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**Cover photo:** On August 14 some 2,800 people from the member organizations of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) gathered in Tokyo's Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery for the 38th annual memorial service for Japan's war dead and prayers for peace. Young women members of the Shinshuren offered lit candles at the altar in the hexagonal building where the ashes of the war dead are enshrined.

Honkoku / Photo: Satokazu Yazawa

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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.

Photo: Isamu Maruyama

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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.

## Genetic Blueprints

**T**he Dhammapada is a collection of sayings of the Buddha, consisting of 423 short verses. In it, we can read the following:

"All creatures fear violence; life is dear to them all. Put yourself in the other's place—it is not right to kill or to cause another to kill." (130)

I think of this as a pure, simple, and frank thing to say about life, uttered in an era long before people were polluted by modern utilitarian thinking. It is impossible to argue the point that life is dear to every living thing and is something to be treasured.

A new branch of research called "life science" has been experiencing rapid progress in recent years. The various genes located on DNA issue orders that cause the production of different types of proteins, which become the bones, internal organs, nerves, and other parts that make up a human being, and it is this process that gives rise to the phenomenon of life. I think we can say that the purpose of life science is to study the function of life in this kind of context. That is why the study of genes is so important.

However, genes can also be seen as a blueprint for a person's life, and as such can be considered the ultimate personal information. If you examine people's genetic makeup, you will know everything about them. Up until now, taking a sample of people's blood to diagnose their physical condition or test for disease has been a relatively simple thing for hospitals and doctors to do, but—because genetic makeup can also be determined from a blood sample—this can also expose all the patients' private information. The knowledge of your genetic makeup can show beforehand, for example, at about what age you are likely to fall ill with a serious illness. Companies might

refuse you employment, or insurance companies might refuse to sell you a life-insurance policy.

These are just my imaginings, but how would you like it if this kind of research makes it possible to reveal your level of intelligence, or at what age you will come down with cancer or diabetes? This could deprive you of your hopes and dreams.

Of course, some hold that there is no need to worry about it to such an extent. A person is born with a DNA blueprint, but this is no more than a blueprint, a basic outline for how the house is to be built. What kind of materials will be used in which parts of the house, what colors are used, and so on are decided in accordance with the opinions and wishes of each individual. That is, after you are born, how you live and what you think is up to you. I am in agreement with this view.

Of course, aside from these considerations, the kind of natural environment and social environment into which you are born will naturally have a very significant effect on your life. I believe that the innate fuses with the acquired, and thus the story of each individual life unfolds.

However, one worry I do have is that an overemphasis on genetic information might get in the way of people wanting to marry, or might cause job discrimination. This should be avoided. I hope that we will not forget the importance of achieving progress in morality, together with progress in life science. □



Kinzo Takemura

**W**e 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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# The Importance of a Bonding Sutra

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.*

My very first contact with the Lotus Sutra was through Sukenobu Arai, who became my revered mentor in the teachings of that sutra. My meeting with Arai came about through the mediation of a midwife, Mrs. Iizuka, who often came to my shop to talk about religious matters. At that time in the 1930s, I was a traveling pickle seller; I was so busy I had hardly a moment to rest. Also, as I had already undergone severe ascetic training in the course of my religious search, I would answer Mrs. Iizuka only vaguely, but she continued to visit. One day she left a sheet of paper with me, saying, "We cannot always be happy. If you have the need, visit the address that I have written down here." I did not pay much attention at the time, but just put the note aside somewhere nearby. A week later, however, my daughter Kyoko was stricken with encephalitis. Even today it is a serious disease, but at that time it was one of the most feared illnesses. I remembered the note Mrs. Iizuka had given me and urgently looked for it. On it was written an address, 24 Niiyama Road, and a map showing the house of Sukenobu Arai.

In Buddhism, a sutra presented when a person first makes karmic contact with Buddhism is called a "bonding sutra" (*kechien-kyo*). In my case, that one sheet of paper given to me was the bonding sutra that made the link between the Lotus Sutra and myself. In today's terms, Rissho Kosei-kai periodicals can also be said to be bonding sutras, leading people to Buddhism. Through the experience of coming across the difficult-to-encounter Lotus Sutra by means of one sheet of paper, I became very much aware that we cannot value highly enough the importance of disseminating the teachings through the written word as a bonding sutra.

Whenever I travel in Japan or abroad to disseminate the

teachings or to attend international conferences, I always carry a few Rissho Kosei-kai periodicals with me. I read them from cover to cover, then as I am disembarking, I give them to the flight attendants, saying, "There are some good things written in these. I hope you will read them."

Human life is a realm of suffering. As long as we live, we experience times when we come up against obstacles. No one can escape this. Echo (1780–1862), a Tendai priest and scholar who wrote close to a hundred volumes of commentary, mainly on the Lotus Sutra, said, "Human life is not a matter of experiencing good things alone." Even if people do not read our publications immediately, these writings can act as wonderful bonding sutras in times of need.

## Dissemination through Publication

It was an immense task for the great temples of the Nara period (710–84) to accumulate their large sutra collections. To achieve it, specialist scribes, people who would devote themselves exclusively to the assignment, were required to transcribe the works. Today people copy the sutras as spiritual training or to reinforce a special prayer, but in the past the copyists did so to preserve them or to make them available as a means of bringing Buddhism to the people.

Thus copyists performed a very important duty at a time when temples were not only libraries, but also what we would call today publishing houses. Copying the Buddha's teachings is an important religious practice taught by the Lotus Sutra as one of the five practices of teachers of the Dharma; it can be considered one form of what we can call dissemination through publication. It is only the Lotus Sutra which speaks of the importance of copying the sutras. We can see from this the emphasis it placed on the aspect of dissemination in preaching.

I have already related that my own karmic bond to Buddhism was a sheet of paper given to me by a certain midwife. If she had not passed it to me at that particular time, I would never have met Sukenobu Arai nor have come across that sutra. And if I had not done so, Rissho Kosei-

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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.*



*The late Rev. Nikkyo Niwano always treasured his encounters with members who visited him at Rissho Kosei-kai's headquarters.*

kai would never have been established, and I would not have been privileged to come into contact with the people who have become its members. I am overwhelmed once again by what a significant role that one piece of paper has played not only in my life, but also in the world movement that affects so many people. I paid no special attention when I received it and did not put it away carefully at the time, yet it became the karmic bond that resulted in the foundation on which the present Rissho Kosei-kai stands.

### Do Not Become Disheartened

There may be many opportunities to feel frustrated when someone we are visiting does not welcome us or listen to us or has not even read the publications that we may have left with them previously. Nevertheless, I would like to say here that just as a person of the caliber of Cofounder Myoko Naganuma appeared from among those to whom I taught Buddhism, so may some other astonishing bodhisattva emerge from among those who now resist your guidance to the Buddhist teachings. You must not become disheartened by this. As the Lotus Sutra says in chapter 12, "Devadatta," "Wherever born, that one will always hear this sutra; and if born among humans or gods, that one will enjoy marvelous delight. If in the presence of a buddha, that one will be reborn by transformation from a lotus flower." Without doubt Mrs. Iizuka, who led me to the sutra, is now dwelling in a place of marvelous delight.

We cannot help feeling regret when, despite our concern for them, people do not understand what we are saying or even want to hear our words. At such times we have to seek within ourselves the cause of their unwillingness, considering it as spiritual training. We must try to learn what the Buddha is teaching us through such a person. If we can achieve that level of understanding, we will grow just that much more as a human being. If we perceive our points of weakness and turn them into strong points that effectively overcome those weaknesses, we will achieve happiness and be successful in leading our lives.

The great former sumo champion Futabayama had insufficient vision in one eye. No one was aware of the fact, however. This was because he confronted his handicap and enhanced his skill at sumo to offset it. That not one spectator knew of his disability was not because he fooled people, but because he perfected his technique through strenuous daily practice to such an extent that no one realized anything about him was different.

### Abuse Can Be a Form of Compassion

One clause in the Bodhisattva's Vow used widely in the Rinzai Sect of Japanese Zen says: "Even when someone becomes a sworn enemy, abusing us and making us suffer, this abuse itself is a form of the great compassion of the bodhisattva as his merciful avatar and a skillful means liberating us entirely from the negative karma we have built up from the boundless past through our selfish attachments." These words should be etched on the hearts of all Rissho Kosei-kai members, who have pledged in the Members' Vow to follow the bodhisattva way.

We must understand these words to mean that even a person who detests us may in fact be a bodhisattva who has manifested himself or herself before us in order to rid us of our transgressions and defilements. We therefore must not become angry or feel dejected just because someone does not want to listen to us. It is understandable that we might become disappointed if a business negotiation is unsuccessful, but when it comes to religious guidance, such failure simply teaches us our own shortcomings and so is the practice of spiritual cleansing.

Even Shakyamuni was reviled by the Brahmins. But when this happened he merely listened quietly and then said to the proud Brahmins, "Evildoers who condemn those who are wise are like someone who spits at the heavens. The saliva will never reach its goal, but will fall back on the spitter." He also said, "One who does not denounce the wise triumphs in two ways: he triumphs over himself, and he triumphs over others."

I also have had the experience of having bad things spoken about me. At such times I was able to accept those who did this as bodhisattvas who could remove the defilements from my mind. Many such people later became my co-workers, and they are now helping me in various ways. They deserve my deep gratitude. □

# Many Paths, One Mountain

by Richard Boeke

*Although there are many paths up the mountain, they all lead to the same goal.  
Our paths may be different, but we share the mountain as well as the goal.*

As 2003 nears its end, we find ourselves in a whirlwind of conflicting fundamentalist religious ideologies. The enemy, some Christian and Islamic leaders say, is liberalism.

One hundred and sixty years ago, Ralph Waldo Emerson, perhaps America's most eminent philosopher, declared: "Instead of wondering that there is a Bible, I wonder that there are not a thousand." This was a radical statement to make then, and it may, in today's fundamentalist environment, be radical still.

Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, who was his friend, were deeply respectful of the authority of the Bible, but they understood the need to break from its constraints. By embracing Brahma, the Buddha, and the Tao Te Ching,

they were able to expand their horizons. It may be their legacy that society, two hundred years after Emerson's birth, now recognizes a multiplicity of scriptures—from the Book of Mormon to the writings of L. Ron Hubbard, the founder of Scientology.

At least once a year, when I visit Harris Manchester College at Oxford, I walk a quarter mile east to Holywell Cemetery. I stop for a moment at the tomb of Kenneth Grahame, author of *The Wind in the Willows*. Then I walk to where a Celtic cross marks the grave of F. Max Müller, who published over fifty volumes on Eastern religions. I recall his vision of the future:

*There never was a false God,  
nor was there ever really a false religion,  
unless you would call a child a false man.*

If you want to meditate, one of the best places is a cemetery. At the grave of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Atlanta, Georgia, we can read the wonderful line: "Free at Last, Free at Last." And we recall how, in one of his last sermons, he said, "Every now and then I guess we all think realistically about that day when we will be victimized with what is life's final common denominator—that something we call death."

Some say that religion is the response to that fact—that we will each of us die. That is one side of the coin. The other side may be best expressed by Robert Jay Lifton, who, from his study of survivors of the bombing of Hiroshima, put forth the concept of "survivor guilt." This is the guilt that we experience in accidents, illness, or war—when we survive and others do not. Survivor guilt, Lifton found, has its corollary in "anticipated survivor guilt," which is the guilt we anticipate we would have if a nuclear holocaust occurred and we discovered ourselves among the handful of survivors. What this conjures up is Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* transformed into Picasso's *Guernica*, and Dr. Strangelove, *On the Beach*, and the "Terminator" films 1, 2, and 3.

It was anticipated guilt that helped bring an end to the

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*Richard Boeke is the Secretary of the World Congress of Faiths, which is now based at the London Interfaith Centre <[www.worldfaiths.org](http://www.worldfaiths.org)>. After studies at the Harvard Center for World Religions, in 1959 he entered the Unitarian Universalist ministry. Dr. Boeke served as minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, California, and in 1995 moved to England, becoming minister of the Unitarian Church of Seven Oaks and serving as Secretary to the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists.*

cold war. And it is anticipated guilt that is part of the psychic motivation that leads millions to demonstrate against war today. Martin Luther King, Jr., exhorted us, "Nations are caught up with the drum major instinct. 'I must be first.' 'I must be supreme.' 'Our nation must rule the world.' And I am sad to say that this nation is the supreme culprit. . . . God didn't call America to do what she is doing in the world now. God didn't call America to engage in a senseless unjust war." Dr. King was speaking of Vietnam, but his words ring uncannily true for Iraq.

Instead of seeing religion as the response to knowing we will die, John Buehrens, former president of the Unitarian Universalist Association, put it this way: "For many years I summarized the religious question as: What kind of story are we in?"

What kind of story do you believe we are in?

For years I have admired Hans Küng and the efforts of the Parliament of the World's Religions to promote a global ethic supported by all religions. At the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF) meeting in Budapest last year, we discussed creating a code of behavior by which different religions could cooperate in the interest of our global village.

Are we in an ethical story? Is virtue rewarded? Do we live in a universe with a god who rewards the just and punishes the unjust? What—or whom—can we trust?

In January this year, Microsoft billionaire Bill Gates was in Davos, Switzerland, at the summit meeting of the World Economic Forum, where business leaders discussed the breakdown of the most important element of business. These people were *not* talking about profit! They were talking about trust.

Trust is the subject of BBC lectures and new considerations on virtues by French philosophers. Clearly, we live in a world in which the old standards of trust are breaking down. How do we create a world community of trust? What sense does it make to promote a common ethic when terrorists or war may destroy our lives and even our world?

Recently, I was formally installed as the minister of a Unitarian church in Horsham, an hour south of London. My wife had been the minister there for six years, and my tenure was to follow hers. To speak at my induction service, I asked three friends from the World Congress of Faiths—Imam Abduljalil Sajid, Reverend Marcus Braybrooke, and Rabbi Jacqueline Tabick. A year ago, Rabbi Tabick had been among ten other rabbis who joined three hundred British Jews calling for Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

I also invited the local clergy to participate in my induction service. Their response, however, was a vote by the Ministers' Fraternal to *shun* the service. While two members of the clergy did choose to come as individuals, the decision of the group was to have no official participation in such an interfaith ceremony.

I was angry. I calmed down with "Buddhist Understanding."

Being shunned helped me to empathize with the Muslim, the Hindu, and the Jew, who are also shunned.

I was reminded of the words of the late Broadway lyricist Oscar Hammerstein II:

*You've got to be taught to be afraid  
of people whose eyes are oddly made,  
and people whose skin is a different shade,  
You've got to be carefully taught.*

We used to think the world was becoming a better place. I worry that may not be the case any longer. Sadly, the shun we experienced is part of a rising tide of fundamentalism. People who are frightened feel they can only trust those who share their rigid religious convictions. Christian, Islamic, Hindu, and Jewish fundamentalists are quite different from one another, but all have the same response to the uncertainties of our multifaith world: "rejecting, condemning, and opposing all those who project apparent criticism of them."

The World Congress of Faiths (WCF) is one of over a dozen organizations that work to build trust among religious traditions. In 2002, our annual meeting was held in north London at the Sternberg Centre, the largest Jewish cultural center in Europe. This year, our annual meeting was held in May at the Muslim College in Ealing, west London, with the theme "*Inshallah—God Willing.*" And in July, we hosted a two-day conference at the University of Leicester, where discussion focused on the question "What is the future of multifaith Britain?"

Through dialogues such as these, we build trust and friendship among communities of different faiths. We learn and grow from the spiritual practices of one another. Both internationally and locally, these interfaith encounters are necessary to build trust. To overcome the fear and the shun.

In January of this year, my wife and I had the privilege of attending the IARF/WCF conference in Palm Springs, California. Huston Smith, speaking to the assembled group, challenged us. Ethics, even global ethics, is not enough, he said. Ethics is like a red light. For our human community to flourish, we need virtues, which are a green light. It is the *go* signal!

