he feels, and it is he who is uttering his inmost thoughts in the words of Hamlet, "But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue!" Anyhow, he is always looking away from England in the present either to countries beyond the seas in Europe and the Mediterranean or to ages long since passed away. He cannot bring himself to speak about his own time, and

*William Shakespeare—an engraving from a portrait prefixed to his first folio published in 1623. Photo: PPS*

centuries before Jesus Christ. But now, while following his general principle, I would like to apply it to the words and the wisdom of Shakespeare. Confucius was living only in China, and I doubt if he was even aware of the existence of Europe, let alone of the globe as a whole. But Shakespeare was living at a time when all our present-day problems, not least those concerned with globalization, were beginning to appear. We may think with pride of his age as brought about by the great voyages of discovery,



yet, paradoxically, in spite of himself, he is always speaking of his own time. For example, Hamlet only seems to be a Danish prince belonging to the early Middle Ages, where history places him. He belongs to the sixteenth century, like the university, Luther's university, from which he has just returned home; and even to Elizabethan England, presided over by the old councillor Polonius, whose name and character is oddly similar to that of Elizabeth's chief advisor, Lord Burghley. And he—for all his Lutheran studies—finds himself aligned not with the new but with the old régime of his deceased father.

*Hamlet* is indeed a puzzling play, not (as we tend to think) a tragedy or revenge play, but a problem play—a play full not only of personal and political problems, but also of social and economic problems. But now I wish to turn from this first of Shakespeare's so-called "great tragedies" to his last and greatest, *King Lear*. For it is in *King Lear* that the social problem of the age, not of prehistoric Britain but of Elizabethan England, is made most apparent and most excruciatingly painful. One of the greatest modern productions of this greatest of Shakespeare's plays is surely that of the Russian film producer Grigori Kozintsev. And one of the greatest gimmicks he introduces into his interpretation of the play is that of a silent procession of poor, disinherited refugees passing from time to time in the background. They are not in Shakespeare's play as such, but they are vividly implied in such individual characters as Edgar, in disguise as a mad beggar, Kent, in disguise as a faithful servant to Lear, Lear's Fool who follows his master through all his misfortunes, and Lear himself, thrust out of his daughters' homes to wander on the tempest-tossed heath. They all serve to emphasize the social problem of the age, if only by their implicit presence on stage; but the problem is given frenzied utterance by the mad Lear himself, who is paradoxically never so rational as when he is out of his wits. As Edgar remarks of him in an aside, "O matter and impertinency mix'd; / Reason in madness!"

It is not only in *King Lear* that Shakespeare expresses his sadness and indignation in the face of the social problem of his age. There is a whole series of plays on the themes of exile and banishment, the sufferings of the disinherited now reduced to misery. If I may mention but three of them, chosen as representing each of the three main divisions of the plays, I would indicate *As You Like It* from the comedies, *Richard II* from the histories, and *King Lear* above all from the tragedies. Of these plays, the first shows all the good characters making their way to, or already dwelling in exile in, the Forest of Arden, subject

to all the penalties of Adam; the second shows the two main characters, first Henry Bolingbroke, then King Richard himself, disinherited and deposed one after the other, the former making his way into undeserved banishment, the latter finding himself in his well-deserved imprisonment; and then the third, taking up and expanding the themes of these two predecessors. In them, one after another, we may see how Shakespeare, for all his varied genius, is always repeating his basic themes, always producing ingenious variations on them, and always contriving, as he says of himself in one of his sonnets, to "say one thing, ever the same."

In a word, Shakespeare seems to me to be always harping on the same string, as he exclaims through the mouth of his heroine in *Measure for Measure*, Isabella, who pleads

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justice, justice!"

before the duke for "justice, justice, justice, justice!" This is by no means the legal justice on which the self-righteous villain of the play, Angelo, takes his stand; nor is it the similar justice that Shylock demands in the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*. Rather, it is a deeply human justice, that which corresponds to what we nowadays call "social justice" on an individual level, the plea of those who, in the words of Jesus in his Sermon on the Mount, "hunger and thirst for justice." At the same time, it is a justice not opposed to, but deeply allied with, the virtue of mercy, which is the very standpoint of the two heroines in these plays, Isabella in *Measure for Measure* and Portia in *The Merchant of Venice*. For mercy descends from heaven, as they each insist, only when we observe due justice in our dealings with one another on earth—a justice that is chiefly due (as we so frequently

find emphasized in the Old Testament) to the widow and the orphan, namely, those who are least able to help themselves.

In conclusion, I have to admit that I have no more than touched the surface of the problem, whether in itself, as we see it around us in today's world, or in the plays of Shakespeare. All I can do is but echo the words that Shakespeare himself puts into the mouth of Lennox, as he speaks riddlingly to another lord in *Macbeth*, "My former speeches have but hit your thoughts, / Which can interpret further." So now all I can do, within the limited space available to me, is to leave you to your further interpretations of my poor words. And, as Lennox adds, referring to *Macbeth*, while I am referring both to Shakespeare's world and to our own today, "Things have been strangely borne." In short, what we see around us in the inequality of rich and poor is nothing but what Saint Paul calls "the mystery of iniquity." □



# Talismans of Hope in War-torn Sri Lanka

by Bardwell Smith

*An American scholar takes seven stones with him on a trip to Sri Lanka, and places all but one in what to him are important locations in a symbolic prayer for peace and reconciliation. The seventh stone, however, finds a different home, but one that is as meaningful and significant as the others.*

Having visited Sri Lanka frequently since 1965, I have considerable appreciation for its people, history, and culture. Friendship and scholarly ties in that country remain important to my professional life. Years of studying Sri Lankan society also provide a healthy respect for the nation's conflictive forms of ethnic, cultural, economic, and religious identity. Considering the protracted warfare since 1983 between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and successive governments of Sri Lanka, and the increasing communalism which surfaced after independence a half-century ago, one heeds historian Kingsley de Silva's words that "the country is haunted by a history which is agonizing to recall but haz-

ardous to forget." This piece is a personal reflection on my most recent visit in 1998.

That I traveled to Sri Lanka this time was to make arrangements for our students to study with University of Peradeniya faculty, an annual semester program that began in 1983. Preparing myself for a two-month visit, I was influenced by a clinical psychologist friend whose concerns are centered on issues of peace and justice. Having gathered a basket of stones from Lake Superior, she discovered to her surprise that by placing one of these at locations that cried out for reconciliation she became better able to address these situations. Inspired by this simple practice, I packed seven reddish-brown stones for our trip to India and Sri Lanka.

Because of the complex relationship over two millennia between India and Sri Lanka, I selected three sites in each country. Within India I chose Orissa and Tamil Nadu, as these places were already on our itinerary. They were examples of cultural beliefs in mythic powers that once channeled human energy for constructive purposes. Obviously, I did not expect that these acts of placement would have any social impact. Rather, they represented my conviction and experience that transforming energy is latent in the heart of destructive circumstances.

## I

1. Site number one was Dhauli (five miles south of Bhubaneswar in Orissa), the location of Asoka's 13th Rock Edict, which contains a central document of Asokan history. According to Romila Thapar in *Asoka and the Decline of the Mauryas* (1961), this edict is regarded by Buddhists as evidence of destructive power transmuted into alternative means of exercising dominion. The choice of "conquest by Dhamma" rather than by violence arose out of Asoka's remorse upon seeing the slaughter of the Kalingas on the battlefield before him. The transformation of this celebrated ruler from being Candassoka (the cruel one) to becoming a paradigm of responsible power has exerted

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immense influence on Asian models of kingship. On the other hand, the use of this story for ideological purposes by various Buddhist monk-scholars and political figures in Sri Lanka over the centuries is well chronicled. The contrast with Asoka's counsel of tolerance among different religious communities could not be more striking.

It seemed appropriate to insert a stone inside the cage surrounding this edict carved in Brahmi script (translated into Oriya, Hindi, and English) at Dhauli. Juxtaposed to the original site of battle in the third century B.C.E. is the interesting addition atop a nearby hill of a white Peace Pagoda, built by Japanese Buddhists in the 1970s. To these latter-day Buddhists, Dhauli remains a symbol for the possibility of peace in the present time, not just remembrance of an ancient king's decision.

2. In the temple city of Kanchipuram (Conjeeveram), forty miles southwest of Madras in Tamil Nadu, exists the large Shaivite complex of Sri Ekambaranatha Temple, with its 190-foot high *gopuram*, five large separate enclosures, and a huge multipillared hall. Kanchi, one of India's great sacred cities, was for centuries the capital city of the Pallava, Chola, and Vijayanagar kingdoms. It remained in a tension-relationship with its island neighbor to the south, allying at times with certain factions in Sri Lanka, frequently at war with others, but typically perceived as a threat from the mid-Anuradhapura period through the Polonnaruwa period that followed. Over this long period there were migrations as well as invasions into Sri Lanka, with a steady flow of Hindu influences, especially Shaivite. Out of this mixed history emerged a chronic ambivalence in the Sinhala psyche about South India's hovering presence. The ambivalence was politically reasonable, but its more paranoid form still colors Tamil and Sinhala perceptions and behavior, especially within Sri Lanka, adding to a climate of suspicion.

As one of many great temples in Tamil Nadu, this temple to Shiva, located in the region's capital with its vast patronage from successive dynasties, possessed symbolic and worldly importance. Kanchipuram was sacred to Vishnu as well and was once a noted center for both Buddhists and Jains. With this confluence of religious traditions, with the region's extended political predominance, and with its impact upon Sri Lankan history and culture, this particular temple seemed an apt place for stone number two. Because peaceful relations had sometimes existed between communities of different persuasions, could not Kanchipuram or other South Indian centers of influence play this role again? Despite skepticism about such an outcome, I communicated my request to Sri Ekambaranatha's senior priest, who personally placed this stone upon the central altar. Invoking Shiva's blessing for a peaceful resolution to the stalemate between Tamils and Sinhala in Sri Lanka, he understood my motive and was not offended by the request.

3. Thirty miles down the coast from Madras lies the well-known town of Mamallapuram, formerly the seaport for Kanchipuram and at one time the Pallava capital. In guidebook parlance, "it was at the height of its political power and artistic creativity between the fifth and eighth centuries." Among the impressive items of architectural design in this place, the one most intriguing to visitors is the 96-foot long, 46-foot high rock-cut sculpture. Known by some as the "Descent of the Ganges" and by others as "Arjuna's Penance," it may be viewed as a mythic account of the river Ganges flowing from its source in the Himalayas. Or, with its portrayal of animals, deities, and semi-divine creatures, and showing Shiva disguised as a hunter and presumably Arjuna the great warrior in quest of the Lord's boon, it can be read as the many forms of being and the infinite expressions of the divine. Exploring Indian mythology and sculpture, one finds a continuing thread in the story of Shiva's unleashing yet also controlling the forces of the Ganges as it descends to earth. In mythic terms, life-giving powers are balanced in one's imagination with human regulations of water through reservoirs, canals, and village ponds. The locks of Shiva's hair are thus demythologized, perhaps recapitulated by the historic dams and locks of local economies.

Through multiple interpretations of this great sculpture one discovers an exquisite portrayal of the human condition in all its ambiguity. One's imagination is triggered to envision enormous possibilities in that fixed piece of sculpture. In trying to decipher this work of art I also viewed it as a metaphor for seeking new perspectives within hardened social realities as these exist in Sri Lanka. While dubious about my own thought process, I left a stone because the site portrays a mythic belief of what can ensue when human and divine power join in regenerative ways.

Hopes of transforming violent interaction, however, do not survive without strong doses of realism. Therefore, at these two sites in Tamil Nadu, I could not forget that extremists among the Tamils had been implicated in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi; that by trafficking in the drug trade they had raised millions of dollars for the purchase of sophisticated arms for their war in Sri Lanka; and that they were training guerrillas at locations in North India and South Africa. The escalations of violence from both sides are well documented.

## II

After several days in Tamil Nadu, we flew to Sri Lanka for our two-month stay. The contrast between the normal security measures at Anna International Airport outside Madras and what confronts one at Katunayake Airport north of Colombo is striking. The protective maze through which one passes is part of a war-zone apparatus that exists at key spots around the island, of which Colombo and a number of places sacred to Buddhists are prime examples.

One might have brought a bagful of stones and deposited them randomly if one viewed these talismans in some magical sense. Such was not my bent. What I sought in this two-month period was greater clarity of understanding about the complexity of forces composing Sri Lanka. My project was thus related to my long-term research on Buddhism and the social order in this country.