Some of you will remember the book *Honest to God*, by Bishop John Robinson. A year ago I was at a talk his widow, Ruth Robinson, was giving. She spoke of her understanding of "faith, hope, and love"—the three virtues of the apostle Paul—which she had come to know as "trust, hope, and compassion."

Along with gratitude and humility, there are no better, more important virtues I can think of for our multifaith world.

Trust—being trustworthy. Not just blind faith in an

ancient creed, but the nurturing of relationships in the community we live in.

Hope—a vision of the future worth living for. Not that you know what the future holds, but that you love this world enough to try to save it from fools bent on destroying it. As Reinhold Niebuhr said,

*My thinking and knowing are pessimistic,  
but my willing and hoping are optimistic.*

Finally, compassion—active love that reaches out in generosity, that forgives when people do not live up to expectations. That includes forgiving yourself.

In our multifaith dialogue, we have learned that while we share a common humanity, all religions are not the same. This is good and right, because we can learn from one another. By knowing another religion, we enrich our own. From Buddhist meditation, we enrich our prayers; from Hindu yoga, we enrich our physical health.

Think of the religious landscape of our planet as a mountain with many paths. In the old theology, only one path led up to heaven; all others led down to hell.

Early twentieth-century religious teachers like William Ernest Hocking saw many paths up the mountain, but found that the mystic from whatever tradition would recognize another mystic. Thus all religions meet at the top of the mountain.

According to Hawaiian mythology, “The mountain has many paths.” But while we are all on the same mountain, one path may be to a waterfall, another path may lead to the ocean, yet another path may bring you to a cave. A path may lead to a village of friends or to solitude. Our paths may be different, but what we have in common is the mountain, and it is our responsibility to preserve the mountain.

We can learn from one another without losing our identities. We can taste salt without becoming salt. Somewhere in every tradition is the teaching that “nothing human is alien to me.” Thus to preserve the mountain, we are called to overcome the shun.

The mountain is our planet, the one reality on which human life will depend for centuries.

*From our planet we look out to the stars.  
The Universe is not Christian or Jew,  
Muslim, Buddhist, or Hindu.  
There are many paths, but one Reality.*

From his travels in outer space, a Soviet cosmonaut looked back at our planet and wrote this:

*The Earth was small, light blue,  
and so touchingly alone,  
our home that must be defended like a holy relic.* □

*Bodhisattva Universal Virtue (Samantabhadra), depicted as mounted on a sacred six-tusked elephant. Bodhisattva Universal Virtue is described in chapter 28 of the Lotus Sutra as vowing to protect those who embrace the Lotus Sutra and practice its teachings. Painted in colors on silk. Twelfth century. Designated a National Treasure. Tokyo National Museum.*



# Dividing Good from Evil

## *Buddhist Reflections on the New Holy Wars*

by David R. Loy

*If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere, insidiously committing evil deeds, and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the line dividing good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being. And who is willing to destroy a piece of his own heart?*

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*

Why does the line dividing good and evil cut through the heart of each of us? This little essay was inspired by the curious fact that the al-Qaeda understanding of good and evil—the need for a holy war against evil—has also been emphasized by the administration of U.S. President George W. Bush. Each side is trying to destroy the other, which, being evil, deserves to be destroyed. In the process, however, is each side destroying a piece of its own heart?

Soon after the September 11, 2001, attacks, President Bush declared that the United States was called to a new worldwide mission “to rid the world of evil,” and that he is determined to “rid the world of evildoers.” If anything is evil, the terrorist attacks on September 11 were evil. Nevertheless, we need to take a close look at such rhetoric. When Bush says he wants to rid the world of evil, I think we should be concerned, because that is also what Hitler and Stalin wanted to do.

What was the problem with Jews that required a “final solution”? Hitler thought that the earth could be made pure for the Aryan race only by exterminating the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals, etc.—all the impure vermin who contaminate it. Stalin needed to exterminate well-to-do Russian peasants in order to establish his ideal society of collective farmers. Both of these great villains were trying to perfect the world by eliminating its impurities. The world can be made good only by destroying its evil elements.

In other words, one of the main causes of evil in our world has been human attempts to eradicate evil, or what has been viewed as evil. In more Buddhist terms, much of the world’s suffering has resulted from our way of thinking about good and evil.

On the same day that Bush first talked about ridding the world of evil, the *Washington Post* quoted Joshua Teitelbaum, a scholar who has studied the al-Qaeda movement: “Osama bin Laden looks at the world in very stark,

black-and-white terms. For him, the U.S. represents the forces of evil that are bringing corruption and domination into the Islamic world.”

What is the difference between bin Laden’s view and Bush’s? They are opposites—in fact, *mirror* opposites. Let’s look at that quote again, changing only a few names: “George W. Bush looks at the world in very stark, black-and-white terms. For him, al-Qaeda represents the forces of evil that are bringing corruption and domination into the Western world.” You are either with us or against us.

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What bin Laden sees as good—an Islamic *jihad* against an impious imperialism—Bush sees as evil. What Bush sees as good—America the defender of freedom and democracy—bin Laden sees as evil. That makes them two different versions of the same holy-war-between-good-and-evil.

This is not to equate Bush's actions with those of bin Laden (although I can appreciate why such an argument might be attempted, because of the large number of casualties in Afghanistan and Iraq). Rather, this is a point about our ways of looking at the world. From a Buddhist perspective, there is something delusive about both sides of this mirror-image, and it is important to understand how this black-and-white way of thinking brings more suffering, more evil, into the world. It is difficult to "turn the other cheek" when the world is viewed this way. If the world is a battleground of good and evil forces, the evil that is in the world must be fought and defeated by any means necessary.

The secularization of the modern West has not eliminated this tendency. In some ways it has intensified it, because we can no longer rely on a supernatural resolution. We have to depend upon ourselves to bring about the final victory of good over evil, as Hitler and Stalin tried to do. It is unclear how much help bin Laden and Bush have been expecting from God.

Perhaps the basic problem with this simplistic good-vs.-evil way of understanding conflict is that, because it tends to preclude further thought, it keeps us from looking deeper. Once something has been identified as evil, there is no more need to explain it; it is time to focus on fighting against it. Bin Laden and Bush seem to share this tendency. This, however, is where we can benefit from a Buddhist perspective.

For Buddhism, evil, like everything else, has no essence or substance of its own. It is a product of impermanent causes and conditions. In fact, Buddhism emphasizes evil less than its *three roots*: greed, ill will, and delusion. Karma implies that when our actions are motivated by these roots of evil, their negative consequences tend to rebound back upon us. That is true for everyone. However, the Buddhist solution to suffering does not involve requiting violence with violence, any more than it involves responding to greed with greed, or responding to delusion with delusion. From a Buddhist perspective, one cannot find justice for the deaths of some three thousand innocent people in New York and Washington in a bombing campaign that leads to the deaths of an even larger number of innocent Afghans. Instead, the Buddhist solution involves breaking that cycle by transforming greed into generosity, ill will into loving-kindness, and delusions into wisdom.

The three roots are intertwined. Ill will cannot be separated from greed and delusion. Another's ill will toward us may be connected with their greed—or with our greed. This points toward the essential question that many have been trying to ask, but others have been trying to evade:

why do so many people in the Middle East, in particular, hate the United States so much? More precisely, how much of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East has been motivated by love of freedom and democracy, and how much by need—or greed—for its oil?

Buddhist teachings usually focus on the role of delusion, which has a special meaning in Buddhism. The fundamental delusion is our sense of separation from the world we are in, including our separation from other people. Insofar as we feel separate from others, we are more inclined to manipulate them to get what we want. This naturally breeds resentment, both from others, who do not like to be used, and within ourselves, when we do not get what we want. Isn't this also true collectively?

The delusion of separation becomes wisdom when we realize that "no man is an island." We are interdependent because we are all part of each other, different facets of the same jewel we call the earth. This world is not a collection of objects but a community of subjects, a web of interacting processes, which means we cannot avoid responsibility for each other.

Of course those responsible for terrorist attacks must be caught and brought to justice. We also have a responsibility to stop other deluded and hate-filled terrorists. If we want to stop this cycle of hatred and violence, however, we must realize that our responsibility is much broader than that.

Realizing our interdependence and mutual responsibility for each other implies something more than just an intellectual awareness. When we try to *live* the way this interdependence implies, it is called love. Such love is much more than a feeling; it is a mode of being. Compassion, generosity, and loving-kindness are all different aspects of this mode, which embodies a deep wisdom about how the cycle of hatred and violence works and about how that cycle can be ended. An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind, but there is an alternative. Twenty-five hundred years ago Shakyamuni Buddha said:

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—for those who harbour such thoughts ill-will will never cease.

"He abused me, he beat me, he defeated me, he robbed me"—for those who do not harbour such thoughts ill-will will cease.

In this world hatred is never appeased by ill-will; ill-will is always appeased by love. This is an ancient law. (Dhammapada, vv. 3–5)

Of course, this insight is not unique to Buddhism. It was not the Buddha who gave us the powerful image of turning the other cheek when we have been struck. There is another way to understand the war between good and evil:

to internalize it and psychologize it, as the struggle that occurs within each of us when we try to live up to the ideals of our own religion. In Islam, for example, this is the "greater *jihad*" or "internal *jihad*" that Muhammad emphasized more than any military one. Given our much greater technological powers today, our much greater ability to destroy each other, we need this "ancient law" about the power of love more than ever.

### Good vs. Evil

Because Buddhist enlightenment involves mindfulness, Buddhism encourages us to be wary of antithetical concepts: not only good and evil, but success and failure, rich and poor, etc. We distinguish between such terms because we want one rather than the other, yet psychologically as well as logically we cannot have one without the other, because the meaning of each depends upon the other. By dualizing in that way, we "bind ourselves without a rope." If it is important for me to live a pure life, then my life will be preoccupied with (avoiding) impurity. If becoming wealthy is the most important thing for me, then I am equally bothered by the prospect of poverty. We cannot take one lens without the other, and together they filter and distort our experience of the world.

What does this mean for the duality of good vs. evil? Perhaps the most important way the interdependence of good and evil shows itself is that we don't know what is good until we know what is evil, and we don't feel we are good unless we are fighting against that evil. We can feel comfortable and secure in our own goodness only by attacking the evil outside us. That is why we often like war: wars cut through the petty problems of daily life, and unite us good guys here against the bad guys there. There is fear in that, of course, but it is also exhilarating. The meaning of life becomes clearer. The problems with my life, and yours, are not inside us but *over there*.

We usually love this struggle between good (us) and evil (them), because it is, in its own fashion, quite satisfying. It makes sense of the world. Think of the plot of every James Bond film, every Star Wars film, every Indiana Jones film, and now every Harry Potter film, etc. The bad guys are caricatures: they're ruthless, without remorse, so they must be stopped by any means necessary. We are meant to feel that it is okay—to tell the truth, it's pleasurable—to see violence inflicted upon them. Because the villains like to hurt people, it's okay to hurt them. Because they like to kill people, it is okay to kill them.

What is this kind of story really teaching us? That if you want to hurt someone, it is important to demonize them first: in other words, by fitting them into your good-vs.-evil script. Even school bullies usually begin by looking for some petty offense (often a perceived insult) that they can use to justify their own violence. That is why the first casualty of all wars is truth. The media must "sell" this script to the people.

Such stories are much more than entertainment. In order to live, we need air, water, food, clothes, shelter, friends—and we need stories, because they teach us what is important in life. They give us models of how to live in a complicated and confusing world. Until the last hundred years or so, the most important stories for most people were religious: the life of Jesus or the Buddha, and the lives of their followers. Theologians and philosophers may like arguing over concepts and dogmas, but for most people it is the stories that are important: the Easter passion; the Prophet in exile; the future Buddha deciding to leave home.

Today, however, our over-commodified world is full of stories, because successful ones are so profitable. Unfortunately, they keep selling us the same duality. For example, Disney's *Lion King* film contrasts the noble ruler of the animals, his loving wife, and their innocent cub, Simba, with Simba's jealous, scheming uncle. The evil uncle hatches a plot to kill the king and eliminate Simba, who escapes but eventually returns to fight the uncle, etc. All very predictable and boring, although often beautiful visually.

In Japan, *The Lion King* was featured in cinemas at about the same time as *Princess Mononoke*, a wonderful animated film by Hayao Miyazaki. One of the striking things about this film is the way it avoids any simple duality between good and evil. People do bad things, not because they are evil, but because they are complicated: sometimes selfish and greedy, and sometimes just so narrowly focused on what they are doing that they do not see the wider implications of their actions.

I do not know if Miyazaki considers himself a Buddhist, but many of his films seem quite Buddhist to me. Compare the following passage from the Sutta Nipata, an early Buddhist sutra, where Ajita asks of the Buddha, "What is it that smothers the world? What makes the world so hard to see? What would you say pollutes the world and threatens it most?" Notice that the Buddha's response makes no reference to evil:

"It is ignorance which smothers," the Buddha replies, "and it is heedlessness and greed which make the world invisible. The hunger of desire pollutes the world, and the great source of fear is the pain of suffering."

"In every direction," said Ajita, "the rivers of desire are running. How can we dam them, and what will hold them back? What can we use to close the floodgates?"

"Any such river can be halted with the dam of mindful awareness," said the Buddha. "I call it the flood-stopper. And with wisdom you can close the floodgates." (Sutta Nipata, vv. 1032–1036)

### A Better Duality?

What alternative is there, if we try to avoid the simplistic duality between good and evil as our main way of evaluating

Photo: AP / WWP

*Israeli police officers pointing rifles from a bridge to secure the area overlooking the scene of a suicide bombing at a bus stop near the central Israeli town of Rishon Letzion, on September 9 of this year. A tragic cycle of hatred and violence, fueled by a vicious cycle of escalating fear on both sides, continues to deprive the lives of many civilians.*

what happens in the world? We would do better to distinguish between two basic modes of *being in the world*, two different ways of responding to the death-haunted insecurity of our life in the world.

One mode of being involves trying to stabilize ourselves by controlling the world, so that it becomes less threatening and more amenable to our will. The other mode involves opening ourselves up to the world, with greater acceptance of the open-ended impermanence of our existence. That means not allowing our concern to *control* the world to dominate the way we *respond* to the world.

Both of these involve a quest for security, but they understand it differently. *Security* is from the Latin *se + cura*, literally “without care”—that is, the condition in which my

life is not preoccupied with worrying about my life. We can try to become “without care” by completely controlling our world, yet there are other ways that involve a greater trust or faith in the world itself. The first way is more dualistic: I try to manipulate the world in order to fixate my situation. The second way is more nondual: greater openness to the world is possible because it is perceived as less threatening and more welcoming, so my own boundaries can be more permeable.

I think the best labels for these two modes of being are *fear* and *love*. If it is true that these are our most basic modes of being, the choice between them (or proportion between them) is the basic challenge that confronts each of us as we mature.



How much better it would be if the Israel-Palestine conflict were understood in this way: not as a holy war between good and evil, but as a tragic cycle of hatred and violence, fueled by a vicious cycle of escalating fear on both sides. Israelis fear that they will never be able to live at peace, believing that Palestinians are determined to destroy them. Palestinians, impoverished by Israeli control over their own communities and dominated by its U.S.-supplied military, strike back in the only way they can.

Needless to say, viewing the conflict in these terms does not offer us any simple solution. Mutual fear and hatred between Israelis and Palestinians have been brewing for generations and will not easily be defused. Yet this perspective offers us the hope for a solution, which present policies of mutual retaliation obviously do not. What has been created can be undone, if each side makes efforts for "internal disarmament" and also accepts responsibility for addressing the fear in the heart of the other side.

### The Basic Message?

Does this choice between fear and love also provide us with a modern vocabulary to express the basic message of both Christianity and Buddhism?