This particular time (January and February 1998) was an eventful one. It was not only the occasion for celebrating our program's fifteenth anniversary; it was also the fiftieth year of Ceylon's independence from Great Britain and of its entry into the British Commonwealth, an event to be attended by Prince Charles and other dignitaries. Kandy, the former Sinhala capital in the central highlands, had been selected as the focal point of this celebration. Administrators from our program's participating colleges in America spent four days early in January in this part of the country. Among the places we visited was the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, where I placed the first of my remaining four stones.

4. The Temple of the Tooth (Dalada Maligawa) is well known for housing the sacred tooth relic of the Buddha that, as tradition reports, was brought from India in the early fourth century C.E., hidden in the hair of an Orissan princess. The Buddha's eyetooth symbolizes the strength

and independence of the Sinhala nation. Over centuries it was kept in succeeding centers of power, finally reposing in Kandy in 1590. In the Esala Perahera festival celebrated every midsummer, the parading of this relic in the central district of Kandy occasions an intermingling of Buddhist and Hindu beliefs and practices. As such, the Dalada Maligawa is revered by Buddhists and in various ways by other religious communities, including Hindus. As sponsors of a program whose students study local beliefs and customs, it was natural to visit this site. The security outside and inside the temple was palpably tense, but once inside, one's focal length switches to the beauty of the colors, the symbolism, and the sense of history. It was in a white lotus flower on the altar in the "Hall of Beatific Vision" that I placed another stone.

Three weeks later, in stark juxtaposition to this ritualized visit, a powerful bomb exploded at 6:00 A.M. on Sunday, January 25, outside the entrance to the Dalada Maligawa. As the crow flies it was a mile from where we were living. Jolted out of bed by this explosion, we could see smoke, in the darkness of early morning, rising from the temple area. Over the next two hours we learned that the bomb had been delivered by a lorry, driven by a suicide squad of the LTTE. Crashing the security gates alongside the area in which is located the Natha Devale and the Pattini Devale, the truck raced down the "pathway" toward the Maligawa, only to be stopped short of its goal to enter the temple. News reports indicated that thirteen people had been killed, among them security people, several civilians, and three Tamil Tigers. Many others were injured. The extent of damage to various religious buildings was considerable, but the inner chamber was not impaired. A number of nearby structures (Queen's Hotel, several banks, and stores) had windows blown out, some suffering worse damage. Even the Devon Hotel across the lake had extensive breakage of glass.

In the hours following the explosion, time passed as if in slow motion. It was impressive to see how deeply people, especially in Kandy, were stunned by the length to which Tamil extremists had gone in this attack. Thousands of people lined the south side of the lake, looking in disbelief at the temple across the way. Sinhala and Tamil alike were incredulous at what had taken place. Over the preceding two decades, violence against one ethnic or religious group had often occasioned retaliation by members of other groups. On this rare occasion, perhaps the worst attack symbolically, it was different. Not only had President Kumaratunga acted promptly by urging calmness on TV and by visiting the bomb site and the injured in the hospital, but uncharacteristic restraint was displayed by most people in every community. In fact, the bomb attack had backfired, bringing condemnation by Tamils as much as by Sinhalas, generating again the prospect that communalism could be transcended.

I felt like a CNN reporter communicating by e-mail to

*The faithful pray before the altar in the Temple of the Tooth.*



*Pilgrims atop Adam's Peak, a shared sacred site for people of different faiths.*

the agent institution of our program as to whether the fall semester should be canceled. Since no further incident occurred in the Kandy-Peradeniya area, we continued as planned. Throughout the country the situation remained ambiguous, as it has since the early 1980s. Threads of hope continued within a climate of sustained discouragement.

5. Two weeks after the event at the Dalada Maligawa my wife and I, with two former students and a colleague from the University of Peradeniya, decided to make the ascent to Adam's Peak, which provides a commanding view of the surrounding scene. Even more interesting is its significance to the major religious traditions on the island: Sri Pada (the Buddha's footprint) to all Buddhists; Shiva's creative dance (Shivan Adipatham) to every Hindu; Adam (primeval man) to both Muslims and Christians; and to Roman Catholics the Apostle Saint Thomas, who preached the Gospel in South India. Before the arrival of these traditions, the mountain was called Sumanala Kanda (Saman's Hill) or sacred lodging of the region's protective deity, whose residence here imbues other traditions with a presence free from communal struggle, though it too is a tradition reconstructed over time.

The coexistence of diverse spiritual paths up the mountain is a harbinger of resolvable conflict. To destroy one person's sacred meaning at this site would be to destroy one's own. The higher one climbs, the further one seems to leave behind the violent turmoil below. Ascending in the

darkness of night, one has a sense of rising above the stars on the horizon. It is a heady feeling, different from what one ordinarily experiences. Even if one has climbed this mountain before, one does not know what lies ahead, up the infinite steps, around each twisting corner. One climbs above the forested jungle below and one knows that in a few hours one will return to a world that cannot be escaped. Because of this double awareness, one of possibility, the other of sobriety, the climb provides clearer recognition that what we see day after day we seldom see in its own terms. One's vision of ordinary life is distorted, not just limited. Yet the climb itself, not just the view from the top, triggers one's imagination to see beyond communalism.

The hours spent at the summit waiting for the sunrise are a time of quiescence following the steep, five-hour climb up this 7,360-ft (2,243-m) mountain. It is a pause before the most awesome of creation's miracles. One is deeply moved by the sight of this returning source of energy. As one mother expressed it, seeing the golden orb rise out of the distant ocean is like watching the head of a child emerging from a contracting uterus. It is literally a rebirthing of life. In all religions there is celebration of nature's prime miracle. Impressive forms of this awareness are found in early Vedic and later Hindu rituals known as *samdhya*, chanted by a priest who welcomes the dawn, the noon, and the close of each new day. At the first glimpse of the sun that day, the pilgrims gathered on Adam's Peak in one voice gasped in amazement.



Before descending, I asked my colleague, a scholar of Sinhala literature, if he would inquire of the Buddhist monk, supervising the pilgrims queued up to venerate the sculpted footprint of the Buddha, whether I might place a stone along with my donation at this shrine. Informing the monk that this was an act of devotion in behalf of reconciliation and peace, my friend vouched for my good will and my familiarity with Sinhala Buddhism. The monk was clearly moved by this request and motioned us to enter a door leading to where he stood, and allowed me to place a stone directly on the "footprint." I was not prepared for my own feelings.

Why had I been so moved? In part because this time and place were a tangible instance of how people, sometimes suspicious of each other, were in this shared sacred space transported beyond their normal prejudices and separated destinies. To believe, however briefly, in the possibility of reconciliation among warring groups is to experience a glimmer of regenerated vision. It is to become a pilgrim in the midst of conflicting evidence. The damage we do to each other by our fears and hatred is damage that we inflict upon ourselves. Given the violent social order in Sri Lanka, one descends the mountain and reenters the ordinary world where suffering and ambiguity flourish. But in the meantime one's skepticism has been chastened.

6. The final site at which I placed a stone is, next to the Temple of the Tooth, the most holy spot to Buddhists on the island. A sapling from the original Bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, India, had supposedly been brought by Asoka's daughter Sanghamitta in the third century B.C.E. Known as the Sacred Bo Tree (Sri Maha Bodhi), this ancient vestige of the original enlightenment is a place we had visited many times. Never before, however, had portions of the ancient city of Anuradhapura, with its vast sweep of partially reconstructed dagobas, monasteries, palaces, and other ruins, been so heavily guarded, fenced off, and protected by elaborate security measures. Beginning in 1965, by foot and on superannuated rented bicycles, I had leisurely traversed this remarkable ancient city—the island's capital for a thousand years—for two or three days at a time.

In mid-February 1998 we were startled by the military presence, though the reasons for caution were obvious. It was also a reminder that over this city's long history there were numerous times when it became a besieged capital and the target of invasions from South India. One gains access to this past through inscriptions, documents, and art history. While Anuradhapura is well acquainted with sorrow and grief, the present threats are more determined. The site of the Sacred Bo Tree, by its location nearest the railway station and by its symbolic significance, is often the starting point for visiting other features of this large area. One is immediately aware of the caged condition of this venerable tree, sometimes considered the "oldest his-

torically authenticated tree in the world." Its appearance is like a patriarchal lion confined in a large but shabby compound for its own safety, protected from a threatening world. The area, once open to access, has been a symbol of freedom from suffering caused by attachment to greed, violence, and ignorance. While ancient symbolism persists, its altered appearance is strikingly incongruous.

Entering the compound, one is drawn up the steps toward the base of the tree. The three of us, my wife and I accompanied by a Sinhala-speaking close friend, were alone except for the slender figure of a woman, quietly engaged in chanting, seated on the sand-covered hard surface near the railing a few yards from the tree. When she had finished, our friend, recognizing that she was a type of Buddhist nun, spoke to her about the heavily guarded nature of this place. As it turned out, she had been there with a sizable group of pilgrims on May 14, 1985, the day a segment of Tamil Tigers forced its way into the compound and began shooting randomly with automatic rifles at all in sight. Somehow she escaped the rain of bullets that killed 146 people and wounded many others. The numbers killed included 25 women, 1 *bhikkhu*, and 4 Buddhist nuns. Her account was grimly specific, told without animosity, but eloquent in its portrayal of a society locked in self-contradiction.

As one hears about Tamil terrorism, one recalls repeated atrocities committed by government troops and local police, as well as the rioting, especially since 1983, instigated by Sinhala groups against innocent Tamils throughout the country. To place a stone at the Bodhi tree, having listened to this person's story, intensified my understanding of why efforts in conflict resolution have come to nothing. It is clear that no lasting antidote to cynicism is possible except through nonviolent and nonideologically driven means. Placing this sixth stone within the tree's enclosure, we were brought full circle to where we started two months before at Dhauli, a place whose meaning lies in reminding others of how unrelieved atrocity is self-perpetuating but also how violence can, so say the edicts of Asoka, be transformed into responsible power. My private act of placing a stone reinforced my own hope for such a possibility.

Each of these six stones was, after all, a testimony to a twin truth—about the omnipresence of suffering and about belief in a path to the overcoming of suffering. In this period of ten weeks, which was never intended as a pilgrimage but became one of sorts, the realization had grown that the casting of blame across political and ethnic and religious lines is constant, making it unlikely for either side to recognize its own complicity in this unfolding self-destruction. On the other hand, because judgments rendered by outsiders are often gratuitous, I brought home stone number seven as a reminder that violence and the need for reconciliation are everywhere—in my own country as well. □

# The Parable of the Vehicles

by Gene Reeves

*The Buddha, like any teacher, has to use appropriate means in order to lead others to the realization of their own potential. In chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, this is illustrated by the Buddha's tale of how a father uses his wits and skillful means to persuade his children to leave a burning house.*

The second chapter, often called the key to understanding the first half of the Lotus Sutra, teaches in some detail the idea of skillful means (Skt. *upaya*; Jpn. *hoben*), certainly one of the central teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and perhaps even the most important. The chapter begins with the Buddha emerging from contemplation to explain to his disciple Shariputra why it is that the wisdom of the buddhas is so difficult, so nearly impossible, to comprehend. This is basically because, in order to save various living beings, all the buddhas have made use of an enormous variety of methods and teaching devices appropriate to different situations. Thus the three ways—the way of the shravaka, the way of the pratyekabuddha, and the way of the bodhisattva—are teaching devices to enable different kinds of folk to enter the One Buddha-way. Shariputra, speaking on behalf both of himself and others, is perplexed, still does not understand, and repeatedly pleads with the Buddha to explain further. The Buddha twice refuses on the grounds that it would just further confuse things, but finally agrees to teach the full Dharma.

At this point some five thousand monks, nuns, and lay people in the congregation, so arrogant that they think they have already attained the highest possible wisdom and have no more to learn, get up from their seats, bow to the Buddha and leave. The Buddha does not try to stop them, remarking that the congregation had thus been cleared of little-needed twigs and leaves.

The Buddha then explained again that all the buddhas of the past, all the buddhas of the various worlds of the present, and all of the buddhas of the future use various literary and teaching methods, including a great variety of sutras, as required by the situation, all for the sake of leading people to the One Buddha-way. Such teachings, he insists, are neither empty nor false. In particular, the teaching of nirvana was invented for people not yet ready for the Great Vehicle in order to lead them to enter the Way by which they will become buddhas themselves. Included is a long list of practices, such as bowing to a

Buddha image or making an offering to or entering a stupa, by which people have entered the way toward becoming a buddha. All of this is in accord with the Buddha's ancient vow to lead all living beings to enlightenment, that is, to lead them to become buddhas themselves.

With this, the Buddha announces that since buddhas very seldom appear in the world, he will now teach the One Vehicle, but only to bodhisattvas.

Shariputra, the leading shravaka and not normally regarded as a bodhisattva, feels like dancing for joy because he realizes the truth of the Dharma, the truth that he too is to become a buddha and in that sense is, in fact, already a bodhisattva. In the third chapter, the Buddha further reassures him that this is indeed the case and explains that he will become the Buddha Flower Glow (Padma-

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*The opening part of chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, copied in ink on paper in the tenth century. National Treasure. Tokyo National Museum.*

prabha) and describes that time and the Buddha-land of that Buddha. This, in turn, causes all others in the assembly to rejoice and say that, after the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma at Varanasi, the Buddha has now turned the wheel of the greatest Dharma.

Shariputra, though encouraged by this assurance, on behalf of those devotees who do not yet understand once again begs the Buddha to explain why, if there are not three paths, he has so often preached them in the past. And this time the Buddha does so by means of the famous "parable of the burning house."

### The Parable

A rich man's house, now in terrible state of repair and leading out of which there is only one narrow gate, catches on fire with all of his many children playing inside. Though the father compassionately calls to them from outside, urging them to leave the burning house, they are too absorbed in their play to listen to these warnings. He also considers carrying them out by force, but soon realizes that this will not work. So he tells the children that, if they go out quickly, outside the gate they will find goat-drawn carriages, deer-drawn carriages, and ox-drawn carriages that he will give them to play with.

Since such rare playthings are just what they always wanted, the children rush outside, to the great joy of the father, and soon ask him for the promised carriages. Instead, because he is rich and has many of them, he decides

to give each of the children a much larger and fancier carriage. The children, having received something they never could have expected, are overjoyed.

### Interpreting the Parable

Then the Buddha interprets this parable for Shariputra, explaining that he, the Buddha, is much like the father in the parable, attempting to save his children from the fires of birth, old age, disease, death, grief, sorrow, suffering, and so on, from which they cannot escape because they have many attachments. He offers them the three vehicles as a way to get them through the gate, but rewards them in the end with the Great Vehicle. Just as the father cannot be accused of deceiving his children, the Buddha cannot be accused of deception for using skillful means.

### Some Lessons to Be Learned:

(1) Parables are analogies, but never perfect ones. This parable provides an image of four separate vehicles. But if we follow the teaching of the sutra as a whole, the One Buddha-vehicle is not a separate alternative to other ways; it includes them. Thus, one limitation of this parable is that it suggests that the diverse ways (represented by the three lesser carriages) can be replaced by the One Way (the special carriage). But the overall teaching of the sutra makes it plain that there are many paths within the Great Path, which integrates them. They are together because they are within the One Vehicle. To understand the lesser

ways as somehow being replaced by the One Way would entail rejecting the ideal of the bodhisattva way (the third carriage), which the sutra clearly does not do.

What the parable stresses is the urgency of the human situation, making it necessary for the Buddha to find some way to get people to leave their play and suffering behind in order to enter the Way. The Buddha, we are to understand, has used such means, not to deceive people, but to lead them. For this, he has used a great variety of ways and means, here symbolized by the three carriages.

It is extremely important, I believe, to understand that the many skillful means are always within the One Buddha-way, not alternatives to it. The many skillful means are “skillful” only because they skillfully lead to the One Way; and the One Way exists only by being embodied in many

One of the important insights to be gained from the teaching of skillful means is that many things that are not the whole truth are nevertheless important truths. Just as we should seek the buddha-nature in ourselves and in others even though we are far from perfect, we should seek the truth, even the hidden truth, in what others say, in their words and stories.

“Others” includes of course other religions. Followers of the Lotus Sutra can be glad when they encounter people of other faiths who have found carriages appropriate for themselves. The Lotus Sutra teaches that there are many successful ways, some, no doubt, beyond our imagination.

(3) The Buddha, like any teacher, has to use appropriate means in order to lead others to the realization of their own potential. But this does not mean that any trick

*Wooden relief at the temple Daikyoji in Tokyo depicting the parable of the burning house in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra.*

skillful means. Understanding the One Way and the many skillful means as separate, alternative ways has been a great mistake, a mistake that has sometimes led to intolerance and disdain for others.

(2) We should realize that in this story it is the lure of the three “lesser” vehicles that actually saves the children. In running out, the children are pursuing the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva ways. And here, these three ways, including the bodhisattva way, are essentially equal, as they are equally effective, perhaps with one appealing to some of the children, another to others, and so on. These “smaller” vehicles, in other words, are sufficient for saving people, that is, for enabling them to enter the One Buddha-vehicle and become bodhisattvas, ones who are on the way to becoming buddhas themselves.

will do. In general, there appear to be three criteria in the Lotus Sutra for something to be regarded as skillful means: appropriateness, skillfulness, and effectiveness. All of the skillful means recognized in the Lotus Sutra have these characteristics.

First, they are for the sake of helping someone else. Often, in the parables, the person who uses skillful means is rewarded for doing so. In this story the father is full of joy from having rescued his children. But the purpose of the skillful act is to help someone else, in this case, the children. The father is rewarded, but his intention is to save the children. There is no possibility of using the term skillful means to refer to something that merely shows off one’s cleverness or to some expedient that is primarily for one’s own benefit. The methods, in other words, are al-



ways intended to be appropriate and beneficial for the hearer or receiver of them.

An action that can be characterized as "skillful means" is selected or created to fit the situation and abilities of the recipients of the method, just as good teachers must consider the situation and abilities of their students. When this notion is extended, however, to practices that need to be developed by followers of the Buddha, then it is helpful to construe such means as needing or having a double appropriateness—appropriateness for the practitioner as well as for the recipient. That is, what makes something appropriate in our own practice is not only the abilities and situation of the person being guided but also the situation, and especially the abilities, of the one doing the guiding. Just as good teachers must consider their own abilities, we have to seriously ask ourselves not only "What needs to be done?" but "What can I do?" This is only to say that, insofar as possible, the whole situation, including oneself as part of the situation, needs to be taken into account in order for action to be as appropriate as possible.

Second, skillful means are always also skillful. In the Lotus Sutra the term *upaya* is used to describe the methods of buddhas or those, in parables, who represent the Buddha. They require intelligence and insight, even wisdom, but they do not, especially in the stories, depend on perfect knowledge. In this parable, the father first tries to get the children to leave the burning house by shouting at them. When that does not work, he considers taking them out by force. When he realizes that that approach will not work either, he comes up with the idea of offering the carriages. It is very important, I think, that the father tells the children that they can have what they most desire. The father, in other words, cannot simply force them out; he appeals to something already in them, and he can do so because he has knowledge and insight into who they are and what they want.

It takes skill to be able to discern what is needed in a particular situation. This is one very important lesson of the Lotus Sutra. Rather than offer simple rules that can be followed in all situations, it implores us to analyze the situation and be creative and imaginative, that is, "skillful," in dealing with it.

Sometimes we like to take the shortest, most direct, way to the solution of a problem, just like the father shouting at his children. Often such direct orders do not work, not because the prescription is incorrect, but because it is not presented skillfully, that is, in a way that will be accepted and acted upon. It takes skill to figure out not only what is needed, but what will be effective.

Third, skillful means are always also actually effective. They work. There are no examples of skillful methods that turn out to be ineffective. In this story, it is very important that the children are actually saved from the burning house. In Buddhism, intentions are very important, but the Lotus Sutra places much more emphasis on results. The

sutra, in other words, while concerned about what goes on in our heads, is even more concerned about what we do with our bodies, that is, with how we behave, with how we live our daily lives.

(4) Even the very fancy carriage that the father gives to the children is, after all, only a carriage, a vehicle. All of our teachings and practices should be understood as devices, as possible ways of helping people. They should never be taken as final truths.

Appropriate means are means, not ends. In this sense they have only instrumental and provisional importance. While it is true that the doctrine of skillful means is sometimes used to describe something provisional, it is important to recognize that being instrumental and provisional does not mean that such methods are in any sense unimportant. At one point at least, the Lotus Sutra suggests that it is itself an appropriate means. The context is one in which the sutra is praising itself and proclaiming its superiority over others ("those who do not hear or believe this sutra suffer a great loss"), but then it says:

When I attain the Buddha way,  
By skillful means  
I will teach this Sutra to them  
That they may live within it.

It is very interesting that what gets the children out of the house is their pursuit of the three kinds of carriages, that is, their pursuit of the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva ways. At least with respect to getting the children out of the burning house, these so-called lesser ways are effective. And they appear to be equally effective. As we will see, the Lotus Sutra champions the bodhisattva way and generally regards it as superior to other ways. But it does not say that these other ways, primarily the shravaka way, cannot be effective. In fact, it says just the opposite—the shravaka way is one of the Buddha's skillful and appropriate ways of saving people.

(5) Why does the Buddha say in this chapter that he will teach the One Vehicle, but only to bodhisattvas? In the first chapter, we saw that the Lotus Sutra celebrates both listening and teaching or preaching. In other words, it takes two to teach—teaching is not teaching unless someone is taught. Thus in the first chapter, heavenly flowers fall on both the Buddha and the audience. That idea is extended here with the idea that the Buddha preaches only to bodhisattvas. The point is that to hear the Dharma is to be already, to that degree, a bodhisattva. This is because to truly hear the Dharma is to take it into one's life, thus to live it, thus to be a bodhisattva. Thus it can be said that the buddhas come into the world only to convert people into bodhisattvas.

(6) What the sutra condemns is not other people, but arrogance—especially the arrogance of thinking one has arrived at the truth, at some final goal. Rather, we are called upon by this sutra to be "lifetime beginners," people who

know they have much to learn and always will. The 5,000 who walk out of the assembly in the second chapter are said to be like twigs and leaves and not really needed, but in chapter 8, they too are told that they will become buddhas.

(7) The Buddha is like a loving father. In many of the parables in the Lotus Sutra, it is a father figure who represents the Buddha. It is possible that the use of such stories influenced the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, leading it, probably more than any other Buddhist text, to emphasize the person, the father-like nature of the Buddha. Over and over, the Lotus Sutra uses personal language to speak of an ultimate reality. Far from being "absolute" and distant, or even "omniscient," as the Buddhist tradition has sometimes claimed, the Buddha of the Lotus Sutra is someone who is very concerned for his children. This means, in effect, that the happiness of the Buddha—and not only the happiness but also the fulfilling of the purpose of the Buddha—depends on us. This is a theme to which we will return in discussing other stories.

It is important to realize that we are like the children in this parable of the vehicles. We need guidance, but we will not be forced. We should think of ourselves as collaborators with the Buddha, helping to do Buddha-work, both within ourselves and in the world.

(8) The parable is interpreted as saying that the world is like a burning house. Much more than in my telling of the story above, the verse version of the parable goes to great lengths to describe the terrors of the burning house, perhaps leading some to think that our goal should be to escape from this world.

But escaping from the world is not at all what the sutra teaches. Elsewhere it makes clear that we are to work in the world to help or save others. The point here is more that we are like children at play, not paying enough attention to the environment around us. Perhaps it is not the whole world that is in flames but our own playgrounds, the private worlds we create out of our attachments and out of our complacency. Thus leaving the house is not escaping from the world but leaving behind our play-world, our attachments and illusions, or at least some of them, in order to enter the real world.

(9) Enlightenment is more a way than an end, more a road than a destination, more a commencement than a conclusion—a responsibility as much as an achievement. To enter the Buddha-way is not a matter of attaining some great height from which one can boast or look down on others. It is to enter an ever difficult path, a way. At the end of this parable, the children are very happy, as they have received a gift much greater than they expected, perhaps greater than they could have imagined. But we must not imagine that receiving the gift is the end of the matter. We can even say that their lives and their difficulties—that is, their responsibilities—have now really only just begun.

*To be continued*

## Buddhist Pointers for Looking at Yourself

*Excerpts from Yakushin, a Japanese periodical for Rissho Kosei-kai members*

### Be Neither Abject Nor Arrogant

When we make mistakes and commit errors, we naturally feel mortified by our own stupidity and powerlessness and belittle ourselves. And, at the other extreme, when everything is going well, we savor being at the peak of our abilities. However, we are not being our true selves when we perforce feel abject, and neither are we our true selves when we are at the peak of our abilities.