The Sangha community of monks and nuns founded by Shakyamuni Buddha eventually became settled and wealthy, but originally they were a motley crew of wandering mendicants, with almost no possessions except robes and begging bowls. The Buddha sent them out one by one in all directions to preach the Dharma, in a way strikingly reminiscent of the way Jesus charged his apostles to go out and preach that "the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand": "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money, and do not have two tunics" (Matt. 9:3). What were both teachers saying? Don't worry about yourself, about how you will live or what you will eat. Just do the best you can spreading the word and have faith that you will be taken care of. In other words, let go of your fears about yourself. Instead, open up to the world and live a life of love focused on giving to the world rather than taking from it, trusting in the world rather than always trying to protect yourself from it.

There are many such passages in the gospels, especially in the Sermon on the Mount. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth" (Matt. 6:19); "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, and yet your heavenly Father takes care of them" (Matt. 6:25-29).

Perhaps the most remarkable Gospel passage of all, from a Buddhist perspective, clarifies this teaching of salvation through insecurity. "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:37-39). This encourages us to follow the personal exam-

ple of Jesus, who "emptied himself" (*kenosis*, Phil. 2:5-11).

There are different ways to understand that emptying, but as a Zen Buddhist I am reminded of the thirteenth-century Japanese Zen master Dogen, who wrote something that resonates in much the same way: "To study Buddhism is to study yourself; to study yourself is to forget yourself; to forget yourself is to be awakened and realize your intimacy with all things." The fruit of the Buddhist path, the end of a life organized around fear, is to lose and empty yourself by forgetting yourself, which is also to find your true self: not an alienated self threatened by the world and trying to secure itself against those anxieties, but a nondual self that knows itself to be a part of the world, a manifestation of it.

This encouragement is often understood in terms of some heavenly reward that we can get in an afterlife (better karma in a future rebirth, or an eternity with God in heaven) that caters to our fear of mortality. But there is another way to understand both nirvana and the kingdom of heaven if, as Augustine put it, God is closer to me than I am to myself. Then forgetting/losing myself is a way to realize the buddha-nature or divinity at my empty (*shunya*) core right now, so that "not I but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). From the usual perspective preoccupied with securing ourselves, forgetting myself or losing myself would seem to be the supreme foolishness. From a more spiritual viewpoint, however, it can lead to the greatest security, a life "without care" because if we have truly emptied ourselves and already died to ourselves then there is no longer anyone left to die, no longer any alienated self to worry about death.

Both modes of living—fear and love—involve reinforcing feedback systems that tend to incorporate other people. When I manipulate the world to get what I want from it, the more separate and alienated I feel from it, and the more separate others feel from me when they have been manipulated; this mutual distrust encourages both sides to manipulate more. But the more I can relax and open up to the world, trusting it and accepting the responsibility to respond to its needs—which is what loving it means—the more I feel a part of it, at one with other people; and the more others become inclined to trust and open up to me.

The choice between them: the line that really divides our hearts.

*A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt about the tragedy on September 11.*

*He said, "I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is vengeful, angry, violent. The other wolf is loving, forgiving, compassionate."*

*The grandson asked him, "Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?"*

*The grandfather answered, "The one I feed."* □

# A Great Treasure Is Very Near

by Gene Reeves

*Having a good attitude toward life means seeing everything that comes to us as a gift, more especially as an opportunity, as what we call a “learning experience.”*

Especially in the early chapters of the Lotus Sutra, one major concern is how the older shravaka way is related to the newer bodhisattva way. What was especially important was to try to explain why the great early disciples of the Buddha, that is, the Buddha's closest disciples, were shravakas and apparently had not taken the path of the bodhisattva.

In chapter 8 (“Assurance for the Five Hundred Disciples”), the Buddha first explains that a disciple named Purna, son of Maitrayani, has been a most excellent teacher of the Dharma under thousands of buddhas. He has skillfully taught the Dharma in the past, is doing so in the present, and will continue to do so in the future. He is so

skillful that innumerable people, supposing him to be a shravaka, have benefited from his teaching. In reality, however, this Purna is a bodhisattva who will eventually become a buddha named Dharma Radiance. By disguising themselves as shravakas in ways like this, bodhisattvas make it possible even for unmotivated people to enter the bodhisattva way, the way of becoming a buddha.

Assurance of becoming a buddha is then given to another leading monk, Kaundinya, or “Ajnata-Kaundinya,” the uncle of Purna. He had been the first to become an ordained disciple of the Buddha at Benares and for some time was the head of the Sangha, the community of monks.

Next, the Buddha assured twelve hundred disciples that they and all other shravakas would eventually become buddhas, and he instructed Kashyapa, another of his ten great disciples, to go and tell those shravakas who were not present that they too would eventually become buddhas. These absent shravakas are probably the arrogant ones who had left the assembly in a huff in chapter 2, just as the Buddha was about to preach. If so, this is one of many places where the sutra shows a spirit of generosity. Even arrogant monks who refuse to listen to the Buddha, it says, will eventually be saved.

At this point, five hundred monks, all of whom had become arhats, the highest stage of spiritual development pursued by shravakas, confessed that they had previously been satisfied with a state or level of progress that they had already attained. Then they used the parable of the hidden jewel to explain their situation.

## The Parable of the Hidden Jewel

A poor man visiting the home of a good friend, a rich man, became drunk and fell fast asleep. The host, having to leave in order to take care of some business, sewed a priceless jewel into the robe of his sleeping friend and went off. After a while the poor man woke up and left. He went to another town, where he had great difficulty earning enough for sufficient food and clothing. Eventually he happened to run into his friend once again, who promptly scolded

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him, explained that he had given him the jewel so that he would not have to struggle so much, and called him a fool for not making use of his hidden treasure.

The Buddha, we are told, is like that rich friend. He reminds us of good roots planted long ago. An arhat is like the poor man. Being satisfied with what little he has already attained, he does not realize that in reality he is a bodhisattva who will attain supreme awakening.

### The Central Message

The central lesson of this parable is, of course, that the greatest treasure is not far off, but very close to each one of us. Though we may not know it, we already have it. That is, each of us has within us abilities, skills, talents, strengths, potentialities, powers, and so forth with which to do the Buddha's work, abilities that we do not yet know about and have not yet utilized.

The idea that the treasure we seek is very close may seem to conflict with the story of the fantastic castle previously discussed. In that story, the goal is both very distant and very difficult to reach. But these two stories can be understood to be in harmony if we realize that the goal is both very distant in one respect and very close in another.

While the term "buddha-nature" is never used in the Lotus Sutra, this is a good example of the use of the basic idea behind the concept, which would be developed later. Buddha-nature is a kind of mysterious power that makes it possible for any one of us to be a bodhisattva for someone else, a power that makes it possible for us to share in doing the Buddha's work of saving all the living, a power that makes it possible for us to go far beyond our normal expectations.

The buddha-nature is, in one sense, very close, a basis of our very existence. Not a power off at some great distance, but a power within each of us. Nothing could be closer. On the other hand, unless we learn to make use of this ability and put it into practice in our daily lives, the goal of realizing it, of becoming a buddha, remains very distant.

### Some Possible Lessons

Depending on our own circumstances, there are several different lessons that might be drawn from this interesting parable.

#### (1) *Never be complacent*

Whatever our present state—our accomplishment or lack of accomplishment, whatever our social status, whether a floor sweeper or a president of a company—we should strive to continue to develop ourselves, to make full use of the potential we have within ourselves to be helpful to others. We should never become complacent, thinking we have arrived and have no more to do.

Sometimes we may become overly attached to our titles—doctor, minister, sensei, master, professor, and so on, titles that convey some kind of superior status. On the one

hand, we may use such titles to make little of others, to put others down. On the other hand, we may use them to fool ourselves into thinking that we have arrived at a level from which there is no need to go further.

In the Lotus Sutra, this is the chief Mahayana criticism of the shravaka-way. Shravakas, Mahayana Buddhists thought, set as their highest goal the status of being an arhat, one who is worthy of receiving offerings. This status then becomes an excuse for being both lazy and arrogant, for thinking that one has no more to do and that one is better than others. In contrast, the Lotus Sutra says in effect that we should always strive to do better, that the bodhisattva path always lies before us. This is the sense in which the goal is always distant. We always have much to do.

#### (2) *Don't hoard your talent*

In a sense, a hidden treasure has no value until it is disclosed and used in some way. This is the difference in economics between investing and hoarding. If we take our savings and hide them in some secret place, such as a mattress, the money doesn't "work" for us. It earns no dividends. It also does no work for anyone else.

So it is with our abilities and talents. If we hoard them by keeping them hidden and unused, they do no good for ourselves or for others. Thus the Lotus Sutra teaches that we should work to overcome obstacles to developing and using our talents, whether they be shyness, excessive humility, or just foolishness. In this parable, the rich friend tells his friend that he has been foolish for not making use of the jewel that had been given to him.

#### (3) *Enjoy life*

In this story, using the treasure clearly means enjoying life. Life is difficult, but we are much freer, more able to appreciate, more able to cope with whatever difficulties life presents us, if we have an appropriate attitude toward life and toward ourselves.

Having a good attitude toward life, for the Lotus Sutra, means seeing everything that comes to us as a gift, more especially as an opportunity, as what we call a "learning experience." Yes, life can be very difficult, but if we approach the troubles and difficulties that come our way as opportunities for learning, we will be able to enjoy life more fully.

In Mahayana Buddhism, the importance of helping others is often stressed. But we should know that even helping others is never merely helping others—it always also contributes to our own enjoyment of life as well.

As we saw in the earlier discussion of the parable of the rich father and the poor son in chapter 4, both one's enjoyment of life and one's ability to help others can be severely constrained by a poor attitude toward oneself. In that story, the poor son had a terrible inferiority complex, one that prevented him from flourishing as a human being. In the

*Detail from a scroll of the Lotus Sutra Mandala, owned by the temple Honkoji in Shizuoka Prefecture, depicting the parable of the hidden jewel.*

parable of the hidden jewel, too, the poor man's problem can be imagined to be his attitude toward himself.

This should not be taken to mean that poverty is always, or even usually, a matter of attitudes on the part of the poor. There are very real and very important social and economic causes of poverty as well. What the Lotus Sutra teaches us here is that our own enjoyment of life can be greater if we overcome whatever attitudes are hindering us from making fuller use of the abilities and talents given to us—our hidden treasures.

#### (4) *Buddha-nature is given to us*

Buddha-nature, the capacity to become a buddha, is not something we have to earn—it is given to us, it comes from the generosity of the Buddha, who is truly our friend.

The point is that we do not have to earn or pay for our basic ability to do good for others. This is something that all of us have received naturally; something that cannot be destroyed or taken away from us. It is, as the simile in chapter 4 says, our inheritance; it is ours by virtue of our very existence. This is why we are taught in this chapter that our treasure is very close.

On the other hand, if we fail to take our treasures out from their hidden places, fail to develop our talents and strengths, our ability to help others and our ability to enjoy life remain mere potentialities. This is why the poor man in this parable is chastised for failing to make use of the treasure given to him.

#### (5) *Buddha-nature is good*

The buddha-nature teaching of the Lotus Sutra can be contrasted with the Christian doctrine of total depravity, according to which human beings are naturally or basically sinful, or even evil. Christians profess that there is no good or health in us. Buddhism, in contrast, understands living beings as basically endowed with a wonderful power to help others, and thereby to help themselves.

The Lotus Sutra encourages us to look for and cultivate the good both in ourselves and in others.

#### (6) *A new meaning of "bodhisattva"*

Purna, we are told in this chapter, while seeming to be a shravaka, is actually a bodhisattva. The Lotus Sutra both retains the classical meaning of bodhisattva as one who is



very high in status on the way to becoming a buddha, and gives new meaning to the term by proposing that all are, to some degree, however slight, bodhisattvas. This means that the title "bodhisattva" should be seen, not so much as a mark of status, but as the label used to name an activity. Just as a teacher who does not teach is not a teacher, a bodhisattva who does not do the work of the Buddha is not truly a bodhisattva. On the other hand, anyone who does do the work of the Buddha, regardless of title or status, is—to that degree—a bodhisattva. I sometimes like to say that we should regard the word "bodhisattva" not so much as a noun, but as a verb. Unfortunately, this is much easier to do in Chinese than it is in English or even in Japanese.

Monks, listen carefully!  
Because they have learned skillful means well,  
The way followed by [bodhisattvas]  
Is unthinkable wonderful.

Knowing that most delight in lesser teachings  
And are overawed by great wisdom,  
Bodhisattvas become  
Shravakas or pratyekabuddhas.

Using innumerable skillful means  
And proclaiming themselves to be shravakas,  
Far removed from the Buddha Way,  
They transform all kinds of beings.

They save innumerable beings,  
Enabling them to succeed,  
Though most people are complacent and lazy.  
In this way they are finally led to become buddhas.

Keeping their bodhisattva-actions as inward secrets,  
Outwardly they appear as shravakas.  
They appear to have little desire and to be tired of life  
But in truth they are purifying buddha-lands.

The point is in part to emphasize the importance of embodying the Dharma in our lives, in our actions and behavior toward others. But equally important is the idea that anyone can be a bodhisattva for us, if we are open to seeing the other as a bodhisattva. As is so often the case, this teaching, the idea that a shravaka can be seen to actually be a bodhisattva, is both about how we should regard ourselves and also about how we should regard others. It is an idea that will be developed and emphasized over and over again in subsequent chapters of the Lotus Sutra.

#### (7) *The treasure is one*

The rich man (the Buddha) both gives the treasure to the poor man in the first place and later has to tell him that he has already given it to him. In the parable of the burning house in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, we are told of a

great carriage that replaces inferior carriages. In this parable, however, the treasure brought to the attention of the poor man at the end of the story is the treasure that was there all along. That is, here the sutra does not claim that earlier Buddhist teachings are false. Here it is not even suggested that they are lesser in any way. Gaining the treasure is a matter of more fully understanding and realizing something that was always within us.

#### (8) *The Buddha depends on us*

We should notice here that the rich friend's initial ploy doesn't really work well. Apparently he expected the poor man to realize that he had the treasure and make use of it. Yet he did not, remaining just as poor as before.

Why? In this story it is simply because the poor man is foolish, too dumb to realize that the jewel had been sewn into his garment. This means, of course, that the Buddha depends on others. In this case, utilizing the treasure depends on the poor man. It has been given to him, but unless he himself makes use of it, it amounts to nothing. So it is with us. We should not think that the Buddha is some kind of all-powerful god who can save all living beings by himself. The Buddha of the Lotus Sutra, like all beings, lives in interdependence with others. He needs his children, bodhisattvas, to do his work in this world.

Shinran, the great founder of the True Pure Land (Jodo Shin-shu) tradition of Japanese Buddhism, thought it important to say that human beings are utterly dependent on the "other-power" of the Buddha and can accomplish nothing good by their "own-power." But in the Lotus Sutra we cannot find this radically dualistic distinction between the power of the Buddha and the power of others. In it, the power in us, the buddha-nature in us, is always the power of the Buddha embodied in us. In this sense, the Buddha is always very close.

#### (9) *The hidden treasure in others*

The message of the parable can also be turned around, and should be. That is, we should realize not only that we have a hidden treasure, but that so does everyone else. Even someone I do not like, even someone who is unfriendly or mean to me, has the buddha-nature. Being a Buddhist, entering the Buddha Way, is to be, to some degree, like a buddha, to be awakened. And to be awakened means seeing in others the same buddha-nature that is in ourselves. Such seeing can give rise to compassion for others. And such compassion can motivate the appropriate practice, that is, doing good for others.

#### (10) *Even the Lotus Sutra has limitations*

In this chapter, as in others, when the Buddha describes the future buddha-land of Purna after he has become the Buddha named Dharma Radiance, he says that it will be without women, that men will have no sexual desire, and that they will be born without having mothers. Historically,

such a misanthropic attitude toward women probably reflects the experience of celibate monks in the India of twenty centuries ago. Sexuality has been an ongoing problem for Buddhism. This is in large part because sexual desire in men can be seen as the embodiment of desire and greed—everything that Buddhism, especially traditional Indian Buddhism, opposed and sought to abolish. Thus women were seen as the cause of men's evil actions, and thus as embodiments of evil.