The law of transience teaches that there is not a single thing in this world that remains fixed and unchanging, and this law also applies to us. Even if something occurs that makes us feel that we are worthless, when we use the energy left to us to make up for it, we discover in ourselves someone completely different from who we were formerly. At the same time, there is no guarantee that we will be able to continually exhibit outstanding abilities. To write oneself off, or to put too much faith in oneself to the point of arrogance, is to display a too narrowly confined understanding of the self, which changes constantly.

When we move away from a fixed viewpoint and look at ourselves with a more flexible attitude, we discover ourselves, possessors of rich hidden possibilities. □

### Learning from Our Own Emotions

To speak specifically of the process of looking at oneself, it often seems to be the case that people will feel some occasional emotion that functions as a way of entering into self-reflection of their own accord. For example, one might think, "I am being consumed by anger. . . . Why am I angry? . . . Things are not turning out as I planned. . . . Why is that?" When we engage in this kind of reflection, we usually realize that self-centered desires and attachments, or strong egoism, are at the root of our anger. Can we realize this or not? That is the important point when we engage in self-reflection. If we can conclude from self-reflection that searches out the roots of our emotions that, "Still self-centered as usual; I have a long way to go," and make up our minds to be more humble, then we can start moving ahead again. Regardless of whether we feel happiness or sorrow, it is not possible to say that these emotions have no basis in selfish desires or tenacious attachments.

Emotions themselves are the natural products of the human heart. However, we should not allow ourselves to be tossed around by our emotions; instead, if we trace them back to their origins, we will find that they show us ourselves, spurred on by greed, anger, and stupidity. □

# The Fertile Field of the Heart and Mind

by Nichiko Niwano

*We are like fields that generate merits. These fields of merits are none other than the fields of the heart and mind within each of us. The more we cultivate these fields, and give them water and light, the richer the harvest we will gain.*

The agricultural philosopher Ninomiya Sontoku (1787–1856) wrote, “If you cultivate the field of the heart, cultivating the wilderness is easy.” In other words, cultivating the wilderness is an arduous task, but if you can cultivate the field of the heart and mind you will have no trouble cultivating the wilderness.

Buddhism includes the concept of the field of merits (also called the field of blessings). The field of merits means the field that generates virtues, the greatest field of merits being the Buddha. The Threefold Lotus Sutra likens the Buddha to “the blessing-field for gods and men” and “the great field of blessings for all living beings.” An old Japanese maxim runs, “Cultivate virtues in the field of merits.”

We too are fields that generate merits. As the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings says, “Pouring abundantly the supreme Mahayana, they [the bodhisattva-mahasattvas] dip all the good roots of living beings in it, scatter the seeds of goodness over the field of merits, and make all

put forth the sprout of buddhahood.” This passage teaches the order in which the buddhas awaken the aspiration to buddhahood in us. This field of merits is none other than the field of the heart and mind within each and every person.

Each of us has a distinctive inner landscape. Of course it also shares features with others’ inner landscapes, but since we are all discrete beings, our fields of the heart and mind put forth a wide variety of sprouts: compassion, warmth, flexibility, respect for life, and so on.

When a field is cultivated, its soil is loosened and it yields a rich harvest. In the same way, as we cultivate the field of the heart and mind our stiff and unyielding self-centeredness is loosened, we are released from suffering, and we are reborn as compassionate people imbued with respect for life. The more we cultivate the field of the heart and mind, the richer the harvest we can gain. If we give the field water and light, it will yield an abundant harvest. The key is the way we cultivate it. The field of the heart and mind holds boundless potential; originally it is rich and fertile.

## Plowing the Soil and Sowing Seeds

I find the image conveyed by the following story from Shakyamuni’s forty-five years of teaching especially moving. It appears in many scriptures, including the Suttanipata (Collection of Sutras), the Samyutta-nikaya (Collection of Grouped Discourses), and the Samyukta-agama (Grouped Discourses). The version below represents my amalgamation.

Shakyamuni was staying in a brahman village in the kingdom of Magadha. The brahman Kasibharadvaja, a large landholder, had had his workers yoke bullocks to five hundred plows in preparation for plowing and sowing and was distributing food for the morning meal. Shakyamuni went there and stood quietly to one side. Seeing him, Kasibharadvaja said accusingly, “Shramana! We plow the soil, sow seed, and thus obtain our food. Why don’t you plow your own field and obtain your own food?”

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*Rev. Niwano prays before the altar at a funeral for the late Venerable Ming Yang, vice-president of the Buddhist Association of China, at Longhua temple in Shanghai on July 27. Rev. Niwano visited China during July 23–31 at the invitation of the Buddhist Association of China in commemoration of the 30th anniversary of the resumption of diplomatic ties between Japan and China.*

Shakyamuni replied quietly, “Brahman! I too plow the soil, sow seed, and obtain food.” Kasibharadvaja, not understanding what he meant, retorted, “Shramana! We have never seen you plowing. Where is your plow? Where is your bullock? Please explain what you mean by plowing in a way that we can understand.”

Shakyamuni replied with the following verse:

“Faith is the seed, penance is the rain, wisdom is my yoke and plow; modesty is the pole, mind is the yoke tie, mindfulness is my plowshare and goad.

“I am guarded in body and guarded in speech, restrained in my belly in respect of food. I make truth my weeding hook and meekness my unyoking.

“Energy is my beast of burden; bearing me to rest from exertion, it goes without turning back to where, having gone, one does not grieve.

“Thus is this plowing of mine plowed. It has the death-free as its fruit. Having plowed this plowing, one is freed from all misery.”

Moved by Shakyamuni’s words, Kasibharadvaja offered him rice gruel boiled in milk. But Shakyamuni refused it, saying, “It is not the custom of an enlightened one to re-

ceive food in exchange for reciting verses.” He ordered the brahman to dispose of it in water where no fish, insects, or other living things dwell. Kasibharadvaja did so, upon which the rice gruel hissed and gave off steam. Seeing this, he pledged himself to Shakyamuni on the spot and begged to be allowed to become a disciple. Eventually he gained the enlightenment of an arhat.

Thus Shakyamuni taught the importance of cultivating the field of the heart and mind. The image of Shakyamuni conveyed here and his dialogue with Kasibharadvaja teach us a great deal. Of course we learn that Shakyamuni taught the importance of constantly cultivating the field of the heart and mind, but we also learn what cultivating the field of the heart and mind actually means and how to go about it.

Each one of us, from our own standpoint, should think about how best to cultivate our own field of the heart and mind and make this our objective. I myself see the objective of “each and every one cultivating the field of the heart and mind” as comprising five elements: self-reflection, thanksgiving, mildness, warmth, and the joy of faith. They all seem different, but fundamentally they are linked and together make up an invaluable mind-set. □



# Living to the Fullest

*A former maintenance technician at a nuclear-power plant decided to change his job and devote his life to being of service to others. Luckily, supported by family and friends, he now works in a nursing home, helping others—as well as himself—to live life to the fullest.*

In the Kaminaka neighborhood of the Oniyu district of Fukui prefecture, old mansions and godowns can still be seen today in an area that was called the Kumakawa Post Town during the Edo period (1600–1868). An important east-west route for the transportation of mackerel caught in Wakasa Bay to Kyoto passed through here, familiar to the local people as the “Mackerel Highway.”

Near the center of the old Kumakawa Post Town, on the site of the former Kumakawa Primary School, stands Shoji-en (Grove of Long-lived Pines), the nursing home where 30-year-old Koichi Kitamura works. Its residents number 72, including short-term residents as well as those with physical handicaps or senile dementia.

Kitamura’s work involves feeding and bathing the residents, changing their diapers, and so on. Most of the time he is dealing directly with the residents, but he is also involved in planning and managing activities at the facility, as well as taking care of various miscellaneous tasks such as picking up residents or taking them home, repairing wheelchairs, fixing televisions, replacing burnt-out light bulbs, and so on.

It was late in April when Ms. T arrived for a short stay. Her son had taken a job in Kanazawa, in neighboring Ishikawa prefecture, and so she was living alone in Kaminaka. Due to her weak legs and back, one of the things she brought with her to the home was a wheelchair. Kitamura deftly stowed Ms. T’s luggage in her personal closet in her corner of the four-person room. Finishing that, he pulled Ms. T’s wheelchair into the center of the room. He wrapped traction tape around the metal handles on the wheels to make it easier to propel the chair. When he asked Ms. T if that was OK, she replied, “Just fine, perfect.” He added, “See how it goes like this. Just give me the word if it’s not working all right.” Ms. T nodded.

As soon as he left Ms. T’s room, he immediately began interacting with another lady in the hallway. Bending his 185 cm (6 ft.) frame almost in half, Kitamura spoke gently into the lady’s ear: “Shall we go the hall?” Seeing that

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*Koichi Kitamura is a member of the Wakasa Branch of Rissho Kosei-kai in Fukui Prefecture.*

she was sitting all by herself and doing nothing, he guided her to the hall where many of the residents congregate.

When he is helping the patients to eat, he always sits with his legs opened wide and his upper body bent down and forward, as it is easier to help them from a low posture. Most importantly, he can talk with them face-to-face. "I want them to enjoy their meal," he says.

Mr. N is one of the people who is happy with Kitamura's help. "He makes it easy to eat by giving me a little bit at a time. He always inquires to see if I'm having any difficulty, which is very helpful."

Kitamura explains his basic approach; "I want to understand what the other person wants at the moment. I want to please the residents, even if it's only a minor thing."

### Appreciating the Support of Family and Friends

In his decision to try working in the social-welfare sector, Kitamura was greatly influenced by his father, Yasunobu. Kitamura was raised hearing about the problems Yasunobu encountered at school and at work, certified as handicapped on account of his extremely weak eyesight. He was taught, "People should make their best effort, and never forget to be grateful."

Seven years ago—in reality, as a way of expressing his filial devotion for his father—he made up his mind that he wanted to do some kind of work in which he could be of help to people with handicaps.

Until February this year, Kitamura had been employed at a nuclear-power plant located about a 40-minute drive from his home. His job mainly involved equipment maintenance, measuring oxygen levels, checking radiation levels of equipment that went outside the plant, etc.

He was married in 1999, and with the birth of his eldest son, he was not in a position where it would be easy to change careers. His family's feelings, his income, his aptitude for the new job—he had a lot more to worry about than when he was single. However, his determination never wavered. He thought, "I want to live by making myself a light," recalling the teaching of "Make yourself a light," which he had learned at his local Rissho Kosei-kai branch. He told himself, "You are the one who will open up your own path in life."

Based on the decision he made seven years ago, he continued to study about social-welfare services, but the first time he opened his heart to his family about his plan was April last year. His wife, Keiko, and his parents agreed to the idea saying, "If that is what you want to do, it's OK with us." His grandmother, Masuko, who at first opposed the plan, eventually came to agree, saying, "No matter how hard the going gets, you must try your best."

The final barrier to realizing Kitamura's plan was his internship at a social-welfare facility. He needed a long holiday from work in order to perform this internship. Last fall, he revealed to his superior at work his desire to be of

assistance to people with handicaps. Far from opposing the idea, his superior kindly offered to assist him in any way he could. Kitamura says that he will never forget this encounter with his superior.

"I am really very thankful to my family for showing their understanding for my dream, and for the support of many other people," he said. The attitude shown by those around him when he was changing jobs served as a model to strengthen his resolve to "Understand what others want."

### Life Teaches Joy and Gratitude

How the patients in the home are feeling changes day by day. Kitamura discovered that some who were fine when he performed his internship there had passed away by the time he started to work there; in others, senile dementia had progressed.

"Because people's physical condition and moods normally change, I do my best to interact with them in accordance with how they are feeling at any given moment." With those who want to talk about their families, he chats with them about their families. With those who are interested in money, he enjoys playful interaction with them using hand-made play money.

One incident occurred very soon after Kitamura started working at the home. He was troubled by his inability to communicate with Ms. M. Every time he tried to talk with her, she merely repeated, "I have pain in the left side of my body." "How can I get her to open up to me," he thought. He felt that he wanted to be of assistance to her, but all his efforts were fruitless.

Feeling like this, he continued his attempts at contact, but one day he happened to notice an old photograph album placed beside her bed. In the tattered album were family photographs, sepia-colored with age. While gazing at her children and other family members, words started to drop from Ms. M's lips. She spoke of her children, of how everyone around her was now dead. Nodding and listening, Kitamura received an intimation of how important families are. At the same time, he was able to feel how lonely Ms. M was.

"Don't leave me alone," Ms. M implored. "You've had a rough time of it. But everything is all right now," Kitamura assured her. Tears rolling down her cheeks, Ms. M said, "Thank you."