With respect to attitudes toward women, Buddhism was something of an improvement over Hinduism. Women were, for example, admitted into the community as ordained nuns, as was true in Jainism. But nuns were radically subordinated to monks and it was believed that only through rebirth as a man could a woman have any possibility of awakening fully.

The Lotus Sutra often reflects such attitudes, as appears to be the case in this chapter. But, as we will see later, it sometimes takes a more generous view of women and their potential to be Dharma teachers and become buddhas. Thus the Lotus Sutra is consistent in teaching that every creature has the potential to become a buddha in this world. In doing this, in maintaining the consistent teaching of universal buddha-nature, the Lotus Sutra takes an important step toward teaching the equality of men and women.

Yet, while the Lotus Sutra does take a step forward with respect to equality, going beyond Hinduism, beyond traditional Buddhism, and even beyond many Mahayana sutras, it only takes a step, and not a very large one at that, falling far short of today's standards. We can, I believe, love the Lotus Sutra and seek to follow its important teachings while still recognizing that, like all things, it has limitations. We should not forget that the sutra itself teaches

us that all Buddhist teachings are skillful means, relative to their time and circumstance, including the details of the Lotus Sutra. In this sense, though ahead of its time in most ways, in some other ways the Lotus Sutra reflects the limitations of the culture and time in which it was written.

#### (11) *The earth as humanity's hidden treasure*

The idea of being given a great treasure is not only an individual matter, but something that can be applied to human beings as a whole. The treasure is the earth, the natural environment and resources that we have inherited. The Buddha (the reality of the world) is basically generous, supportive of life and of human life. We have inherited an incredibly rich earth. With it we are given enormous opportunity to do good. The question is, will we recognize and appreciate how valuable this treasure is, and, if we do, how will we use the treasure given to us?

Perhaps humanity as a whole is like the poor man in the parable—still stumbling around without realizing that he has such a treasure. Perhaps humanity as a whole needs to wake up to see not only the wonderful treasure that is in us but also the wonderful treasure that is all around us.

In summary, we should never become complacent or completely satisfied with some lesser level of awakening, whether it is some great illuminating experience or high social status. We should always pursue the Buddha Way by seeking to deepen our understanding, strengthen our compassion and improve our practice. Full benefit comes with full realization—from making full use of the buddha-nature given to us and from full recognition of the buddha-nature in others and in everything that is around us. While our treasure is very close, that full realization of it always remains very distant. □

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*An extant part of a picture scroll of the Lotus Sutra owned by the Kyoto National Museum, depicting the Buddha commissioning bodhisattvas to promulgate the Lotus Sutra. 13th century. Designated an Important Cultural Property by the Japanese government.*

# Gandhi and Buddhism

An Interview with Sanskrit Scholar Naresh Mantri

*While promoting cultural exchange between India and Japan as president of the Sarvodaya Indo-Japanese Culture Center in Tokyo, Dr. Naresh Mantri has been engaged in the translation of Kumarajiva's Chinese version of the Lotus Sutra into Hindi. During a recent interview with DHARMA WORLD in Tokyo he emphasized the need to understand the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence as a guiding principle for the twenty-first century.*

*When India became independent from British rule, you were eighteen years old. Could you tell us your impression of the British government's policies and your boyhood under colonial rule?*

I was born into a Hindu family in Bombay, which is now called Mumbai. The city had been developed as a trade center for the British East India Company to carry on trade in India and China. It later came under British rule and was used as the base for conquering India. The British entered India through Bombay. The people of Bombay had been in contact with Western civilization for generations, so they were fortunate to get a Western-style education in English. Bombay developed under British rule,

but it also became the center of the independence movement—the Indian National Congress was also established there in 1885.

Gandhi launched his “Quit India” movement in an effort to bring the British to the negotiating table for India’s independence, and on August 9, 1942, he declared from Bombay his famous call to the British to “Quit India” and to Indians: “Do or die”—either free India or die in the attempt. A great number of the Congress leaders—Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru and all the others—were immediately put into confinement.

That happened when I was in school, and there was a feeling that we should do something for our country. But at that time we were young students and had the feeling

*Mahatma Gandhi, right, and Muhammad Ali Jinnah, advocate for a separate Muslim state, pose at the steps of Jinnah's home where the two met to discuss the Hindu-Muslim conflicts in Bombay, India, on September 9, 1944.*

that we were not able to do much, that we were unable to take part in the independence movement. But we read the writings of Gandhi, Tilak, Nehru, and other great leaders. Sometimes we used to go to the speeches of the independence movement leaders. Therefore, we were very happy when the Indians were liberated from British colonial rule under the superb leadership of Gandhi and Nehru. So when I graduated from school, I realized that my generation was full of patriotism—that we were all imbued with the feeling that we should do something for our newborn country.

*After you heard the news of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination, what was the situation in Mumbai?*

Everyone was very sad, and full of tears. There was an unbearable feeling—no one could comprehend why such

a great leader, who had dedicated all of his life to the unity of Muslims and Hindus and had conducted his movement through nonviolence, should have been assassinated. Our grief was even deeper.

I was very much impressed by the speech by Nehru [prime minister at the time], which I heard on the radio in the evening on the day that Gandhi was assassinated. I still remember that Nehru was saying, "The light has gone out of our lives and there is darkness everywhere. . . . The light has gone out, I said, and yet I was wrong. For the light that shone in this country was no ordinary light. . . . For that light represented the eternal truth, and the eternal man was with us with his eternal truth, reminding us of the right path, drawing us from error, taking this ancient country to freedom." The light that was guiding us to the future had gone—I understood it in that way. On that day I decided to quit eating meat and become a vegetarian, like Gandhi. At that time, however, I had no idea that in the future I would go to Wardha, where Gandhi's last ashram was operated by his disciples.

*What lured you to Wardha?*

I had two close friends. After graduating together we all entered Wilson College of the University of Bombay, which is located near Chowpatty, where Tilak was cremated and his statue is still standing. We were always a group of three friends. We decided to stay together in a hostel. I was going to major in Sanskrit studies. One of my friends was Mangesh Padgaonkar, a talented poet. He published his first book in 1950, a couple of years after entering college. His books are all in Marathi. Now he is one of the most renowned poets of Marathi literature. We always discussed literature and spiritual things. We used to go to listen to J. Krishnamurti when he came to Bombay. We felt that he had already attained enlightenment. While listening to such a great religious man, at that time, I came to read books on Lord Buddha. I was also attracted to the Buddha's teachings. So I used to keep an ivory Buddha statue in my room. Although I was a Hindu, I didn't keep any statues of Hindu deities. But I kept the Buddha statue.

We were very much influenced by Krishnamurti's spirituality and aspired to enlightenment; therefore, the three of us decided to leave college. Leaving college education means for young persons to give up the chance for a professional career. Unless they graduate from university, they cannot get good jobs. At that time there was no such thing as a hippie, but we were almost like that. We had long hair and grew beards.

Taking only a small bag, we started on a tour of South India. When leaving home I gave the Buddha statue to my sister and bought another one in Travancore. It is still with me. We visited first Sri Aurobindo's ashram in Pon-



dicherry. He was a very creative yogi and a very renowned person. Then we went to some Christian ashrams, and then to Ramana Maharshi's ashram. He was a great sage. In this way we traveled to Sri Lanka.

After a six-month journey, we returned to Bombay again. For nearly one year we were thinking what to do. I didn't want to go to college again. So, one day, one of our friends took the three of us to Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar—a close disciple of Gandhi. Gandhi trusted him very much. Staying in Gujarat, he helped Gandhi's work. He started traveling all over the world after independence, and at that time he stayed in Bombay in order to go by ship to East Africa (Kenya) for a tour. Acharya Kalelkar talked with us, all three of us, separately. He asked me what the aim of my life was. I was full of spiritual aspirations, so I replied, "What aim can one have except self-realization?" He said, "Now you come and stay with me." So of the three, he selected only me. After returning from the tour, he took me to Wardha, where he ran an institution called the Hindustani Prachar Sabha. I worked in that institution. I stayed there. Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar became my lifelong teacher.

*Please tell us about your life in Wardha.*

Originally the Hindustani Prachar Sabha had been established by Gandhi. It was to propagate Hindustani throughout India as our national language. Gandhi's idea of a national language was a little bit different from that of others. What he was concerned with was the question of unity between the Hindus and Muslims of India. He had realized the importance of Hindustani as the means to unite the two communities—because Hindi and Urdu are thought of as two facets of the same language, Hindustani. Both languages share a common lexicon that includes native (Indic), Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and English loanwords. When expressing the elevated thoughts of science, philosophy, art, and politics, the Muslims of India naturally drew from the wealth of Arabic and Persian, whereas the Hindus turned toward Sanskrit. Therefore, Gandhi encouraged the unified view of Hindustani written in Nagari and Urdu scripts, which is commonly understood and easily spoken and learned. For this purpose, Gandhi assigned Acharya Kalelkar the task of creating a simple Hindi with a beautiful style. But those who opposed his idea wanted to promote Modern Hindi as the national language, but it was too much a kind of "Sanskritized Hindi." Soon after India was partitioned, the question of this unity of Hindi and Urdu, the main object of his concern, disappeared. So the importance of Hindustani also died, and gradually Modern Hindi was accepted as the national language by the Constitution.

We were all living the ashram-like life in the institution. And we used to have the ashram prayer also. In the begin-

ning of the prayer, we used to chant the *O-daimoku*, "Namu Myoho Renge-kyo." Since that time I have been familiar with this Buddhist mantra. In the morning and evening prayer, we used to start with "Namu Myoho Renge-kyo." At that time, most of Gandhi's great disciples were in Wardha. They were Vinoba Bhave and others; whereas Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar used to travel all over India. He was invited by the different institutions—Mahatma Gandhi's institutions all over India—to come and give lectures and guidance. He took me with him many times. There my education began again. I started studying different languages. My mother tongue is Marathi, but I studied Hindi, Urdu, Gujarati, and some Bengali. Then

*Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar during his sixth visit to Japan. Photo taken by Dr. Mantri.*

whenever a new pagoda was completed, he used to invite guests from India, especially from Gandhi's disciples, for the opening ceremony of the pagoda. In this way Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar also came to Japan at the invitation of Fujii Guruji. On his second visit to Japan, he said to Fujii Guruji, "We shouldn't communicate in English. It is not good. We should communicate in our own languages. So you send me two of your disciples to study Hindi—our language, so that we can communicate in Hindi." So Fujii Guruji sent one man and one woman—both young—to our institution in Delhi, which had also been founded by Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar near the Mahatma Gandhi Memorial Museum. He brought me from Wardha to Delhi to help establish that institution. In the beginning, I taught them some Hindi. Then Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar sent them to another school for further study. They stayed in India for five or six years, I think, and attained mastery in Hindi. After their return, Fujii Guruji said to Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar: "Now you send one of your disciples to study Japanese Buddhism." That meant, for him, the Lotus Sutra. So Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar told me, "The Lotus Sutra was written originally in Sanskrit. We have an English translation, a Hindi translation too. We read it, but we don't find it very interesting. So I don't know why Japanese Buddhists respect it so much. So you go to Japan and study this, and find out why it is respected so much." It was in early April of 1963, and I was 34 years old. I left Bombay by steamer on August 26 and reached Tokyo on September 15.

In Tokyo I went to a Japanese-language school for six months. Then I joined Rissho University where Dr. Shobun Kubota, a great scholar in sociology and Buddhism, helped and guided me in many ways. First I studied sociology in the Faculty of Arts, then I entered the M.A. course of the Faculty of Buddhist Studies. After that, I entered the doctorate course and started studying the Lotus Sutra under the guidance of Professor Yensho Kanakura. In any case, I wanted to write my dissertation about the Lotus Sutra, because that was the instruction of Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar. It was very difficult to get the degree of Doctor of Literature on that sutra, because research on the Lotus Sutra was highly advanced in Japan. I had to read all of the papers and books already published in Japanese. I also read as many of the Sanskrit scriptures as were available. I read them and compared them with the Saddharma-pundarika-sutra. Then I could find some new points on the interpretation of this sutra. My ideas were recognized, and I received my doctorate from the university in 1973.

The greatness of this sutra is that it was formed and taught in order to bring all Buddhist sects together into one form of Buddhism—to make a synthesis of all the teachings of both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions. In order to synthesize all that, the Lotus Sutra was formed and there the teaching of Ekayana—One Vehicle—became essential. And in order to achieve it, the

*The Most Ven. Nichidatsu Fujii, founder of the Nipponzan Myohoji Sangha. After the World War II he and his Sangha started building peace pagodas throughout the world.*

Sanskrit was my favorite subject, and English, also. We used to clean latrines, work in the fields, and study. So I had a very spiritual life and had many opportunities to receive direct guidance from Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar. And I found that he was also very much attracted to Buddhism.

*What was your motive in coming to Japan and studying the Japanese Buddhist tradition?*

I didn't have any idea that I might be going to Japan for study. At that time, even a university graduate seldom had the opportunity of going out of India for study.

Now I have to tell about my new teacher in Japan—the Most Venerable Nichidatsu Fujii, founder of the Nipponzan Myohoji Sangha. We used to call him Fujii Guruji out of respect, because Gandhi gave him the title of Guruji, which means a respected teacher. He met Gandhi and his disciples in Wardha. So my teacher, Acharya Kakasaheb Kalelkar, also became one of his friends. After the Second World War, Fujii Guruji launched a peace movement in Japan. He started to build pagodas—peace pagodas. So

eternal life of the Buddha was preached. Shakyamuni was also a form of this eternal Buddha. In this way Buddhism was synthesized.

So that is the greatness of this sutra, which I discussed as the main theme of my dissertation.

*Why did Gandhi adopt the chanting of the O-daimoku at his ashram as a key part in the practice of prayer?*

Fujii Guruji believed in the prophecy of Nichiren that Japanese Buddhism would be returned to India. But another attraction was the movement of Gandhi based on nonviolence. In Gandhi's movement he found a kindred spirit of Nichiren's *Rissho Ankoku-ron*. So Fujii Guruji reached India in January 1931. He had to wait for two years in India until he was able to meet Gandhi in 1933, because Gandhi was very busy doing so many things at that time. In March 1930 Gandhi launched the Satyagraha against the taxation on salt, which was called the Salt March. He was arrested and put in prison for a while. During that time, Fujii Guruji was staying in Calcutta, where the Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore operated Shantiniketan, a school for the study of Indian philosophy and fine arts. It later developed into a university. However, Fujii Guruji did not have the desire to meet him; rather, he was only waiting to have a chance to meet Gandhi. And it came in October 1933, in the place of Wardha. Beating a drum and chanting the *O-daimoku*—*Namu Myoho Renge-kyo*—Fujii Guruji appeared in Wardha. When both of them met for the first time, both souls were melded together. Fujii Guruji didn't understand Hindi or any Indian languages, nor did Gandhi understand Japanese. But Gandhi was very impressed and fascinated by the drum sound and the chanting of the *O-daimoku*. And he liked chanting it very much until he was assassinated.

Gandhi maintained that all religions are equal. Therefore in his ashram prayer he included all the prayers of different religions. He also included a prayer from the Qur'an. He could even recite some verses from the Qur'an. He read it, and so did we. But until the meeting with Fujii Guruji, he had not included any Buddhist prayers in his ashram prayer.

*What do the teachings of the Lotus Sutra mean in your life personally?*

I also believe in synthesis, and that true religious persons should not raise any conflict. They should try to understand the philosophy and the faith of other people and try to respect them. That is also the message of the Lotus Sutra. It is taught that all of the teachings are true in this Lotus Sutra. So what is different is *hoben*—skillful means. Thus it teaches that all people have the freedom to believe according to their beliefs. There are so many different countries and different languages. Gandhi used to

*A handwritten letter by Gandhi to Nichidatsu Fujii. Gandhi celebrated in writing this letter the end of the Most Ven. Fujii's fasting at Calcutta in December 1933.*

say that there can be as many religions as there are men in the world. Everyone has a different personality from everyone else. So all people can have their own unique religions. We should not try to impose anything on others. We should understand this. And religion should not be the cause of conflicts or strife in the world. It should work for peace—for the harmony and uplifting of all people. So that is the message of the Lotus Sutra, I think.

*Can the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence or the Gandhian perspective on peace respond to contemporary conflict situations? Could you elaborate your ideas on this point?*

I think that after the creation of deadly nuclear weapons, Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence has become more relevant and necessary, because there can be no real solution through violent means. In Japan, Gandhi is introduced as a political leader. But he was a pure religious person and his philosophy, teachings, and movement all had but a single purpose—to save all humanity in the twentieth century. He was born in India not only for the

cause of independence, but to save humanity from nuclear holocaust.

Buddhism teaches us the doctrine of cause and effect. Gandhi also believed in this causality. In order to achieve a good cause, we should use good means. Through bad means we can never achieve good results. Getting rid of Saddam Hussein by violence will not make Iraq peaceful. So in order to achieve good results, we should sow a good seed. From a bad seed, we cannot have a good tree. This is the principle—the interdependent relationships among phenomena. Gandhi saw this. Only through nonviolence were the people of India able to achieve a real independence. So in the face of nuclear weapons, what we should develop is spiritual force, not brute force, in order to save humanity. Gandhi believed, and we must also believe as religious people, that real spiritual force is superior to brute force—material force. So wherever there is any conflict, we must resolve it, but we must try to solve it through spiritual force. If you try to resolve it through brute force, what awaits you is hatred and the destruction of all humanity.

*What is the significance of your translating the Lotus Sutra into Hindi, which you are now working on?*

The Lotus Sutra was originally written in Sanskrit. But we do not find the Sanskrit version very interesting, as I told you. But the Chinese translation made by Kumarajiva in the fifth century is very inspiring. So through Kumarajiva, the Lotus Sutra has received a new life. I think it is very important. As you know, there are many English translations, but still, there is no single Hindi translation made directly from Kumarajiva's Chinese translation. This is the reason that I am now translating it into Hindi. But only translating does not satisfy me. I would also like to make detailed notes on the important words. The Sanskrit version is also helpful. But sometimes in Kumarajiva's version there are some parts that are not in the original Sanskrit. Therefore it is a very important work. Besides, there are so many meanings in the Chinese terms. It takes more time for translation. You have to study many books. You have to see many translations. So it becomes very hard work, but I'd like to accomplish it anyway.

This is the only thing I can do because I have devoted my life to the study of this sutra. So this has become my lifework.

*India was the cradle of Buddhism, which, however, disappeared in the land of its origin in the thirteenth century. Actually, what is your basic idea for bringing the spirit of the Lotus Sutra back into India?*

For those who follow the teachings in the Lotus Sutra, there is no division, such as Mahayana and Hinayana. It's only Ekayana—One Vehicle. As I told you, in Mahatma

Gandhi's philosophy, teachings, and movement, this Buddhism—Ekayana Buddhism, or the teaching for bodhisattvas—was revived.

There is another person who needs to be mentioned when I discuss Gandhian philosophy and Buddhism—Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi. He is not very well known in Japan, but his son, Professor Damodar Kosambi, is more popular as a renowned mathematician, historian, and Sanskrit scholar whose books have been translated into Japanese.

Acharya Dharmananda Kosambi was originally from a Brahmin family in Goa. But he began reading about Buddhism. He was very much attracted to Buddhist philosophy and the Buddha's life, so he became a Buddhist. But he realized that he didn't know anything about Buddhism. So he decided to start again, by learning Pali. He traveled from Ceylon to Nepal and Burma for the study of Pali scriptures. Thus, he became a great Buddhist scholar who wrote many books. He was also fascinated with Gandhi's movement. Dharmananda Kosambi went to see Gandhi in Pune, a city near Bombay, in 1924 when Gandhi was hospitalized because of appendicitis. Gandhi also had great respect for him as a Buddhist scholar. In the hospital, Gandhi told Dharmananda Kosambi that he had already known many things about him through Shankarlal Banker, one of Gandhi's disciples. Both had once been confined in prison, so Shankarlal used to speak to Gandhi about him. So Gandhi said, "You are a great Buddhist scholar." Dharmananda replied, "It is true that I have studied Buddhist literature very well, but it is you who really savors the Buddhist teachings, who knows, while practicing Buddhism, the real taste of Buddhism." What he was pointing out was that Gandhi was truly practicing Buddhism as a living faith. The true spirit of Buddhism was revived in India through Gandhi and the "Satyagraha" movement, through which he showed humanity how to put into practice the Buddha's teachings to solve different problems by peaceful means.

So I don't think that any new attempt has to be made to take Buddhism from Japan to India. Gandhi was the greatest bodhisattva who appeared in the twentieth century. He was not merely a political leader—he was purely a religious man.

Until now, people may have had some illusions about the Gandhian philosophy of nonviolence, and also his followers' feelings and faith. So what is necessary for all those who follow the Buddhist faith in Japan is to know and study Gandhi's philosophy. But I think that you should not be very sensitive about the names—the spirit is there. Honestly speaking, Indian people themselves are already forgetting the Gandhian philosophy. So we have to inherit what Gandhi did and give a new form to Buddhist faith. That is important. And I want to devote my life to doing this. I believe that the Gandhian philosophy should be the guiding principle for the twenty-first century. □



# Look Upon All with a Mother's Eyes

An Interview with Ven. Nyichang Rinpoche

Nyichang Khentul Rinpoche was born on the eighth day of the second month of the Wood Boar year (by the Western calendar, April 10, 1935) in the Kyidong<sup>1</sup> valley of southwestern Tibet. He was born in a small village of fewer than 30 dwellings that lay amid the mountains near the border with Nepal. The villagers were mostly devotees of esoteric (Tantric) Buddhism, and his family maintained the post of head priest of the village temple. At the age of seven he was sent to Drepung, one of the three great Gelug colleges, but shortly thereafter his father removed him from Drepung and placed him under the tutelage of the great yogini Shugsep Jetsun Lochen Chönyi Zangmo Rinpoche of Shugsep Temple. His recognition by this realized teacher-practitioner as a *tülku* (reincarnated lama) was later acknowledged by Drukpa Thukse Rinpoche, who pronounced him to be the reincarnation of Drukpa Sangye Dorje—a great poet and the main disciple of Padma Karpo, sixteenth-century head of the Drukpa Kagyü sect. He also studied at the Nyingma head temple of Mindröling as well as the small but excellent Nyima Changra Monastic College (from which his name, Nyichang, derives), and was able to receive instruction under Chödrak Rinpoche, Pöba Tülku Rinpoche, Khenpo Tsenden Sangpo Rinpoche, and, after fleeing occupied Tibet, Dudjom Rinpoche, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche (who were both former heads-in-exile of the Nyingma School), His Holiness the Dalai Lama XIV, and others. For more than a quarter of a century, he has lived in Japan, to which he came at the request of the Dalai Lama, and where he transmits the Dharma to all

who are sincerely interested, regardless of nationality, with absolute fidelity to tradition, while he remains one of the greatest living scholar-monks of the Nyingma tradition. On behalf of DHARMA WORLD, Ven. Nyichang Rinpoche was interviewed by Stephen Comee, our copy editor and his student, at Rinpoche's residence in the suburbs of Tokyo in May and June.



*Could you briefly describe the Nyingma tradition for those who might not be familiar with it?*

The Nyingma school has an unbroken lineage of enlightened masters. Its Mantrayana and Sutrayana lineages go all the way back to the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, while its Dzogchen lineage is traced all the way back to Kun-tu bzang-po, or Samantabhadra, the Primordial Buddha. It is the oldest of the Tibetan traditions of Buddhism, and was directly founded by Padmasambhava (fl. eighth century),<sup>2</sup> who brought the Dharma to Tibet, for which reason he is revered by Tibetans as the "Second Buddha."

The ultimate view of the Nyingma school is called

Dzogchen (*rdzogs-pa chen-po*).<sup>3</sup> So "Nyingma practitioner" and "Dzogchen practitioner" have almost the same meaning. But historically, the Nyingma school is defined as being based upon the "old translations" of the Tibetan Buddhist canon in the Kangyur (the sutras) and Tengyur (the commentaries).

The word "Nyingma" actually means "ancient," and refers to these "old translations." The whole corpus of texts included in the Kangyur and Tengyur collections were originally translated by Nyingma scholars during the reigns of the three Dharma kings: Songsten Gampo (617–98), Trisong Detsen (742–98), and Tri Ralpachen (806–41). The school of Tibetan Buddhism based upon those texts

and their teachings is called Nyingma, the school of “old translations.”

In India, there is no tradition of “old” and “new” versions of the Buddhist canon. But in Tibet, the teachings were first transferred from India during the time of the three Dharma kings, by many scholars and translators and gurus and students—all of them in the Nyingma tradition. The later schools of the Gelug, Sakya, and Kagyü traditions are together classified as Sarma (“New Ones”), because they followed the new translations of Indian texts resulting from a second wave of translation activity centering upon the great translator, Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo (958–1055).

*We have heard that you studied with a great many teachers, especially Shugsep Jetsun Rinpoche. Could you tell us a little about her and her nunnery?*

Yes, Shugsep was a Nyingma nunnery (surrounded by residences for other followers) located near Lhasa that traced its rituals and practices to some of the most famous women teachers in Tibetan history. There the nuns followed a routine of memorizing scriptures and meditating, living as ascetics in caves in the hillside. Shugsep was also home to one of the most famous practitioners and teachers of this age, Shugsep Jetsun Rinpoche. At the time that I was fortunate enough to be able to study with her, I was just a child, so she was very kind, for she was a great, compassionate teacher. Spiritually, she was one of the most accomplished Dzogchen practitioners of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. She was considered a *maha-siddha*, and I was privileged to be able to study under her from the age of seven to about fifteen, when I moved to Nyima Changra Monastic College. I received many teachings from her. Of the many transmissions she gave to me, one of the most beautiful as well as very effective was a Green Tara practice, but perhaps the most important was the practice of Chöd.\* She also was very devoted to the purifying practice of Vajrasattva.

One of the great gifts she presented to me was to recommend me out of all her followers to attend the full empowerments and transmissions of the Rinchen Terdzö (*rin-chen gter-mdzod*: The Precious Treasury of Hidden Treasures) which were given at the great Nyingma center Mindrölling by the illustrious scholar-saint, Shechen Rabjam IV—these rites required my residence there for an entire year.

*Didn't you also study the special Dzogchen practice known as Longchen Nyingthig with her?*

Yes, I did. She was a leading teacher of Longchen Nyingthig,<sup>5</sup> for her lineage gurus are almost the same as the orthodox Longchen Nyingthig lineage. Her most venerated lama was Padma Gyatso (fl. late nineteenth century), who was a student of Shabkar (1781–1851) of

Amdo, who studied under a Mongolian lama whom we call Chögyal Ngakyi Wangpo (fl. mid-eighteenth century), whose teacher was the first Dodrupchen Rinpoche, Jigme Thrinle Öser (1745–1821), who studied under Jigme Lingpa (1729–98), who received the mind *terma* directly from Longchenpa (1308–63). There is no need to describe these masters in detail, as they are, of course, perfect Buddhas; so her lineage is the perfect Buddha lineage.

*So you have the perfect Buddha lineage, too.*

Well, I might have that lineage, but I am afraid that I am still a child! (Laughter.)

*I understand that you also studied with the great Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche.*

Ah, yes, Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche was a very great teacher. Unfortunately, I was not able to study under him very much, but I was able to receive initiations from him of the Kangyur as well as the Nyingma Sung Kama, the vast collection of oral teachings handed down in the Nyingma tradition that had been edited by the great scholar and practitioner Gyalse Shenphen Thaye. So I received all the teachings—the oral transmissions (*lung*), expositions (*ti* [*khrid*]), and full empowerments (*wang* [*dbang*])—from Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche at Namdrölling, the Nyingma temple of Penor Rinpoche (another former head of the Nyingma school) in south India. And then also, I received the transmissions and initiations for almost all of the Rinchen Terdzö (which I had previously also received in full while in Tibet [from Shechen Rabjam IV]) from Khyentse Rinpoche at Mindrölling monastery at Dehra Dun, in the state of Uttaranchal, India.

*I know that you came to Japan at the same time that I did, in 1974. I came in order to study Noh drama. Why did you come to Japan?*

Maybe it is because of some connection in a previous life. (Laughter.) Actually, I very much wanted to go to England or America or Canada—somewhere in the English-speaking world, since I wanted to speak in English. But a completely different situation arose for me. After leaving Tibet in 1959, I had been in Mussoorie, in Uttar Pradesh, where there was a school for Tibetan exiles, at which I served as Religious Headmaster. But His Holiness the Dalai Lama had asked me to go to a school of the highest level of Tibetan studies for undergraduate and graduate students. So I moved down from the mountains, to the plains of Benares, near the Ganges River, and until 1974, I was an assistant professor within the Tibeto-Indian Research Institute of the Varanasi Sanskrit University (now the Sarnath Buddhist University), where there was an advanced course in the Tibetan language. I was there together with

one other Tibetan master, Geshe Lobsang Gyatso, who was from the Gelug tradition. We were teaching scholars of all the traditions—the Nyingma, Gelug, Sakya, and Kagyü schools. Even now, this school remains at Sarnath, where Lord Buddha gave his first sermon. So I had come down from a very chilly place in the mountains to one of the hottest places in all of India. I spent many years there.

Then, in about 1972, His Holiness told me that the Japanese priests of the Shingon school on Mount Koya had asked His Holiness to send a teacher. At that time, the Tibetan language was a very important subject there, a one-year compulsory course; and even now, it is still offered as an elective. For that purpose I was approached by them, and then His Holiness asked me to go. I did not know a single word of Japanese at the time, but he wanted me to go. And for me, as for most Tibetans, his wish was my command. So I agreed to go.

However, it took a very long time, about two years, to prepare all the necessary documentation and receive the proper visa. After all arrangements were completed, I left India in about June 1974, and landed at Haneda Airport. My sponsor, a Shingon priest, met me and took me to a hotel near Tokyo's Shiba Park. He took me to a restaurant that specializes in eels, since it was the traditional time of year to eat them, but I could not even think of eating one.

Then from Tokyo, I went to Kyoto and stayed near Heian Shrine, living there until October, when my sponsor said that it was time to go to Mount Koya. I stayed there for one year, but had a very difficult time due to the cold temperature, because I had spent so many years acclimating to the great heat of India. It was the start of my time in Japan.

On Mount Koya, I was teaching the Tibetan language almost exclusively for one year, at Koyasan University. Many scholars wanted to study the language. But I had such hardships there that I returned to India, where I took up my old job in Benares. Some political problems that had come up also required my attention back in India.

But then the priests from Koyasan University wrote to His Holiness once more, asking him to send me back for another year. They thought that I was a very good teacher, and greatly wanted me to return. So I reconsidered what had happened during the year I was there. His Holiness told me that if I agreed to go back, it would be easy for him and also easy for the Japanese monks. He could, of course, have asked someone else to go, but it would have taken time to make all the necessary arrangements. The priests said that I could stay as long as I wanted, so I decided to return to Mount Koya and Japan. For the next three years, I taught not only the Tibetan language, but also gave lectures on Tibetan Buddhism, offering a survey course on the Tantric teachings.

*And is Koyasan University the only place at which you have taught in Japan?*

No, I have also lectured on Buddhism at the Institute for Research in the Humanities of Kyoto University, in the Department of Indology and the History of Indian Buddhism of Tohoku University, and also at Iwate University.