He once heard the following from a lady who had been bedridden for the last 15 years. "Don't forget, the fact that I am alive here now is thanks to everything people have done for me." Thought Kitamura, "What a wonderfully optimistic way of seeing life!" To him, it seemed that the lady lying in bed shone with light.

"What is important is not to push your own feeling of trying to be helpful, but rather to make it your practice with everyone you meet to put yourself in the other person's place. I am learning from the old people how impor-

tant it is to live every day with feelings of joy and gratitude," said Kitamura.

### Running Around Saying "Anything I Can Do?"

Kitamura normally finishes work and gets home at around six thirty in the evening. As soon as he finishes dinner, he goes out to help the staff of the youth group at his branch. He also looks in on the local government's community youth group, an independent study group. Recently, he was chosen as leader of this study group. On weekends, he helps out with his father's and his father-in-law's farming chores, meanwhile answering his constantly ringing cell phone. At all events, Kitamura never sits around doing nothing. He says, "I feel more myself when I am working, and work gives me opportunities to help others, which makes me happy."

At the nursing home, it's the same story. Asked to repair a punctured tire, he readily agrees and immediately sets about it. Discovering that there are no towels in the washroom, he swiftly hangs towels on the racks. Next he goes around asking the patients how they are feeling. He

not only does the tasks he is asked to do, but also sizes up the situation himself to discover what else needs to be done. His co-worker Nobuko Sawa says, "He actively challenges new tasks. He does not put off doing what we ask him to do, and takes a leadership role in activities. Mr. Kitamura is a very helpful person to have on board. He has a good reputation with the patients, too."

From April 2002, Kitamura was assigned the responsibility for four of the women patients. Dogged by worries about whether he could achieve a sufficient level of communication with them, he looked at the documentation of their personal histories, trying to figure out how best to interact with them.

Kitamura asks Ms. T, "What would you like to do today?" Lowering herself into her wheelchair and smiling brightly, Ms. T says, "I am old and so my legs hurt. I want to visit a temple to pray to the bodhisattva Kannon to take away the pain in my legs."

"OK! We'll organize that soon," answers Kitamura in a soft tone, accepting Ms. T's request. In so doing, he himself expresses Kannon's great compassion for us all. □

*Mr. Kitamura enjoys conversation with his family. He always appreciates the support and encouragement of his family and friends and many other people.*

# A Buddhist Statue Dressed in Elegant Robes

by Takeshi Kuno; photo by Kozo Ogawa

*Japanese Buddhist art includes several statues that were carved naked and then clothed in beautiful silk robes. This statue of the bodhisattva Jizo, from Nara's Denkoji, is exceptionally beautiful, with its expression of great compassion.*

The bodhisattva Jizo (Skt., Kshitigarbha), popularly believed to rescue sentient beings from hell, and generally represented as a shaven-headed monk, was, in the statue belonging to Denkoji in Nara, carved of wood in naked form, painted, and then clothed with real robes. The right hand holds a monk's staff and the left, with elbow bent, holds a sacred jewel (Skt., *cintamani*). The face wears an expression of the greatest compassion. Both the pedestal and the aureole are thought to date from the same time the statue was made.

A large number of votive objects have been found inside the 97.3-cm statue, and we know from these the name of the donor, the vow made, the names of those associated with the donation, and the year the statue was carved. A reliquary made of dark blue glass was discovered in the head section; in it were found a bone relic (*shari*) and a small statuette of a seated Yakushi Nyorai (Skt., Bhaishajyaguru), the Buddha of Healing. The torso cavity contained copies of the Heart Sutra, the Lotus Sutra, and the Gejinmitsukyo, a Yogacara scripture, as well as the vow document and the list of those connected with the donation. In addition, a statuette of Juichimen Kannon (the Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara) was deposited in the left thigh section.

These various depositions signify the Three Treasures of Buddhism—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. Further, it is considered that the four divinities represented, Shakyamuni (through the relics), Yakushi, Kannon, and Jizo (the statue itself), are intended to epitomize the “original buddhas” (*honjibutsu*) manifested by the four native deities of Kasuga Shrine in Nara. The vow document, dated 1228, names the instigating donor as the

eighty-three-year-old nun, Myoho; that date is considered to indicate when the statue was made. We can assume that Myoho was encouraged by many supporters in the decision to have the statue made. The deposition of well-loved scriptures and relics inside the statue tell us that it was made from a whole-hearted vow to attain rebirth in the western paradise.

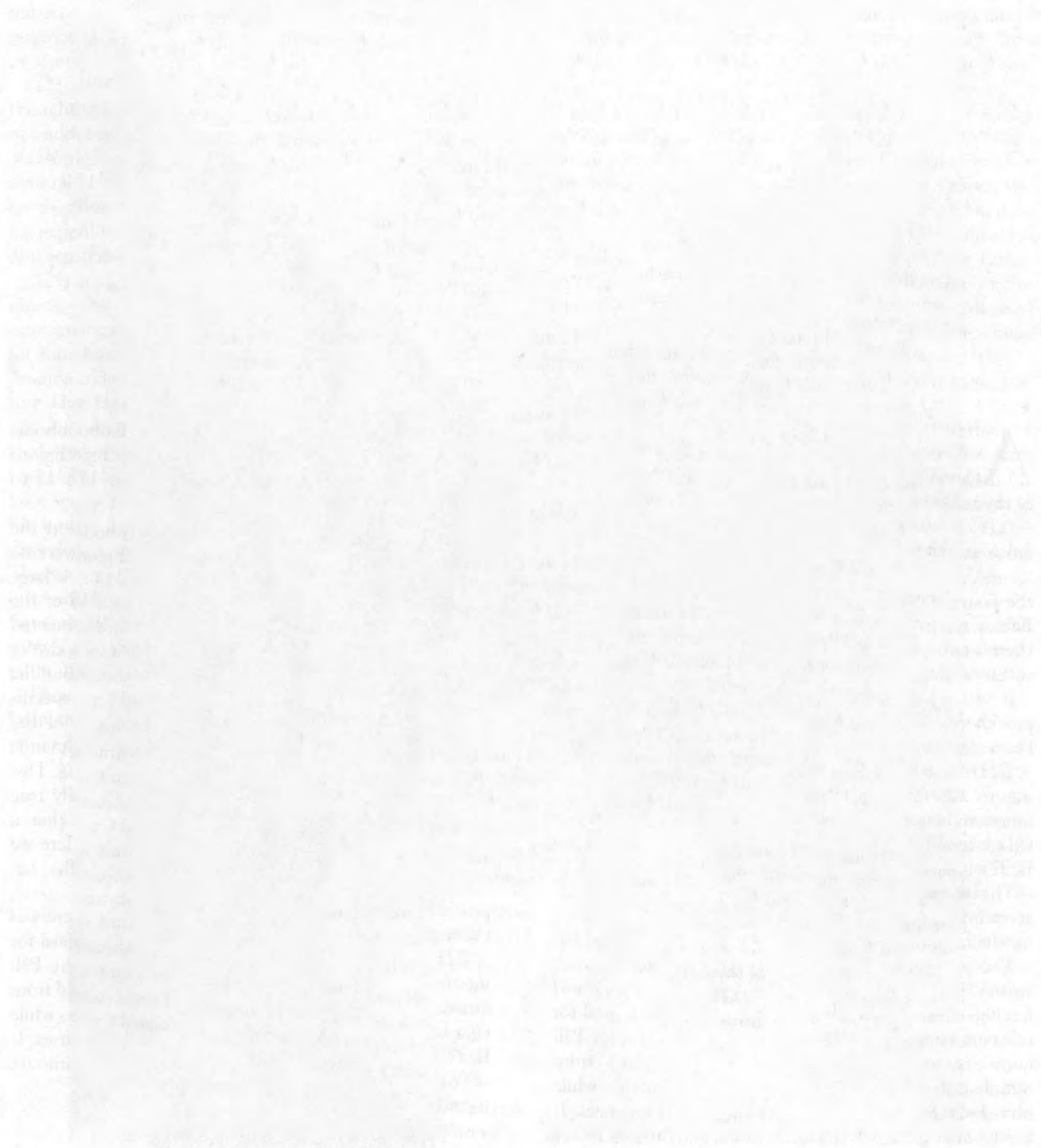
It is unclear, however, why the statue was naked. There is no single accepted hypothesis concerning why such naked statues were made during the Kamakura period (1185–1333). Certainly Kamakura sculpture developed basically in a realistic manner in the early period, and the extreme limit of this realism can be seen in the naked form dressed in real robes and carrying real objects, such as a lute. However, a naked statue was discovered dating as early as the Fujiwara period (894–1185), and so this explanation cannot apply to all. That statue, said to be of Takenouchi no Sukune, was discovered at the end of the Second World War in the Mieido of Kyoo Gokokuji (Toji) in Kyoto. It was originally one of a triad also containing the male and female deities of the Toji Hachimangu, the Hachiman shrine that protected Toji. When this shrine burned down, the statue was placed in the Mieido. Except for a covering around the hips, it is completely naked. We have no idea, however, why the statue was made in this way.

In Japan, the majority of new stimuli and sculptural styles had been strongly influenced by the art of China. It is possible, therefore, that the naked statues came into being influenced by developments in Sung China (960–1279). Though no such images have been found, there are some that suggest the style. For example, the standing image of Shakyamuni at Seiryōji in Kyoto, brought from China by Chonen (d. 1016), has the internal organs deposited inside, with the intention of making the statue the living Shakyamuni. In addition, the diary of a court noble of the

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Fujiwara period mentions a "Dharma-body Jizo," saying it had been amended according to a Sung model. We can interpret this as meaning that this Jizo too was a naked statue and it was clothed in priest's robes according to the Sung model.

Other notable naked statues include the Benzaiten (Skt., Sarasvati) at Tsurugaoka Hachimangu shrine in

Kamakura and a seated statue of Kobo Daishi (Kukai) at Shorenji, also in Kamakura. The Benzaiten image in the Benzaitendo of Enoshima Shrine, near Kamakura, is also a naked statue. It is noteworthy that so many naked statues are to be found in the Kamakura region, dating from a time when communications with Sung China were at their peak. □

# Falling Ill along the Way of the Journey

by Hajime Nakamura

*Upon leaving Ambapāli's grove, the Buddha went with Ānanda to Beluva, but there he became very ill. When begged by Ānanda to give teachings, he said that Truth is the possession of all people. He added that all that is necessary is to practice and meditate upon the Truth.*

After having spent two days in the mango grove where he converted the courtesan Ambapāli, next Gotama Buddha went to stay at Beluva (the village of the bamboo grove).

"(21) The Venerable Master, having stayed at Ambapāli's grove as long as he wished, said to the young Ānanda: 'Come, Ānanda, let us go to Beluva.' 'Yes, Master,' replied the young Ānanda. Then, the Venerable Master went to Beluva together with a large company of *bhikkhus*, and there stayed in the village of Beluva." (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 21)

It was while he was there that the rainy season approached. He called the *bhikkhus* together and said to them:

"(22) 'Now, *bhikkhus*, you should enter your fixed lodgings for the rainy season, wherever you have friends, or acquaintances, or close friends. I shall remain here at Beluva village for the rainy season.'" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 22)

The sutra then relates that arrangements were made accordingly and the *bhikkhus* and the Buddha settled down for the rainy season.

The practice of entering a fixed lodging for the rainy season (Pāli, *vassam upagacchati*; Skt., *varṣām upagacchati*) has been a long-standing custom among all religious practitioners in India, irrespective of sect or school. During the rainy season, which lasts from the middle of May to the middle of September, wandering ascetics stay in a particular dwelling, and do not journey or leave their lodging. Epidemics can rage in the rainy season and noxious insects are rife. Religious practitioners too have to take care not to tread on, and kill, insects. The Buddhist Saṅgha adopted the practice of the rainy-season retreat, and remained inside neighboring dwellings, or later, monasteries, for a period of three months beginning on the day following the full moon of the fourth month in the Indian calendar, undergoing religious training and meditation. This retreat was known in Sanskrit as *vārṣika*. The Buddhist Saṅgha in

Sri Lanka, Burma (Myanmar), Thailand, and Cambodia continues to preserve this period as a time of religious practice. (In Burma, it is generally held from July 15 to October 25, following the Western calendar.)