*Could you please explain in more detail your specialty, the Longchen Nyingthig tradition of Dzogchen?*

Well, first of all, it is a lineage of Dzogchen teachings that began with the Dharmakaya (Samantabhadra Buddha), emanated through the Sambhogakaya (Vajrasattva), and were first expounded in the human realm by the great teacher Garab Dorje. They were then passed down through four teachers to Padmasambhava, who created *terma* (*gter ma*), or "hidden treasures," of them. These hidden teachings were later revived by Longchenpa (Longchen Rabjam Drimed Odzer; 1308–63), who was the greatest scholar of the Nyingma school. He lived in Tibet and Bhutan in the fourteenth century. He was a child prodigy, not only in the sense of being intelligent, but also of possessing great faith, compassion, and wisdom. He was trained as a Sakya monk/scholar, and then met a master of Dzogchen and became his disciple and lineage holder. He wrote over two hundred works, some of which have survived to this day and are gradually being translated and published in English, and also hid the teachings as *terma* for later ages.

Then the teachings were once again rediscovered by Jigme Lingpa (1729–98), an amazing Nyingma adept who lived in Tibet. He was a *tülku* (physical emanation form) of many great lamas, including Longchenpa, and displayed miraculous abilities beginning in childhood. At the age of twenty-eight he had a spiritual revelation that was brought to him by a wisdom *dakini*—an entire cycle of teachings, meditation instructions, and transmissions that could bring its practitioners to Buddhahood. This is called the *Longchen Nyingthig*. The lineage of Jigme Lingpa's disciples has become the largest within the Nyingma lineage, because its effectiveness has been proven again and again.

*If you had to explain the essence of Longchen Nyingthig in a few words, what would you say? And what do you think is the heart of the teaching?*

Longchen Nyingthig is basically the same as "Dzogchen Nyingthig"—that is, it is the basic practice for Dzogchen practitioners. As for the heart of the teaching, it is something that we cannot express with words. But this is different from Zen and its koans, because Zen is a sutra teaching, and Dzogchen is a Tantric teaching.

*I was reading a book about Dzogchen by Chögyal Namkhai Norbu, and another by Tulku Thondrup, and both of them said that when a Dzogchen teacher takes a*



*new student, one of the things the teacher does is to give the student at the very beginning an experience of "naked awareness," of "direct experience."*

Whether it is "naked" or "clothed," I don't know (laughter), but the Dzogchen experience is one of *shunyata*, but with lightness, as opposed to heaviness or darkness. This idea of "naked awareness" or "direct experience" is related to the first of Garab Dorje's famous three statements: "Direct introduction to one's true nature," which is the first thing a Dzogchen teacher should give to students. But we cannot express what that, or even what Dzogchen is, in this kind of interview.

*Of course not. But am I correct in thinking that, for you, the most important teaching within Tibetan Buddhism is the teaching of Dzogchen?*

Yes, of course, I believe that Dzogchen is the best, the highest teaching.

*This is fine for your students, or other people who have received empowerments to practice. But what about people who do not have the good fortune to meet a lama and to receive the proper empowerments? What is the best thing for these people to do for their practice?*

They should do *ngöndro* (preliminary practice), but not without an empowerment, because it is the basic practice of Dzogchen. Dzogchen is the empowerment of Samantabhadra, the Dharmakaya—this is the essence of Dzogchen, for that is the highest teaching. Of course, to progress to the highest stages of Dzogchen practice, one should receive the proper empowerments. The reason for the *ngöndro* practice is to purify ourselves in body, speech, and mind and in order to become able to receive the pureness, awareness, or experience of clear awakening, or *rigpa*.

So although many people who have not received a *lung* or *ti* or *wang* may try to practice *ngöndro*, in order to conduct the actual practice, they really should get some kind of transmission first. But I realize that there are many people who are not fortunate enough to receive a transmission directly from a lama, and for these people, there is really no Tibetan practice that I can recommend. These teachings have been passed down by word of mouth for centuries, so that if students do not receive the proper teaching and empowerment, they will not know how to do the practice correctly. So without the transmission, they cannot do *ngöndro*.

Now many people might read this and think, "Well, then, at least I can recite Tibetan mantras," but even for that, as well as for reading the sutras, one would do better to receive at least the *lung* transmission. Lord Buddha's

teachings all fall under the category of, as we say in Japanese, *mon-shi-shū* (Skt., *shruti-smṛiti-bhavana*; Tib., *thos-bsam-sgom*)—hearing the teaching, thinking about the teaching, and then practicing the teaching.

So, in other words, people who have not received any transmission at all should not try to add some Buddhist ritual that they have not been empowered to perform to their own religious practice; rather, they should continue to do the practices of their own religions. So if they are Christians, they should do some Christian practice; if they are Muslims, they should do some Islamic practice. Without the proper empowerments, the Tibetan practices will not yield any positive results.

*But if I ask you how the average people all over the world can attain the highest state, you're going to tell me they should practice Dzogchen, right?*

(Laughter.) I really do hope that someday every human being will be able to practice Dzogchen. But if they do not have the Dzogchen empowerments yet, what would be most effective for them, in order to help them reach the highest state, would be to do good works. Then, gradually, the effects will ripen, and they will then be lucky enough to meet a lama and receive the proper transmissions.

*What do you think that all the people in the world—including Tibetan Buddhists, Theravadin Buddhists, Mahayanists, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Jews, and people of many other beliefs—can do to help bring about world peace?*

Working for world peace is wonderful. Especially the kinds of things that Kosei Publishing and DHARMA WORLD publish are very good. They bring great benefit to all who read them. In terms of Tibetan teachings, whether or not people agree with the benefits of Dzogchen does not matter.

What is important is that we all should strive not to harm any others. And then we should also think about making benefits for others, and should always try to help one another. Buddhism talks about love and compassion, but in Lord Buddha's teaching, love is not the same as God. Not harming other creatures, and always trying to help them—this is the Buddhist teaching.

*Is there any message you would like to express to the people around the world?*

Yes, to all the people around the world, I would like to say this: All the time, please be humble, and look upon each other in the same way that a mother looks upon her child. And also, please have faith in any belief you like—either some religion, or in the Buddha-Dharma. For me, the Buddha-Dharma is not like a religion, since the origin of the



*Ven. Nyichang Rinpoche photographed at a sang (cedar-bough smoke) offering, a special type of purification ceremony, held in Yamanashi Prefecture in May.*

word religion is the Latin *religere*, to be bound together, by commands. And Lord Buddha's teaching is not a set of commands; he is not a commander. But everybody should be kind enough to treat all others with love, not to harm others, and to do things to benefit all beings. □

## Notes

1. Note that in both the text and notes, Tibetan words are given in various forms: e.g., the exposition transmission is pronounced *ti* but written *khrid* (a transliterated form reflecting the way it is written in Tibetan script). In some cases, as in *Khentrul*, *trulku*, and *Kyidrong*, the retroflexive "r" has been dropped; the "r" has been kept in *Drigung*, *Drukpa*, and *Drepung*, however, in order to retain spellings commonly used in the West.

2. Padmasambhava, also known as Guru Rinpoche ("Precious Master"), is the patron saint of Tibetan Buddhism. In addition to spreading the Dharma, he placed many teachings in hiding to be rediscovered later for the sake of future generations.

3. Although Dzogchen is often called "The Great Perfection," please note that Ven. Nyichang Rinpoche does not approve of this translation.

4. Shugsep Jetsun Rinpoche was recognized as the reincarnation of Machig Labdrön (1055–1153), founder of the Chöd (*chod*) practice, which is intended to "cut off" attachment to the self. Her rare Dharseng lineage is one of the purest of all Chöd traditions.

5. Longchen Nyingthig is a special teaching that is found only in the Nyingma school. According to tradition, the lineage comes directly from the Dharmakaya (Samantabhadra) to the

Sambhogakaya (Vajrasattva) to the Nirmanakaya (Garab Dorje) to a series of human masters, including Guru Padmasambhava. Then Guru Rinpoche, who could see far into the future, hid certain teachings and practices not deemed appropriate for contemporary disciples, to be rediscovered in future times during which they would be more suitable. He created auspicious connections for his main disciples to be able to recover these hidden treasures, called *terma*, in their future rebirths. Such treasure finders are called *tertöns*, have appeared at various times in Tibetan history, and one such *tertön* was Jigme Lingpa, who rediscovered the *terma* called Longchen Nyingthig, which is currently one of the foremost traditions in the Nyingma school. One of Jigme Lingpa's main disciples, the first Dodrupchen Rinpoche, vowed to preserve and protect the Longchen Nyingthig tradition in all his future incarnations. Currently, the Fourth Dodrupchen Rinpoche is the head of the Longchen Nyingthig tradition.

The name Longchen Nyingthig is often translated as "The Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse," and many have noted that the term *longchen* might also be a reference to the fact that this is Longchenpa's lineage of the *nyingthig* (heart-essence) teachings. Longchenpa was the most brilliant scholar of the Nyingma tradition. He gathered the heart-essence teachings of Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and Yeshe Tsogyal, and hid them for later ages.

\*\* DHARMA WORLD would especially like to express its gratitude to four of Ven. Nyichang Rinpoche's students: Messrs. Inomoto and Kim, for their help and encouragement in arranging the interview; Mr. E. M. Cooke, for his assistance in checking the manuscript and clarifying several doctrinal points; and Ms. I. Oyamada, for graciously supplying the photographs.

## Interreligious World Symposium Held in Germany

Over 10,000 participants gathered in Aachen, Germany, September 7-9, to attend the interreligious conference "People and Religions" organized by Rome's Community of Saint Egidio. The conference followed in the footsteps of the interreligious prayer for peace called by Pope John Paul II in Assisi, Italy, in 1986. Since then, each year the Community of Saint Egidio invites representatives from different faiths to a dialogue for prayer and peace in a European city.

Andrea Riccardi, president of the Community, described this as "an ideal pilgrimage from city to city. From Assisi a message of peace rose, calling upon the religious traditions to distance themselves from war."

Over 400 religious representatives attended this year's conference, which focused on the theme "War and Peace: Faiths and Cultures in Dialogue." Seven members represented Rissho Kosei-kai, led by Michio Shinozaki, director of the organization's general secretariat. Dr. Shinozaki made his personal contribution in a panel on "Prayer as a Source of Peace," saying that "Buddhist prayer embodies the noblest healing power, coming from the Buddha's heart and the wishes of all living beings." Quoting from Rissho Kosei-kai's President Nichiko Niwano, he added, "The existence of all life depends on the crucial notion of harmony. Harmony is a hope that all human beings hold deep in their hearts." It is very important, Dr. Shinozaki concluded, "that we religious people, coming from different traditions and countries, repent our past misdeeds so that we can pray for peace together."

The meeting began with a pontifical mass for peace celebrated in the historic cathedral by Bishop Heinrich Musshoff of Aachen, who affirmed that "God is not Catholic, nor Orthodox, nor Evangelical. He is neither a Christian, nor a Jew, a Muslim or a Buddhist: God is God for all of us." The Orthodox Metropolitan Patriarch Augustinos

added, "The very fact that we have all gathered here is a cause for hope."

In a message read by Roger Cardinal Etchegaray, Pope John Paul II recalled the tragedy of September 11, 2001, emphasizing that "many hopes for peace seem to have collapsed." What believers must do, the pope said, is to affirm peace in this time full of war. He indicated that these international meetings for prayer and peace are already "a concrete answer" to these failing hopes.

An unprecedented meeting between Christian Chaldean leaders, Sunni

logue among religions for the achievement of peaceful coexistence. "Pacific coexistence and dialogue among religions is a priority for Iraq. Meetings such as this one, promoted by our Christian brothers, help us to know one another truly."

In a panel titled "Israel and Palestine: Dialogue for the Future," Rabbi David Rosen of Israel pointed out that religion is a key factor in the difficult situation of the Holy Land. He suggested that the Community of Saint Egidio be instrumental in promoting an agreement between Christian, Muslim, and Jewish leaders for the recognition of the status of Jerusalem.

Father Elias Chacour, president of the Mar Elias Educational Institutions

*Michio Shinozaki of Rissho Kosei-kai speaking in a panel titled "Prayer as a Source of Peace."*

Muslims, and Iraqi Shi'ites took place in the premises of the conference. The Chaldean bishop of Baghdad, Shlemon Warduni, recalled the sad reality of Iraq, stating that the one source of light in the darkness of war is "interreligious dialogue." Mr. Sayed Aiad Jamal Aldin, of the Iraqi Shi'ite Community, stated that "the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein was worse than war," and he thanked the U.S. and the other coalition members for having put an end to the dictatorship in his country. Mr. Ahmed M. Mohammed, an Iraqi Sunnite, reaffirmed the importance of dia-

logue among religions for the achievement of peaceful coexistence. "Pacific coexistence and dialogue among religions is a priority for Iraq. Meetings such as this one, promoted by our Christian brothers, help us to know one another truly."

in Galilee, Israel, announced the opening in Israel of the first university for Israelis and Palestinians. He said that in order to build peace, it is necessary to start at the grass-roots level, and therefore it is necessary to start from school and education.

The former chief rabbi of Israel, Meir Lau, said that if on the one hand he is very pessimistic about a forthcoming solution to the Israel-Palestine problem, on the other, the very fact of participating in the meeting in Aachen is a reason for hope. He then recalled the episode of the first two brothers in the

Bible, Cain and Abel. The two brothers "didn't talk," he said, and if one raised his hand to kill the other, this was due to a "lack of dialogue." "Everything can be solved with dialogue," claimed the rabbi. He concluded by saying that according to the Jewish tradition the hero is the one who controls his own ambitions, "but the hero of all heroes is the one who turns an enemy into a friend."

More strictly political issues were also debated during the conference. In a panel on the abolition of the death penalty, Mr. Misaki Yagishita, from Japan's branch of Amnesty International, reported on the establishment of a religious people network to call for a moratorium on executions in Japan, which maintains the death penalty, and announced that the network plans to gather signatures on a petition urging the moratorium and the holding of a seminar on the death penalty on November 29 in Tokyo.

On September 9, all the religious representatives who had taken part in the meeting gathered in the main square of Aachen to announce the Appeal for Peace for the Year 2003. "At the beginning of this millennium marked by hope and fear," says the message signed by 450 religious leaders from 58 different countries, "we, men and women of different religions, coming from so many parts of the world, have gathered in Aachen to invoke God's great gift of peace; the peace that humanity, so often, cannot provide for itself. . . . To those who think that a clash of civilizations is inevitable, we say: 'Free yourselves from this oppressive pessimism that creates a world full of walls and enemies, where it becomes impossible to live safely and in peace. Eventually the art of dialogue empties terror of its reasons and removes the grounds of injustice that precipitates resentment and violence. . . . Religions can never be used to justify hatred and violence. Fundamentalism is an infantile disease in any religion and any culture. The need to find an enemy to establish one's own identity, only imprisons us: it separates one from others and presents violence as more worthy than peace.'" □

Eva Ruth Palmieri

## First Christian Arab Israeli University in the Middle East Established

*In July we were pleased to receive a letter from Father Elias Chacour, president of the Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin, Galilee, in Israel, and the recipient of the 18th Niwano Peace Prize in 2001, informing us that official accreditation of the Mar Elias University campus in Galilee had been granted by the Israeli Council of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education as the first Christian Arab Israeli university in Galilee. Following is a slightly adapted text of the press release issued by the Mar Elias Educational Institutions soon after the accreditation.*

After four years of planning and negotiation, Father Elias Chacour, president of the Mar Elias Educational Institutions, has announced the official accreditation of Mar Elias University in Galilee by the Council of Higher Education of the State of Israel Ministry of Education, marking a momentous day in the history of Israel.