The fact that the Buddha and his followers spent the rainy season at different places argues that there were no permanent temples or monasteries nearby where a large number of men could live together until the end of the rains. Another reason for the dispersion was connected with the difficulty of gaining an ample supply of food. We know from the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta that the Buddha stayed at Beluva; the only other person mentioned specifically is his attendant Ānanda. A careful reading of the various texts indicates that only the Buddha and Ānanda spent the rainy season together in the same dwelling. This is indubitably historical fact. It is probably equally true that the Buddha was never accompanied by more than a small number of disciples, even at other times. Here we can discern the true historical figure of the Buddha, before later ages deified him.

The Yu-hsing-ching records that at this time there was famine in the area around Beluva, and so it was hard for the *bhikkhus* to live by begging food as alms. The Pāli text does not state this clearly, but it can be inferred from context. Gotama received invitations from Brahmins while in Beluva, and was presented offerings at their houses. It is clear therefore that he harbored no feelings of animosity toward the Brahmins.

## Falling Ill

While in Beluva, Gotama became very ill.

"(23) When the Venerable Master had taken up residence for the rainy season, he suffered a severe illness, with such pain that he thought he would die. However, the Venerable Master bore the pain mindfully and with great awareness, and voiced no complaint." (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 23)

The Buddha was able to bear his pain by entering med-

itation (*dhyāna*), and eventually he recovered. The composers of the sutra placed great importance on this and gave a reason for it.

“(23 *continued*) At that time, the Venerable Master thought, ‘It is not becoming for me to enter *nibbāna* without addressing my attendants and taking farewell of the *bhikkhus*. I must exert energy to control the illness and maintain my expected life span.’ Then the Venerable Master exerted energy to control his illness and maintained his expected life span. Thereupon the Venerable Master’s illness abated.

“(24) Then the Venerable Master recovered from his illness. Soon after he had recovered from his illness, he went out of his dwelling and sat down on a seat prepared for him in the shadow of the dwelling. Then the young Ānanda approached where the Venerable Master was sitting. Having approached, he greeted the Venerable Master and sat down to one side. Having sat down to one side, the young Ānanda said to the Venerable Master, ‘Revered One, I have seen the Venerable Master in comfort, and I have seen the Venerable Master becoming healthy again. My body stiffened a little. [Astounded] I lost all sense of direction. The various teachings were not clear to me. This was because of the Venerable Master’s illness. [Now,] however, I am able to find peace of mind, because the Venerable Master will not enter *nibbāna* without relating some teaching to the *bhikkhus*.’” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 23–24)

Though his illness had temporarily abated, the Buddha knew that the end of his life was approaching. Ānanda was relieved that the Buddha had recovered, but the Buddha

himself said that he was already an old man and could not escape death. Therefore he spoke of human fate. Ānanda drew near and begged him to give his final discourse. The Buddha’s words were poignant.

“(25) ‘Ānanda, what do the *bhikkhus* expect of me? I have taught the Dhamma without any distinction of inner or outer. In my teachings to all people no master’s fist exists, attempting to hide something from the disciples. Only one who thinks, “I will take charge of the band of *bhikkhus*,” or “The band of *bhikkhus* will depend on me,” says something regarding the band of *bhikkhus*. The Tathāgata, however, does not think, “I will take charge of the band of *bhikkhus*,” or “The band of *bhikkhus* will depend on me.” How then can the Tathāgata say anything about the band of *bhikkhus*? Ānanda, I am now old, my body is decayed, I am old and wasting away with age. I have traversed life’s journey and reached the end of my time. I am already eighty. As an old cart will move only if strapped up, my body is kept going by being strapped up. It is only when the Tathāgata does not dwell in his mind upon his outward characteristics, when he causes the cessation of certain feelings, and when he enters into the concentration of mind that has no outward characteristics that his body is sound [comfortable].

“(26) ‘Therefore in this world you should be islands unto yourselves, your own refuge, depending upon no one else, with the Dhamma as an island and the Dhamma as a refuge, depending on nothing else.’” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 25–26)

The above words are famous as constituting one of the Buddha’s last discourses. In content too they are extremely important. Let us scrutinize the ideas that lay behind them.

First, the Buddha declares he has revealed the Truth that pertains for all people. “I have taught the Dhamma without any distinction of inner or outer. In my teachings to all people no master’s fist exists, attempting to hide something from the disciples.” It was common within society for master craftsmen and teachers to hide the inner secrets of their callings from their followers. This was termed the “master’s fist.” Gotama Buddha, however, does not possess such “secret teachings,” though the Upaniṣads relate that the inner teachings should be transmitted by a master only to his own eldest son or trusted disciple. According to the Buddha, the Truth is the possession of all people, and he brushes away any suggestion of discrimination according to caste or other differences between people. By the same token, Truth is not the possession of a particular master, able to be transmitted by him alone. Buddhaghosa comments on the expression “master’s fist”: “[Outside Buddhism] people are governed by the ‘master’s fist.’ When he is young, [the master] does not speak to anybody, and later, when he is on his deathbed, he speaks only to a favorite disciple. The Tathāgata did not speak in this way, making a master’s fist and saying, ‘I will speak of this at a later opportunity, when I am old,’ and

The late Hajime Nakamura, an authority on Indian philosophy, was president of the Eastern Institute in Tokyo and a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo at the time of his death in October 1999. This ongoing series is a translation of Gotama Buddha, vol. 2, Tokyo, Shunjūsha, 1992.



did not leave anything unsaid" (*Sumaṅgala-vilāsini.*, p. 546). Though the Brahmins secretly transmitted their knowledge to their disciples, Buddhism contains no such secrets. Thus the Buddha said: "Only one who thinks, 'I will take charge of the band of *bhikkhus*,' or 'The band of *bhikkhus* will depend on me,' says something regarding the band of *bhikkhus*. The Tathāgata, however, does not think, 'I will take charge of the band of *bhikkhus*,' or 'The band of *bhikkhus* will depend on me.'"

Gotama Buddha himself denied that he was the leader of the Buddhist order. Each person must rather be his or her own refuge, must depend on the universal Dhamma. Shinran's statement that he had not a single disciple displays a direct link with these teachings of the Buddha, and has the same strong ethical connotation. Because Gotama did not claim to be the leader of the order, he could not spell out for his followers what should happen later. "Ānanda, what do the *bhikkhus* expect of me? . . . How then can the Tathāgata say anything about the band of *bhikkhus*?" There was no need for the band of followers to consider that the order depended upon the Buddha. He thought that what was needed there was for him to leave teachings regarding the order. He who discovered the Truth taught it completely. There was nothing held back. All that was necessary was to practice and meditate upon the Truth, and to transmit it broadly. Nor was it right to grieve about one's death; being born means that death lies ahead for all, without exception. The law of impermanence is absolute. What will die, says the Buddha, is my own body, now old and frail. True life is the Dhamma I have discovered and taught. If people understand it and practice it, I will live within it, and my life will be eternal.

Then the Buddha made a surprising statement, saying that although he was old and weak, "his body is sound." A sound body is considered necessary for tranquillity of mind. Therefore an old man, though frail, can still seek a sound body. "Ānanda, I am now old, my body is decayed, I am old and wasting away with age. I have traversed life's journey and reached the end of my time. I am already eighty. As an old cart will move only if strapped up, my body is kept going by being strapped up." This may sound like the feeble complaints of an old man, but it is by no means so. The words contain a strong resolution.

The eighty-year-old ascetic was undertaking his journey tranquilly, apparently with the knowledge that his death was not far off. His body was as shaky as an old cart. However, as long as his mind was unaffected he was able to make wise decisions. If the mind controls the body, the body itself will be sound. This the Buddha declared triumphantly. "It is only when the Tathāgata does not dwell in his mind upon his outward characteristics, when he causes the cessation of certain feelings, and when he enters into the concentration of mind that has no outward characteristics that his body is sound [comfortable]." What

precisely did he have to do to attain this state of mind? And later, after his death, upon what were his followers advised to rely? This is where we find the teaching to rely upon yourselves and rely upon the Dhamma.

"Therefore in this world you should be islands unto yourselves, your own refuge, depending upon no one else, with the Dhamma as an island and the Dhamma as a refuge, depending on nothing else" (*Tasmāt ih' Ānanda atta-dīpā viharatha atta-saraṇā anañña-saraṇā, dhamma-dīpā dhamma-saraṇā anañña-saraṇā*).

I have long pondered about the best way to translate *anañña-saraṇā*. Should it be translated "Do not depend on other [people]" or "Do not depend on other [things]?" To translate *añña* as "other" would be the direct translation, and would not incur criticism from scholars, but it remains ambiguous, for there is no indication about what "other" refers to. Thus I have translated *añña* in the sense of "other people" ("no one else"), in contrast with *attan* ("self"), and as "other things" ("nothing else"), in contrast with *dhamma*. The contrast of self and others conforms to human relations, while that of the Dhamma and other things corresponds to objective matters.

Gotama Buddha sought to attain a state wherein the mind was tranquil and stable, and able to consider things calmly and deeply, unperturbed by delusion. Thus he could say, with great composure: "Be a refuge unto yourselves, for I will pass away."

Final decisions come from the self, none other; the self must take responsibility for all things. We should not rely on others. We must give consideration to the customs of the past and the opinions of others when making a decision, but the decision itself can only be our own. We cannot blame others for our own mistakes. Though the self must rely upon the self, this is no excuse for indulging in selfish behavior. Decisions must be based on human reason and law, called Dhamma in Pāli, and Law (*fa*) or Way (*tao*) in the translations of Chinese Buddhist writings. If one's decisions are based on this Law, then no attention needs to be paid to the dissenting opinions of others. One will have the courage to abide by one's own decisions. Therefore to depend on the self means at the same time to depend upon the Dhamma.

The expression "island" in the text perhaps should better be translated as "sandbank." At times of great flooding in India, the land is covered by a sheet of water as far as the eye can see. Scattered here and there in the water are sandbars, sections of land that have not been entirely covered by the floodwaters and that provide refuge for people. This is the image that the Buddha's words draw on. The Law (*dhamma*) acts as a sandbar (*dīpa*) does in times of flood, a place of refuge. Jaina writings also contain the same image; a discourse of Mahāvīra in the Āyārāṅga-sūtra says:

"But can discontent lay hold of a mendicant who has

ceased to act and leads a religious life, for a long time controlling himself? He advances in his spiritual career and exerts himself. As an island [*dīva* = *dīpa*] that is never covered with water, so is the law taught by the noble ones (a safe refuge for those in danger)."

From this the following can be ascertained:

(1) This teaching of Gotama Buddha's employs elements of the teachings of Jainism and of other religious leaders of the time.

(2) The *dīpa* of *dhamma-dīpa* means shoal, sandbar, or island (*dvīpa*), not lamp. The teaching to depend on one-self, being so broad and deep, can be interpreted very widely. I consider that the intention of the writer of the sutra was to say: "Reflect on the attitude of your own mind. By doing so it becomes possible to depend on yourself."

"(26 continued) 'And how does a *bhikkhu* be an island unto himself, his own refuge, depending upon no one else, with the Dhamma as an island and the Dhamma as a refuge, depending on nothing else? Here, Ānanda, a *bhikkhu* contemplates the body as body, attentively, aware, mindful, having done away with all worldly greed and distress. He contemplates the feelings as feelings, attentively, aware, mindful, having done away with all worldly greed and distress. He contemplates the mind as mind, attentively, aware, mindful, having done away with all worldly greed and distress. He contemplates the various objects of mind as objects of mind, attentively, aware, mindful, having done away with all worldly greed and distress.'" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 26)

Here, in the contemplation of body, feelings, mind, and the objects of mind, we find the terminology of later Abhidharma scholarship. Since this section is not found in all the recensions, it can be assumed to be a later accretion.

Gotama's discourse then concludes:

"(26 continued) 'In this way, Ānanda, a *bhikkhu* is an island unto himself, his own refuge, depending upon no one else, with the Dhamma as an island and the Dhamma as a refuge, depending on nothing else. And if any person, Ānanda, at this time or at the time after my death, is an island unto himself, his own refuge, depending upon no one else, with the Dhamma as an island and the Dhamma as a refuge, depending on nothing else, he will attain the highest stage as my *bhikkhu*—anyone who desires to learn.'" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 26)

A *bhikkhu* should depend on no external thing whatever. He must make the self (*attā*) and the eternal Law his refuge.

We find in this passage the expression "attain the highest stage" (*tamatagge bhavissanti*); the expression "to attain *nibbāna*" has not been used. (The title *Mahāparinibbāna* was given to this sutra by people of later times.) There is certainly no sign of the later philosophical concept of nirvana with residue and nirvana without residue.