Mar Elias University campus (known as MEUC) will be the first-ever Christian Arab Israeli university in the Middle East, filling the vital need for an intercultural, interreligious institution of higher learning in the region. Arab, Palestinian, Christian, Muslim, Druze Israeli, and Jewish Israeli students will have the opportunity to pursue studies in science, technology, and media, and to work together toward a shared future. Students from outside the region are welcome; exchange programs are encouraged.

In providing an innovative model of academic excellence combined with pluralistic living, where acknowledgment of difference builds upon the resources and richness of diversity, MEUC will continue the twenty-year ethical tradition of Mar Elias Educational Institutions as a nonpolitical, nonconfessional organization. It will provide a beacon of hope in the Middle East as Arabs take their place beside their Jewish brothers and sisters in realizing the goals of education as well as justice, peace, and reconciliation.

The faculty will consist of seven

professors and sixty-four instructors, all of whom hold doctorates in their fields. Incoming students at MEUC will be able to complete coursework toward a degree in one of three programs: Bachelor of Science in computer science, Bachelor of Science in chemistry with a minor in biology, and Bachelor of Arts in communications with a minor in marketing. Graduates will have the option of continuing at the Master's level at MEUC or of pursuing graduate studies elsewhere. MEUC expects to add six fields of study to its undergraduate curriculum shortly.

Courses will be taught primarily in English, with some courses offered in Arabic or Hebrew. Intensive English-language classes will be available. Scholarships will be awarded based upon academic excellence.

Inaugural classes will be held on the current campus of Mar Elias Educational Institutions in Ibillin, in Galilee, with plans to begin construction of a campus for MEUC in the immediate future. Funding is sought from private and corporate sources. MEUC, while aiming for financial self-sufficiency, is a non-profit institution, with a board of directors soon to be announced.

The Mar Elias University project was accredited three years ago by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools in the United States as a branch campus of the University of Indianapolis, Indiana. MEUC is also seeking affiliation with an Israeli university. □

# True Human Warmth

by Nichiko Niwano

*The Buddha said, "Put the welfare of others before your own." Buddhism teaches that your own benefit and that of others are one and the same.*

Cultivating the heart and mind means fostering warmth, compassion, and thoughtfulness. All of these are what Buddhism calls donation, or giving. Donation connotes compassion and thoughtfulness; thus, giving means taking thought for the happiness of others.

Giving tends to be thought of as a one-way street—"haves" giving to "have-nots"—but nothing could be further from the truth. Essentially, giving means being *privileged* to provide something to another. In Buddhism, human beings are seen as basically living in a relationship of mutual giving—a relationship of give-and-give rather than give-and-take.

The attitude of society in general is that one is better off receiving than giving, so most people try to amass as many possessions and as much money as possible. This is because they are self-centered and always think of their own benefit first. Of course, in a way, this is natural. But the Buddha said, "First and foremost, give. Put the welfare of others before your own."

Buddhism teaches that one's own true benefit lies in

putting the benefit of others first. Giving makes not only the recipient but also the giver happy. Many people have proved this through their own practice. For example, say there are two apples, one bigger and one smaller, and you and another person have to choose between them. If you put your own benefit first, you will reach for the bigger apple. The other person, seeing this, will probably feel disgruntled. If that feeling intensifies, it can lead to outright conflict. If, however, you put the other person's benefit first, you can be content with leaving the bigger apple for him or her. The sight of the other person's beaming face will make your apple taste all the more delicious. Even more important, sooner or later, the other person will feel the urge to yield to someone else.

Buddhism teaches that your own benefit and that of others are one and the same. Someone else's happiness makes you happy. This is because giving leads to selflessness and thoughtfulness, so that you and the other person are in harmony. We tend to focus solely on our own benefit and our own family's happiness. Wishing for the other's happiness makes for a warm, big-hearted person. And this leads to harmony with others.

## Kind Words and a Smiling Face

What exactly, though, do we give? Giving can be broadly divided into three categories. The first is spiritual giving—transmitting the Buddha's teaching, the Buddha Dharma, which is the most precious gift a person can receive. The second is helping others with one's body—such as giving up one's seat to an elderly person or helping someone with a heavy load; it also includes taking part in various kinds of volunteer activities. The third is giving wealth—providing aid to those who are financially hard up, donating money for the public good, and so on, to save people from hardship.

It is through these three ways of giving that we devote ourselves to others and contribute to their happiness. To those who protest that all this is beyond them, the Buddha teaches that there are things they can give even if they have nothing. Let me tell you about two of them. One is to speak kindly; the other is to interact with others with a smile. Even someone with no material wealth whatsoever

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can give kind words and a smile. To those who say that interacting with others with a smile is too hard, I recommend practicing smiling in front of a mirror. Even a forced smile makes one feel more cheerful. Whether form or feeling comes first does not really matter. Body and mind are inextricably linked. If you train your body, your mind will become trained; if your mind is upset, your body will be, too. So whichever approach you take—form or feeling—both body and mind will follow suit.

If we are always cheerful and smiling, and speak with kindness and thoughtfulness, what a warm, soothing effect it will have on our surroundings. Not only that; it will also make us warm and happy. The joy that arises from giving is profound. It is a selfless joy that unites us with others. The joy of receiving cannot begin to compare. The reason is that everyone is endowed with the same precious wish as the Buddha—the wish to make people happy. There is no greater happiness for a human being than to give others joy and happiness. Nothing can take the place of the joy that springs from the satisfaction of having been able to help others. Nothing can impart greater happiness or *joie de vivre*.

Donation, or giving, is one of the Six Perfections of Buddhism. Cultivation of the Six Perfections is regarded as bodhisattva practice. A bodhisattva is one who strives to emulate the Buddha and aspires to be saved, together with everyone else, by working for the happiness of others. This bodhisattva practice is impossible without a warm heart. At the same time, one can become a warm person through bodhisattva practice.

Sharing the joys and sorrows of others as if they were one's own, and being unable to ignore the misfortune of others, impelled by the wish to help them somehow—this is the wish of the bodhisattva. The practice of devoting oneself to the well-being of others and, spurred by this wish, transmitting the Truth and the Dharma is the bodhisattva practice. Those who are self-centered and in thrall to a relativistic view of things do not know and cannot savor the joy of giving. Awareness of the law of transience enables one to begin the quest for harmony with others.

### Living with Compassion

Chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, "Revelation of the [Eternal] Life of the Tathagata," ends with these words, spoken by the Buddha: "How shall I cause all living beings / To enter the Way supreme / And speedily accomplish their Buddhahood?" We are always enfolded in the Buddha's great compassion. When we become aware of this great compassion, the wish to live with compassion, like the Buddha's, wells up within us. Compassion is not sympathy or pity. It refers to the Buddha's wish to lead all people to the Way of the Buddha and cause them to attain the state of the Buddha. Compassion is when that wish of the Buddha becomes our own wish, which we then transmit to others. Herein lies the true meaning of the bodhisattva practice.

It is very difficult to want to live with the compassion of the Buddha, but if by following the Truth and the Dharma we become able to accept everything that happens to us as a sermon of the Buddha guiding us to the highest Way, we can realize that we are indeed living in accordance with the Buddha's wish. When we become aware that we wish not just for our own happiness, but also for the happiness of all those around us, and that we willingly devote ourselves to the happiness of others, a new course opens up before us.

In short, compassion means transmitting the Truth and the Dharma to others, one by one. This is true human warmth. It is the Buddha's wish within us. Firmly aware of this, let us walk the Way of the Buddha.

### Giving as a Way of Life

After gaining enlightenment under the Bodhi tree, the Buddha rose and set out on his travels to teach the Truth and the Dharma that he had realized to others. All his subsequent acts, motivated solely by his awareness of the Truth and the Dharma, can be called "acts of truth." Their aim was to bring all people to an awareness of the Truth and the Dharma.

In the teachings of the Buddha are found these lines: "The gift of the Dharma surpasses all gifts. The taste of the Dharma surpasses all tastes. The pleasure of the Dharma surpasses all pleasures." Any kind of giving is precious, to be sure, but teaching others the Dharma is the greatest gift of all. The taste of the Dharma is superior to that of any delicacy. And the pleasure of savoring the Dharma surpasses all worldly pleasures.

Renouncing his life as a prince and leaving behind his wife and child, the Buddha was enlightened to the great Dharma of the cosmos. Thereafter he continually taught this Dharma to liberate people from suffering. He expressed this state of mind in the following verse from chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, "A Parable": "Now this triple world / All is my domain; / The living beings in it / All are my children."

Making the Dharma his daily bread and teaching on his travels his pleasure, the Buddha dedicated his life to giving people the gift of the Dharma. Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, also continually taught the Truth and the Dharma, wishing for the happiness of others as had the Buddha. As a result, many people have followed the Way of the Buddha, have awakened to what truly makes life worth living, and have been saved.

When we think of the Buddha's life, we become aware of the Truth and the Dharma and transmit it to others, walking the Way of the Buddha together. We then realize that this is what has made our birth as human beings in this world truly worthwhile. In the firm awareness that the Buddha's life was dedicated to spreading the teaching, let us devote ourselves together to following the Way of the Buddha. □

# Grateful for the Gift of Life

by Yasuyo Iijima

*A young woman whose family has long had close ties to Rissho Kosei-kai describes how taking the Buddha's teaching to heart helped them to overcome difficult times.*

I am a third-generation member of Rissho Kosei-kai. My maternal grandmother joined the Ibaraki Chapter in 1947 in order to hold a memorial service for her eldest daughter, who died from a disease at the age of two and a half. For a long time, my grandmother pursued her training, serving as area leader, and because she explained the teaching of the founder to my mother, my sister, and me, we were able to come into contact with the teachings of Rissho Kosei-kai from the time my sister and I were small. My mother always told us about the emotions she experienced when she learned something at the branch, and so we were able to have a feeling for the teaching as a part of our everyday family life.

I had decided to go on to college after graduating from

high school, but because my father's construction company was having management and financial difficulties, I decided I should try to help lighten the burden on my parents and contribute to supporting the family as soon as possible. Although it was not my preferred line of work, I found a position at an accounting firm and started working.

My father's company had borrowed large amounts of money to purchase real estate, but with the bursting of Japan's economic bubble, the number of jobs and work orders it received continued to decline. The company found it impossible to borrow more money from its bank, so in order to pay its debts, it borrowed money from a consumer loan company, listing me as the guarantor. Now the everyday subjects of conversation at home were things we had never imagined previously, for example, how the family might have to separate if the company declared bankruptcy.

One night, when I came home from a youth group meeting, I found the family members sitting on the floor, everyone soaking wet. In particular, my mother was trembling like a leaf, and I felt that something awful must have happened.

"Dad, what's the matter? What's going on?" I asked my father.

He said that our dog outside had started barking unnaturally, and when my father freed him from his chain, the dog went running at top speed toward the river near our house. Running after him, my father and sister saw the dog jump into the river and start paddling. Looking ahead, they saw my mother standing in the water, although it was midwinter and she cannot swim.

## Sticking Together as a Family

In 1994, my parents built a house on the lot next door, and my maternal grandfather and grandmother, who had been living 50 kilometers away, moved in with us. My mother welcomed the opportunity to look after her parents, but when she thought of what it would mean if the company's bankruptcy required that our home and land would be taken away, she decided to drown herself in the river. My

*Yasuyo Iijima, a member of the Mito Branch of Rissho Kosei-kai in Ibaraki Prefecture, delivers her testimonial speech in the Great Sacred Hall at the Tokyo headquarters on June 15.*

father and sister had to drag her out of the water and bring her back home. When I heard this, I panicked for a moment, overwhelmed by chagrin that we had to suffer like this, sorrow that my mother would do such a thing without thinking of us, shame that we were unable to suspect how much pain my mother was feeling, and insecurity about what was going to happen next. However, when I thought that my mother had nearly disappeared from our world, but in any event was still alive, I was filled with feelings of relief. "I thought that the insurance policy on my life would at least help pay off some of the debts," my mother said, weeping. "I am sorry, I am so sorry." My sister and I, sitting in tears in front of our family Buddhist altar, took her in our arms, and my father, saying, "Whatever happens, it will be all right, it will be all right," hugged all three of us tightly.

Not soon after this, my father's company could no longer pay its bills, and on February 16, 1998, it filed for bankruptcy. That night, we gathered only our essential things and went to stay in a relative's apartment. My sister, who was to graduate from high school, canceled her plans to continue studying, and decided to go to work so as to contribute even a small amount to the family finances. I knew she was really looking forward to going on to further studies, and it hurt me to think of how hard her decision must have been for her. Because I was the guarantor for my father's loans, the loan company started to make threatening phone calls to the office where I worked. I was fearful every day, and sometimes in my heart I blamed my father.

That was the situation when my father received some advice from the head of the Mito Branch, who told him, "Keeping harmony in the family is most important particularly during difficult times." We all sat down and talked things out, and decided that, even though our lives would not be easy, we would not run from reality, but would do our best to stick it out living in the same house. We had no idea how long we would be able to do that, but come what might, we were all very grateful to be sheltered from the elements together as a family, and to be able to sleep in warm beds every night. Also, not only the head of the branch, but everybody in the branch including the chapter leader spoke to us in an encouraging way, even bringing us donations of rice and vegetables. So, with food on the table we had the security of knowing we would be able to get by, which gave us the courage to keep trying our best. We realized how deeply grateful we should be to have so many of the things that until then we had taken for granted, and so our spirit as a family was greatly enriched, and we actually felt happier than before.

Now, my father, who as president of the company had been used to giving orders and sometimes seemed rather self-important, merely bowed his head and apologized when his creditors complained to him, and did his best to meet their demands. I am sure my father was the one who suffered most and wanted most to escape from reality, but

he never averted his gaze from the true situation and threw himself into his efforts to support the family, sometimes even making us laugh. Seeing my father act this way, I was able to regain my respect for him.

As for my mother, while serving as Dharma instructor of the chapter and area leader, she joined my father as usual, working at construction sites in order to help pay off our debts, going out every day with a bag of nails at her waist and wearing workboots. She never complained about getting dirty, and looked as if she actually enjoyed it. She communicated to me her attitude of being happy from inside herself, and of doing what she could for the family and for others. Seeing my parents like this made me proud and truly happy that I had been born into the Iijima family.

### **The Calendar in Grandmother's Room**

At this time, my grandmother who lives with us suffers from senile dementia, and has been recognized as requiring special care. Recently she is no longer able to remember my name, and this makes me feel a little lonely. No matter what she eats, she says, "This is delicious! Absolutely delicious," and is always smiling and saying, "Thank you, thank you" to everyone. Grandmother always wears a happy, untroubled expression, and being with her relieves all the family members and brings a smile back to our faces. Even though she can no longer get out of bed and move around by herself, I feel that she is doing her best to go on living so as to show us day by day that we should maintain our spirits.

In grandmother's room a calendar on the wall still shows the month of the bankruptcy of my father's company, February 1998. On the calendar page is a poem by Mitsuo Aida entitled "Fertilizer": "At that time, That pain, At that time, That sorrow, All become fertilizer, For growth of self into Self." Everything that happens every day happens so that we can grow; everything functions as fertilizer provided to us by the Buddha in various forms. Through these things, and through "cultivating the fields in our hearts and minds," as shown to us by our president, we are able to make our own way. In order to remember this always, that calendar page has still not been turned over.