To be continued

A bronze statue of the Buddha made in the seventh-century Japan, which was formerly in the possession of the temple Horyuji in Nara. An Important Cultural Property. Tokyo National Museum.

A stucco head of the Buddha, unearthed in Hadda, Afghanistan. 3rd–4th century. Tokyo National Museum.

# The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

## Chapter 5

### The Parable of the Herbs (4)

*This is the sixty-seventh installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.*

**TEXT** Constantly I proclaim the Law, / Never occupied with aught else; / Going or coming, sitting or standing, / I never weary of / Pouring it abundantly upon the world, / Like the rain enriching universally.

**COMMENTARY** *Never occupied with aught else.* The Buddha does not think about anything but expounding the Dharma to save all living beings. This is something we must study and emulate. There is no doubt that we can achieve great results when we are able to concentrate our minds on one thing, like the Buddha. It is so easy for people today to be preoccupied with other things. We should reflect upon ourselves in this regard.

• *Going or coming, sitting or standing.* This phrase means “at all times.”

**TEXT** Honored and humble, high and low, / Lawkeepers and lawbreakers, / Those of perfect character / And those of imperfect, / Orthodox and heterodox, / Quick-witted and dull-witted, / [With] equal [mind] I rain the rain of the Law / Unwearyingly.

**COMMENTARY** Here we see the great compassion of the Buddha. Those who have practiced his teaching to some extent can preach the Law irrespective of the social standing or position of their listeners, but it is far more difficult to preach the Law “with equal mind” to those who are corrupt and ill mannered and to those who believe in a mistaken way of thought. “Lawbreakers” are those who ignore the Buddha’s admonitions, or precepts, and those who are of loose morals. The Buddha leads these people, and those who will not do as they are told, with the same compassion that he extends to those who keep the precepts. “Those of imperfect [character]” are those who lack decorum; for example, they may not bow before the Buddha or may sit with their legs outstretched toward him. Even to those people the Buddha proclaims his teaching with warm compassion, in exactly the same way as he

does to those whose behavior is impeccable. “Heterodox” here refers to those who are ensnared by false views. They look disbelieving when hearing the Buddha’s teaching and are defiant. The Buddha teaches such people gently, in the same way that he teaches those of “orthodox” (right) views. “Dull-witted” people are weak in understanding and cannot comprehend things however much they are taught. The Buddha, though, patiently teaches dull-witted people with the same affection that he gives the intelligent. That the Buddha is able to do this is a cause of enormous gratitude. When we realize that this is so, we can pursue our quest with renewed courage. Since the Buddha’s rain of relief falls equally on all of us, we can realize, from the words in this passage, that we can definitely recover from our distress, whatever our capacity, nature, and desire. Let us cast aside the past, make a fresh start, and then with a frank, open mind, meditate deeply on the Buddha’s compassion. A new confidence will be sure to well up within us, a confidence that will become a steppingstone to spiritual progress.

**TEXT** All living beings / On hearing my Law, / According to their receptive powers, / [Find their] abode in their several places; / Some dwell [amongst] gods or men / Or holy wheel-rolling kings, / Or Sakra, Brahma, or other kings; / These are [like] smaller herbs.

**COMMENTARY** *Holy wheel-rolling kings.* In ancient India, legend had it that great virtuous kings were endowed with jeweled wheels by the gods. When they rolled these wheels, it is said, their enemies vanished and they could conquer all. Such great kings were called “holy wheel-rolling kings.” The epithet “holy” is important; however strong they were, even powerful enough to conquer the entire world, they could not be holy wheel-rolling kings if they were not of high virtue.

• *Sakra, Brahma.* Sakra (Indra) and Brahma were the highest deities in the ancient Indian pantheon. They entered



Buddhism as protective deities. We should note that the passage states that even people who can associate with the holy wheel-rolling kings of the *saha* world or with the supreme gods in the realms of heaven are no more than “smaller herbs,” though normally they would be regarded as the highest beings. Fine though they may be, they are “smaller” than those to be discussed below. Here Shakyamuni states clearly that true human value lies in spiritual achievement, and that this value depends upon the degree of enlightenment.

TEXT [Those who] know the faultless Law / [And are] able to attain nirvana, / [Who] cultivate the six transcendent [faculties] / And obtain the three clear [views], / Who dwell alone in mountain forests, / Ever practicing meditation, / And obtain pratyekabuddhahood— / These are the larger herbs.

COMMENTARY *The faultless Law.* To be faultless is to be pure and undefiled. “The faultless Law” here indicates the law of dependent origination, a basis of Buddhism. This is the teaching that the phenomenal appearance of all beings arises as the result of causes and conditions and that when these causes and conditions disappear, the phenomena also disappear. Since our spiritual suffering arises out of the illusion that things have lasting, real existence, if we realize that they are but temporary, impermanent phenomena and cease to be attached to them, our distress and suffering are sure to disappear. If we can truly learn this law of dependent origination that the Buddha taught, our minds will always be calm and peaceful. This is the mental state of the Hinayana nirvana, and one who has reached this state (or is learning the Buddha Dharma in pursuit of this goal) is called a shravaka.

- *The six transcendent [faculties].* The first is the ability to see what is invisible to ordinary people; the second, the ability to hear that which is inaudible to ordinary people; the third, the ability to read all minds; the fourth, the ability to perceive all one’s own and others’ earlier lives; the fifth, the ability to move anywhere with great speed and to do anything at will; and the sixth, the ability to remove delusions from the minds of others. (For details, see the September/October 1996 issue of *Dharma World*.)

- *The three clear [views].* This refers to the first, fourth, and sixth of the six transcendent faculties. A clear view is a more advanced state than a transcendent faculty.

- *Pratyekabuddhahood.* This refers to the realization of those who have realized the truth through the practice of meditation, that is, by their personal spiritual practice. Those who have attained this spiritual state (or are practicing to attain it) are called pratyekabuddhas.

TEXT Those who seek the World-honored One, / [Resolving,] ‘We will become buddhas,’ / And practice zeal and meditation— / These are the superior herbs.

COMMENTARY *Seek the World-honored One.* This phrase of the Chinese text can be read as meaning “seek the place of the World-honored One.” Since “World-honored One” is an epithet of the Buddha, “the place” means “buddhahood.”

- *We will become buddhas.* This phrase expresses strong determination to attain buddhahood. The person who has such determination and endeavors with all his or her might in practice is of high value as a human being and thus is a “superior herb.”

TEXT And these Buddha sons / Who single-mindedly [walk] the Buddha Way, / Ever practicing compassion, / Assured that they will become buddhas / Certainly and without doubt— / These are named shrubs.

COMMENTARY *Buddha sons.* This of course refers not to the Buddha’s actual children but to those who have inherited his teaching. In a way, though, all those who are true heirs to his teaching can be considered kin, for they realize their oneness with the Buddha (the Eternal Original Buddha). Originally the Buddha and we are not separate existences; we are one with the Eternal Original Buddha, living through him. In this sense he is our parent.

The Buddha says that such people can be likened to “shrubs,” a stage above the “superior herbs.” They are still small because they are primarily concerned with benefiting themselves rather than others. Though they are “ever practicing compassion,” there is a considerable difference in their compassionate acts and those of the people named “trees” below.

TEXT The firmly settled in the transcendent [faculties], / Who roll the unretreating wheel / And save infinite hundred / Thousand kotis of the living, / Such bodhisattvas as these / Are named trees.

COMMENTARY The same compassionate practice differs greatly in quality depending on whether or not it actually liberates people from their immediate suffering and helps them remove suffering from the depths of the mind through instruction by means of the Buddha Law. Someone with tuberculosis who suffers from fever, a cough, and phlegm can gain temporary relief from those symptoms with medicine, but the root causes of the disease are not affected and the person will not return to full health. Compassionate acts that provide temporary relief from fever and coughing are necessary, but they do not truly help unless they are able to restore the person to health. The great way that leads people to liberation helps them reestablish the mind through the truth. A person who can do this is of the highest human value, a “tree.” All of us can become trees, and indeed are walking that path already. Buoyed by confidence and pride in this fact, we should continue our spiritual endeavors.



TEXT The Buddha's equal preaching / Is like the one rain; / [But] beings, according to their nature, / Receive it differently, / Just as the plants and trees / Each take a varying supply. / The Buddha by this parable / Tactfully reveals / And with various expressions / Proclaims the One Law; / [But of] the Buddha wisdom / It is as a drop in the ocean.

COMMENTARY This passage needs careful attention. "The Buddha by this parable tactfully reveals" means that by this parable of the herbs the Buddha explains simply to us the nature of skillful means. (The Sanskrit text has: "By this parable thou mayst understand the skilfulness of the Tathagata, how he preaches one law, the various developments whereof may be likened to drops of rain.")

- *With various expressions proclaims the One Law; [but of] the Buddha wisdom it is as a drop in the ocean.* It would be a great mistake to interpret this to mean that the teaching of skillful means is as small as a drop of water. The ocean is vast, and each drop of water in it is essentially the ocean itself, no different from it in any way. One drop is therefore connected to the whole. In the same way, the teaching of skillful means is a drop in the vast ocean of the Buddha wisdom and is part of that great ocean of the truth. The teaching of skillful means may appear to be a small drop, but in reality it manifests the vast and boundless Buddha wisdom, being an expression of the great truth.

TEXT I rain down the rain of the Law, / Filling the whole world, / The one essential Law, / To be practiced according to ability, / Just as those thickets, forests, / Herbs, and trees, / According to their size, / Luxuriantly develop. / The Law of all buddhas / Ever by its essential oneness / Causes all the worlds / Universally to gain perfect weal. / Gradually by its observance / All attain the Way's fruition.

COMMENTARY *Causes all the worlds universally to gain perfect weal.* The Chinese word translated as "perfect weal" signifies "to be sufficiently, or perfectly, bestowed." In enlightenment there is nothing left over; it is completely imbibed.

- *The Way's fruition.* This means the end product of Buddhist practice. Some attain shravaka enlightenment, some attain pratyekabuddha enlightenment, some attain bodhisattva enlightenment, and some attain buddha enlightenment. We have already discussed the stages of enlightenment in terms of "the four fruits of the shravakas" (see the November/December 1992 issue) and "the ten stages of the bodhisattvas" (see the May/June 1993 issue).

TEXT Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas / Who dwell in the mountain forests, / Are in the final bodily state, / And, hearing the Law, reach fruition / Are named herbs, / Each progressing in growth.

COMMENTARY *The final bodily state.* When all delusions or defilements have been completely eliminated, shravakas and pratyekabuddhas can move away from transmigration in the six realms of existence. Other than particular cases (for example, the bodhisttvas who, springing up out of the earth, appear of their own accord in this world to save living beings, in chapter 15 of the Lotus Sutra), none will be born again in the human realm. Therefore arhathood is called the final bodily state.

TEXT As to the bodhisattvas / Who are firm in wisdom, / Penetrate the triple world, / And seek the highest vehicle, / These are named shrubs / Which gain increasing growth.

COMMENTARY *Firm in wisdom.* "Firm" means certain and unmistakable. Firm wisdom is not vague and ambiguous but firmly grasps the truth. Such wisdom remains unmoved, whatever the changes in the world or transitions in doctrinal interpretation. This is of course the wisdom that discerns, according to the Buddha's teaching, the real aspect of all the things in the universe. If we firmly grasp this fundamental wisdom, we will not be deceived or confused by changes in the phenomenal world or by shifts in doctrinal interpretation.

- *Penetrate the triple world.* The triple world, or three realms of existence, comprises the realm of desire, the realm of form, and the formless realm. Generally, all living beings are considered to inhabit the triple world. The realm of desire is that of those who possess physical bodies and are dominated by their various desires. This *saha* world and the four evil realms (of hell, hungry spirits, animals, and ashuras) lie within it, as does the realm of heaven (the six heavens in the realm of desire), whose inhabitants have not yet fully relinquished desire. The realm of form is a heavenly realm that ranks above the six heavens in the realm of desire. Its inhabitants have no appetites or sexual desire. This realm is made up of exquisite, superb matter (form) and so is called the realm of form. The formless realm comprises the highest heavens, where matter has been transcended and spirit alone remains. It consists of four abodes: the abode of the infinity of space, the abode of the infinity of consciousness, the abode of nothingness, and the abode of neither perception nor non-perception. Since individual self-consciousness remains even in the formless realm, it is not a buddha realm but a realm of beings with a sense of self.

To "penetrate the triple world" is to comprehend everything about the world of living beings. In modern terms, it is to understand clearly all living things both materially and mentally, including their pasts and futures. You may think it impossible that there is any state beyond this, but there is: it is the "highest vehicle," that is, the Buddha's wisdom, compassion, and teaching, which sustains the life of all beings as they really are. It is the bodhisattvas'

*The Precious Stupa of the One Vehicle, which houses the relics of Founder Niwano, at Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters in Tokyo.*

ideal and the purpose of their practice to acquire the highest vehicle.

**TEXT** Again, those who practice meditation / And gain transcendent powers, / Who, hearing of the Void of the laws, / Greatly rejoice in their minds, / And emitting innumerable rays / Save all living beings, / These are named trees / Which gain increasing growth.

**COMMENTARY** *Meditation.* Meditation (*dhyana*) is a state of having learned the universal truth through total concentration, eliminating delusion, quieting the emotions, and meditating on the truth with a serene mind. (See the March/April 1996 issue.) Since meditation is an essential element in the practice of the Buddha Way, it is the fifth of the Six Perfections. A Buddhist sect (the Zen sect) was even established with meditation as its central practice. To "practice meditation" means to maintain a quiet, contained, and undistracted mind not only for the time one is in the state of *dhyana* but at all times. When one sustains such a state of mind, the universal truth comes to be reflected clearly and naturally in the mind, and one will not take a wrong course, whatever happens. One's speech and action accord naturally with the truth. This is very important in daily life, so much so that in recent years people from many different walks of life have undertaken the practice of seated meditation (*zazen*).

Maha-Kashyapa, to whom Shakyamuni addresses this chapter, is in fact considered the founder of Zen Buddhism. Once, when Shakyamuni was staying on Vulture Peak, so the story goes, a great Brahma heavenly king offered him a golden lotus flower and requested that he expound a discourse. Shakyamuni mounted the platform for preaching the Dharma and sat there composedly, and without speaking held out the flower in his right hand to his audience. Everyone strained to hear Shakyamuni's

words and gazed up at him expectantly, but no sound was heard. They wondered what was happening and could not still their doubts. Then Shakyamuni caught Kashyapa's eye. Kashyapa broke into a broad smile. An expression of satisfaction crossed Shakyamuni's face, and he said slowly, "I have the treasury of the eye of the true Dharma, the subtle mind of nirvana, the real aspect of the formless, and the subtle Dharma gate, beyond the range of words, and transmitted outside the sutras. This I entrust to Maha-Kashyapa." In effect, the Buddha told Kashyapa, "I have the treasury of true wisdom, in which is secreted the totality of enlightenment. Having seen that all things in this world exist in great harmony, my mind is indescribably peaceful. This is the wisdom of discerning the real aspect of all phenomena in the universe, but it has no fixed form and cannot be expressed in words. It is a subtle wisdom, a subtle teaching, which cannot be expressed in letters, which cannot be taught in words. This subtle teaching I entrust to you, Maha-Kashyapa. Protect it firmly and transmit it to posterity." Only Maha-Kashyapa understood the meaning of Shakyamuni's silent discourse, and Shakyamuni discerned Maha-Kashyapa's understanding. In Zen Buddhism this wordless discourse and wordless enlightenment are considered of great importance, and so Maha-Kashyapa is looked upon as the first patriarch, who transmitted Shakyamuni's true Dharma. As you already know, "real aspect" is a fundamental concept in the Three-fold Lotus Sutra and is discussed in detail in the "Tactfulness" chapter.

• *Hearing of the Void of the laws, greatly rejoice in their minds.* This short phrase has important implications. "The Void of the laws," that is, the teaching that all things are empty, is the great truth that all things in the universe exist through the law of dependent origination and in their essence are equal and in great harmony. (See the January/February 1993 issue.) People who hear this great

truth understand it in different ways. Some consider it means that nothing, whether material form, living beings, or the self, has any real substance, and take the extreme view that human life is all empty and feel that they cannot expect much of it. Such people adopt a nihilistic stance and may lead irresponsible and negligent lives. A person who understands it correctly knows distinctly that the self and all others are given life by the Eternal Buddha's compassion and that all beings equally possess the buddha-nature. Therefore the self and all other people are brothers and sisters and are equally sustained by the Buddha's compassion, together with all other living things and matter. If our mind is awakened to its original, true nature (buddha-nature), the world in which all human beings, other living things, and matter exist in great harmony (the Land of Tranquil Light) appears.

Since such people no longer have delusions, the source of the distress that arises from being dominated by phenomena, they can realize that through transformation of the mind of the self phenomena too change, and a great joy rises in their hearts. Thus such people will find a bright future in life, which may seem to have completely changed. We must understand the teaching of the Void (emptiness) in a positive manner, for this is the true understanding of the doctrine.

- *Emitting innumerable rays.* This refers to the radiance emitted from a person's (bodhisattva's) character. This radiance unconsciously influences the people around one. When it takes the concrete form of instruction, it enables large numbers of people to achieve liberation. Since we have all been born in human form, it should be our hope to become splendid beings who are able to emit such radiance.

**TEXT** Like this, Kashyapa, / Is the Law preached by the Buddha. / It is just like a great cloud / Which with the same kind of rain / Enriches human flowers, / So that each bears fruit. / Know, Kashyapa! / By numerous reasonings / And various parables / I reveal the Buddha Way; / This is my tactful method. / All buddhas do the same. / Now, for your sake, / I preach the veriest truth. / All shravakas / [Have] not [yet] attained nirvana. / The Way in which you walk / Is the bodhisattva way; / By gradually practicing and learning, / All [of you] will become buddhas."

**COMMENTARY** *Human flowers.* Shakyamuni likens practitioners of the Buddha Way to flowers.

- *By numerous reasonings.* "Reasonings" indicates "preaching by causality," a method of teaching people by means of examples from the past.

- *All shravakas [have] not [yet] attained nirvana.* Many shravakas have attained knowledge of the law of dependent origination by learning the Buddha's teaching and thereby a peaceful state of mind, which is no longer disturbed by phenomenal changes around them. They there-

fore have the mistaken idea that they have eliminated all delusions ("attained nirvana"). That is why Shakyamuni admonishes them not to consider this to be true nirvana from the Mahayana viewpoint.

The shravakas are monks or nuns who, far removed from secular life, listen to Shakyamuni's discourses and undertake religious practice in quietness. Because of this they consider that they have completely overcome their delusions, even though the vast majority of ordinary people leading secular lives are still living in pain and suffering. Their forgetting that and isolating themselves from the multitudes reveal that they are in fact still enmeshed in delusion, however much they believe they have attained enlightenment. There is neither true enlightenment nor true peace of mind. Therefore the Buddha says, "All shravakas [have] not [yet] attained nirvana." According to the spirit of Mahayana, true nirvana is to save all others and to gain happiness together with them.

Nevertheless, the Buddha immediately follows his severe words with encouragement. "The Way in which you walk," he says, "is the bodhisattva way; by gradually practicing and learning, all [of you] will become buddhas." This means, taking the larger view, that the shravakas' practice is also a stage of bodhisattva practice and thus they do not walk a separate path at all. The Buddha guarantees that if they can advance to higher stages through gradual practice, they will definitely be able to attain buddhahood. Nothing is more precious and valuable than these words of prediction. All who hear the Buddha's teaching feel limitless joy at them and are encouraged to firmer aspiration for the Way. The next chapter, "Prediction," will give you a fair idea of the circumstances.

Before we finish our discussion of chapter 5, "The Parable of the Herbs," let us summarize its main points. It goes without saying that the parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and the two kinds of trees is the core of the chapter. Through this parable the Buddha teaches the functioning of the Buddha Law in a direct way. The point is that though the Buddha seems to have given various forms of salvation, all his teachings are essentially one, which is equally bestowed on all people. Just as those who receive the teaching appear to differ in natural gifts, nature, circumstances, and so on, so the Buddha's teaching only seems to vary, as does the salvation it offers. However varied the teaching may seem to be on the surface, it saves all people equally in the end. Herein is the marvelous nature of the Buddha Law.

To sum up, the point of the parable is to instruct us about both the apparent, discriminative aspect of salvation in the Buddha Law and its essential, equal aspect. When practicing the Buddha Way, we must always bear this in mind and accept all teachings with gratitude. In this way our spiritual state will advance and we will be able to gradually reach the higher stages of enlightenment. At the same time, the significance of the teaching



shown in the parable will be reduced substantially if not put into practice in daily life. The application of this teaching in daily life should be understood as follows. First, we must realize, through the parable, human beings' apparent, discriminative aspect and their essential, equal aspect. We have discussed the truth that in essence all people are equal, which is repeatedly preached in the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings and from the "Tactfulness" chapter of the Lotus Sutra up to this point. There is a reason that all beings, originally equal, take an infinite variety of actual forms. This will be easily understood when you reread the aforementioned example of the clock parts (see the July/August 2002 issue). The clock functions because the face, the hands, the cogwheels, and the shafts all exist separately but together. Society, too, is well balanced because there are people of varying talents, personalities, and abilities, and this balance makes its administration as a whole possible.

Therefore we must first come to a firm realization of the fundamental truth that all people are equal and throw away all notions of conceit or meanness. Let us always bear in mind that "all people are equal under the sun" and live our lives modestly but with dignity. At the same time, we must recognize our own role in this life and our *raison d'être* and fulfill our allotted tasks as well as possible. Thus, the effort of aiming at perfection of the apparent, discriminative aspect is in itself directly linked to the manifestation of the truth of human equality in this world.

All the same, equality cannot be achieved merely by mouthing the word. What is necessary is its practice, the positive action of fulfilling one's own role to the utmost.

There once lived in Yunozu village in the province of Iwami (today's Shimane Prefecture) a pious man called Saichi Asahara (1851–1933). Exceptionally devout lay believers, chiefly commoners, in the Jodo Shin sect of Buddhism were given the title of *myōkonin* (literally, wondrously virtuous person). They spent their whole lives in single-minded devotion to the Pure Land faith, and their everyday lives had an inexpressible beauty. Saichi was a maker of wooden clogs. He died at the age of eighty-three, having put his whole heart into both his faith in Amitabha Buddha and his work. Though he was semiliterate and could write only in a simple syllabic script, he scribbled down his feelings and thoughts in notebooks, accumulating more than a hundred of them over his life. His writings were collected and published by the late Daisetz Suzuki, best known for his writings about Zen, and a reading of them gives us a good idea of the correctness, purity, and profundity of his faith. His spiritual state, in which faith and life formed a harmonious whole, is one of the best examples for lay Buddhists. I would like to introduce a few of his writings below. You will, I think, realize that for Saichi, intently making clogs was nothing other than the practice of benefiting others, the practice of the Buddha Way.

"Saichi! Who is the tathagata?

The tathagata?

Yes, the tathagata is . . . —Saichi is the tathagata!"

There is no conceit in these words. His heart and mind were brimming over with his feeling that he and the Buddha were one.

"Ah, wonderful! The world, space, all are the Buddha. I too am within them, *Namu Amida Butsu*."

"I too am within them" means that Saichi was in the company of the Buddha. *Namu Amida Butsu* is a heartfelt utterance to express taking refuge in Amitabha Buddha. Saichi had realized the teaching of the real aspect of all things.

"I am in your employ.

*Namu Amida Butsu* is in my work."

"In my work there is no pain

When I think that I am with *Namu Amida Butsu*."

"Amida's living beings—they mean me!

In my work is *Namu Amida Butsu*."

The "you" referred to in the first of the above three quotations is the Buddha. Saichi perceived clearly in the very depths of his heart and mind that working hard at his job was in itself the living function of Amida (Amitabha) Buddha's great vow to bring all living beings to salvation.

"One who puts one's joy into the two letters *na-mu*.

When I have joy *Namu* is there.

Saichi just goes on working and working.

Now my pain has been taken away by you.

This working body is *Namu Amida Butsu*.

Happiness, this. Joy, this.

Enlightenment, this.

Happiness, happiness.

Happiness is happiness,

I wander the fleeting world."

In Saichi's work were happiness, joy, and enlightenment. That he was able to live his life with such happiness was a measure of the true state of nirvana he had attained.

When a person achieves such a stage, it does not matter what religion or sect he or she belongs to. At this point, Amitabha and Shakyamuni, *Namu Amida Butsu* and *Namu Myōho Rengekyō*, become one. I would like to suggest Saichi as a sterling example of the realization of the teaching of the "Parable of the Herbs" chapter in this world.

*To be continued*

In this series, passages in the TEXT sections are quoted from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1975, with slight revisions. The diacritical marks originally used for several Sanskrit terms in the TEXT sections are omitted here for easier reading.



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