Since my father's company went bankrupt, every time our house was listed by the court in the newspaper real estate auction column, we had to get our belongings ready so we could vacate at any time. Although we prepared ourselves, we often suffered from insecurity and sleepless nights on this account. However, because all our family members get along with each other, and because we have taken to heart the Buddha's teaching that whatever happens is for the good of everyone, we were still able to live with grateful hearts. And then, the year before last, something happened. We were able to obtain the right to live securely in our house again, which we thought we would never be able to buy back for the rest of our lives. This was thanks to my maternal grandfather and to the heartfelt



prayers of everybody in the branch, who have been giving us so much support since the bankruptcy. We have been fortunate in that we appreciate from the bottom of our hearts the fact that we can keep our house and lead our lives together. We have all vowed that we will never forget to be grateful every day, to take good care of the house, and pay off all our debts. Since the bankruptcy of my father's company, our family has realized through experience to be grateful for the fact that we have been given the gift of

its day for the "Donate a Meal Campaign." What I have been taught about the meaning of this campaign is that, by skipping a meal, we get a physical feeling for the people around the world who are suffering from poverty or are victims of armed conflict. We pray for peace and deepen our understanding of the "wisdom of being satisfied with little," and make a donation to a fund for assistance projects. For the price of the one meal we go without, they say that it can bring back a smile to the faces of a hun-

dred children in the project areas. What I do is look at the prices of boxed lunches at a convenience store, or on advertisements for ready-to-eat food sold in supermarkets, and take the price of what I really feel like eating as the amount for my donation. I also do my best to get others to join in, hoping that even one more person will understand what this campaign is about. During the biannual Rissho Kosei-kai fund drives, I am privileged to take part in pan-branch activities. Thanks to everyone's efforts, every year we are able to collect about ten million yen, which goes to provide direct assistance or development assistance for the benefit of children in underdeveloped countries or war-torn regions.

The other day, an advisor to the Mito Branch, a man who was one of my grandmother's "children in faith," dropped by to see how she was doing. My mother

*Yasuyo Iijima (far right) appreciates the fact that her entire family can live together in the same house despite the many difficulties they have had to face.*

life, and that no matter how difficult the circumstances, we are able to be happy in our everyday lives.

Since that time, every year I make a New Year's resolution to "smile 365 days a year." This is because I have decided to make it a habit to keep in mind that I am being given life by all the people and things around me, and to express the happiness I feel in my heart.

### The "Treasure" I Received at Birth

A year has passed since I began to serve as head of the young women's group at our branch, with the support of all my wonderful friends in the group. When I was given that position, the head of the branch told me, "The important thing for human beings is to be able to be gladly considerate of others, and to do what you can for them." Though I am inexperienced, I am doing my utmost every day to carry out my duties, keeping an observant attitude and remembering that I am a beginner.

The Mito Branch has chosen the 15th of every month as

told me that he still appreciates the fact that he came into contact with the Dharma through his association with my grandmother, though this was many decades ago. This reawakened me to the fact that, in my own case, I was brought into contact with this wonderful Dharma more or less from birth. This reminded me to be grateful to my grandparents and parents. If the founder had not been born into this world, perhaps I never would have come into contact with the Dharma, for which we are all so grateful. To another person our family's circumstances might appear to be the blackest sort of bankruptcy nightmare, but because every day these precious teachings serve as our beacon of light and hope, we have been able to get back on our feet again.

My vow is to not to keep the wonder of the Dharma to myself, but to make my best efforts to communicate it through my own deeds and words so as to bring as many people as possible into contact with it, in order to bring them joy. □



# Pukkusa's Acceptance of the Buddha's Teachings

by Hajime Nakamura

*After he heard the Venerable Master describe his own experience in learning tranquillity, the youth of the Mallas rejected his former faith as if a torch had been raised in the darkness, and took refuge in the Dhamma.*

Then a Malla called Pukkusa (Skt., Putkasa) came walking along the road on his way from Kusinārā to Pāvā. According to the Pāli text below, he was a student of Ālāra Kālāma, but other texts say that he was a chief minister (*mahāmātra*) of the Mallas. He saw Gotama Buddha sitting beneath a tree and felt drawn to him.

“(26) Just then Pukkusa, a Malla and a student of Ālāra Kālāma, came walking down the road from Kusinārā to Pāvā. Pukkusa, a Malla, saw the Venerable Master sitting beneath a tree. Seeing him, he approached him. Approaching, he greeted the Venerable Master and sat down to one side. Sitting to one side, Pukkusa, a Malla, said to the Venerable Master: ‘Revered One, how mysterious and wonderful it is that those who have gone forth out of the world dwell in such calmness of mind.’”

Pukkusa was under the impression that the Buddha had learned such tranquillity from Ālāra Kālāma.

“(27) Once [the ascetic] Ālāra Kālāma was walking along the highway, when he turned aside to sit under a tree not far from the road to take his noon rest. Just then five hundred carts [belonging to merchants] went by close to Ālāra Kālāma. A man who was walking along behind the carts came up to Ālāra Kālāma and, drawing near, said to him: ‘Revered One, did you see five hundred carts passing by?’

“‘No, friend, I did not.’

“‘Did you hear them, then?’

“‘No, friend, I did not.’

“‘Were you sleeping then?’

“‘No, friend, I was not.’

“‘Were you conscious, then?’

“‘Yes, I was.’

“‘So, even though you were conscious and awake, you neither saw nor heard five hundred carts passing by. Revered One, your outer robe is covered with dust.’

“‘Friend, it is so.’

“And that man thought: ‘How mysterious and wonderful it is that those who have gone forth out of the world dwell in such calmness of mind. Even though he is truly con-

scious and awake, he neither sees five hundred carts pass by close to him nor hears the sound of them.’ He went away proclaiming his great faith in Ālāra Kālāma” (Mahā-parinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 26–27).

When a person becomes accomplished in the meditation of *dhyāna* or Yoga, he is completely unaware of the things of the outside world.

## The Buddha's Experience

In reply the Buddha described his own experience.

“(28) ‘What do you think, Pukkusa? Which is the more difficult to do or attain—neither to see nor hear, when conscious and awake, five hundred carts passing close by or neither to see nor hear, when conscious and awake, the

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*The late Dr. 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).*

rain falling from the heavens, the thunder roaring in the heavens, the lightning flashing, and the thunder and lightning reverberating?"

"(29) 'Revered One, neither to see nor hear, when conscious and awake, the rain falling from the heavens, the thunder roaring in the heavens, the lightning flashing, and the thunder and lightning reverberating, is truly the more difficult to do or attain even compared with the five hundred carts, or six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred, nine hundred, a thousand, or one hundred thousand carts.'

"(30) 'Once, Pukkusa, I was staying at the chaff-house in [the village of] Ātumā. At that very time the rain fell from the heavens, the thunder roared in the heavens, the lightning flashed, and the thunder and lightning reverberated, so that two brothers who were farmers, and four cattle, were killed. At that time a great crowd of people went out from Ātumā to where the two brothers and the four cattle were killed.

"(31) 'At that time, Pukkusa, I had left the chaff-house and was walking up and down before its entrance. Then a man from the crowd came up to me. Having come up to me he greeted me and stood to one side. I asked that man who stood to one side:

"(32) '“Friend, why has that great crowd of people gathered?” “Revered One, just now the rain fell from the heavens, the thunder roared in the heavens, the lightning flashed, and the thunder and lightning reverberated, so that two brothers who were farmers, and four cattle, were killed. That is why a great crowd has gathered. But you, where were you?” “Friend, I was here.” “But what did you see?” “Friend, I saw nothing.” “But what did you hear?” “Friend, I heard nothing.” “Then, were you sleeping?” “Friend, I was not sleeping.” “Then, Revered One, were you awake?” “Yes, friend, I was.” “Then, Revered One, you are saying that though you were conscious and awake, you neither saw nor heard the rain falling from the heavens, the thunder roaring in the heavens, the lightning flashing, and the thunder and lightning reverberating?” “That is so, friend.”

"(33) 'Then, Pukkusa, that man thought, “How mysterious and wonderful it is that one who has gone forth out of the world dwells in such calmness of mind. Even though he is truly conscious and awake, he neither saw nor heard anything, even when the rain fell from the heavens, the thunder roared in the heavens, the lightning flashed, and the thunder and lightning reverberated.” Proclaiming his great faith in me, he departed, saluting me, and encircling me to the right.”

Thus did the compiler of the *suttanta* express his belief in the greater depth of the Buddha's meditation and *dhyāna*.

"(34) When he had heard this, Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, said to the Venerable Master: 'Revered One, I then reject my faith in Ālāra Kālāma, as if it was blown away in a great wind or swept away in a torrent. Excellent, excellent! It is as if a thing that was knocked down had been

righted, as if something that was shut had been opened, as if a person who was lost had been shown the way, as if a torch had been raised in the darkness so that one with eyes could see. Just so has the Venerable Master illuminated the Dhamma in various ways. Thus, Revered One, I take refuge in the Venerable Master, and I take refuge in the Dhamma and the community of *bhikkhus*. Accept me, Venerable Master, as a lay follower from this day until the day of my death” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 28–34).

The Sanskrit text relates the same episode in abbreviated form (XXVIII, 22 et seq.). It is clear that at that time the depth of meditation and *dhyāna* of an ascetic was a crucial factor in attracting the faith of excellent followers. Here we have another item of evidence that Buddhism developed out of the traditional Yoga background of India.

### Pukkusa's Offering

Tradition has it that Pukkusa then made an offering of robes to the Buddha as the result of his taking refuge in the Buddha.

"(35) Then Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, said to an-

*The Buddha meditating under a tree. A relief unearthed at Mardan, Pakistan. Ca. 3rd century. Swat Museum.*

other: 'Go and bring me two lengths of finely burnished golden cloth.' 'Yes, Master,' he replied to Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, and brought the lengths of finely burnished golden cloth. Then Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, offered the lengths of finely burnished golden cloth to the Venerable Master. 'Here, Revered One, are two lengths of finely burnished golden silk cloth. May the Venerable Master accept the cloth for my sake.' 'Then, Pukkusa, clothe me in one length and Ānanda in the other.' 'Yes, Master,' replied Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, and clothed the Venerable Master in one, and Ānanda in the other.

"(36) Then the Venerable Master instructed, inspired, encouraged, and delighted Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, with a lecture concerning the Dhamma. Then Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, taught by the Venerable Master by means of the lecture concerning the Dhamma, being instructed, inspired, and delighted by it, rose from his seat, saluted the Venerable Master reverently, and departed, encircling him [three times] to the right" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 35–36).

*Bhikkhus* of the Buddha's time wore three robes, though they were not especially made for them, each being merely a length of cotton cloth about a meter wide. The first was folded in half and wound around the body. The second hung from waist to ankles, secured by a tie that was wound three or four times around the body. The third was worn over the others, wound twice over the legs and covered the left shoulder with the remaining portion, falling down the back across to beneath the right arm. The cloth that Pukkusa offered the Buddha was worn like shawls by Gotama and Ānanda. After Pukkusa had left, Ānanda clothed the Buddha in both lengths, which then acted as the first and third robes.

Although according to the Pāli text Pukkusa "clothed the Venerable Master in one [length], and Ānanda in the other," the Sanskrit version says that only Sakyamuni wore the cloth and makes no mention of Ānanda. Undoubtedly Ānanda did actually wear the cloth but any mention of his participation was removed as the Buddha increasingly became a deified figure.

Again, while the Pāli text describes how Pukkusa took refuge in Gotama, the Yu-hsing-ching says that he took both the triple refuge and the five lay precepts, since by that time this was the minimum requirement for Buddhists. The Pan-ni-yüan-ching adds, after detailing the five precepts, strictures against eating meat. This demonstrates an attitude considerably different from the ethics of the Theravāda of South Asia and should be noted carefully since it shows a further addition of Mahāyāna ideas. In the same sutra too Pukkusa's departure is accompanied by the explanation that he had to return because of his "numerous duties of state." This is clearly a Chinese expression and is found in neither the Pāli nor Sanskrit version, nor in the Tibetan translation. The Chinese translators obviously read the idea of "state" into the original and so inserted

the expression, so typical of China and its absolute state authority.

### The Buddha's Body Shines Gold

According to an old verse incorporated into the Pāli text:

Pukkusa had [someone] bring to him two lengths of  
finely burnished golden cloth;

The Master put them on, and his body shone golden.  
(Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 38)

The prose section that corresponds to the verse explains in detail.

"(37) Soon after Pukkusa, a youth of the Mallas, had departed, the young Ānanda arranged the two lengths of finely burnished golden cloth on the body of the Venerable Master. He perceived that the golden cloth appeared dim against the Venerable Master's body. Therefore the young Ānanda said to the Venerable Master: 'Revered One, how mysterious and wonderful it is that the skin color of the Tathāgata should be so bright and clear. I have placed two lengths of finely burnished golden cloth of silk on the Venerable Master's body, yet the cloth against the Venerable Master's body appears to have lost its light'" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 37).

The Pāli text explains that there are two occasions when the Buddha's skin appears brighter than usual.

"(37 *continued*) 'That is so, Ānanda. There are two occasions when the skin color of the Tathāgata is bright and clear. What are the two? One is the night, Ānanda, when the Tathāgata attains supreme enlightenment, and the other is the night when he enters the realm of the *nibbāna* without residue. On these two occasions, Ānanda, the skin color of the Tathāgata is bright and clear'" (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 37).

In later times people believed that a buddha possessed golden skin, and this was one of the thirty-two distinguishing marks of a buddha. The above passage shows us the origin of that idea. The verse quoted above does not appear in the Sanskrit text, the Tibetan translation, or the Chinese translation (P'i-nai-yeh tsa-shih). Since, however, the prose section appears based on the verse, these other texts must have dropped the verse, despite the fact that it was the original component. The author of the prose section was concerned to explain why the skin color of the Tathāgata was bright and clear. He had already begun to look upon Gotama Buddha in deified terms.

The fact that the verse is ancient both in content and idea while the prose section is much newer provides evidence to support the assertion that this *sutta* was compiled on the basis of a collection of verses that had been current from a very early period, some of which were included and some of which were not.

The description in the Pan-ni-yüan-ching of Sakyamuni's "radiant face being tranquil" has been used as a stereotyped



expression in China and Japan from ancient times to the present, having been absorbed into the folk tradition, and contrasts with more strongly religious descriptions, such as found in the *Sukhāvati-vyūha*.

### To the River Kakutthā

Next Gotama Buddha set out for the Kakutthā River. According to the Pāli text, he had foreseen his own death, and made the move in response.

“(38) ‘Tonight, Ānanda, in the last watch, the complete death of the Tathāgata will take place between the twin *sāla* trees in the Mallas’ *sāla* grove of Upavattana in Kusinārā.’ Then the Venerable Master said to the young Ānanda, ‘Come, Ānanda, let us go to the Kakutthā River.’ ‘Yes, Master,’ replied the young Ānanda.

“(39) Then, the Venerable Master went to the Kakutthā River together with a large company of *bhikkhus*. Arriving there, he went down into the water, bathed, drank, and crossed the stream to reach the mango grove. There he said to the young Cundaka: ‘Fold an outer robe into four for me, Cundaka, and place it down, for I am tired and want to lie down.’ ‘Yes, Master,’ the young Cundaka replied, and folded an outer robe into four and placed it down.

“(40) Then the Venerable Master lay down in the lion posture, lying on his right side with his [left] foot over his [right] foot, ready to rise again, attentive, and mindful. The young Cundaka sat down in front of the Venerable Master.

“(41) The Buddha had gone to the Kakutthā River, where the pleasant waters flow clear and bright. His body utterly weary, the Master plunged into the stream—the Buddha, without any equal in the world. Bathing, drinking, crossing [the stream], the Master headed the group of *bhikkhus*. The Teacher of the Dhamma in this world, the Venerable Master, the Great Ascetic came to the Mango Grove. There he said to the *bhikkhu* called Cundaka: ‘Fold [a robe] into four and place it down for my sake, for I would lie down.’ Urged by the Well-Trained One [Sakyamuni], Cundaka immediately folded [the outer robe] into four and placed it down. Utterly weary, the Master lay down, and Cunda sat before him” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 38–41).

Here there is a strong suggestion that the person referred to is Cunda the blacksmith. The reason is as follows: the man is called both “the young Cundaka” (*āyasmā* Cundaka) and “Cunda.” Because he had offered the Buddha a meal he was without doubt a lay person and probably also a young man, since he is called “son of the blacksmith” (*kammāraputta*, IV, 42). He is called Cundaka, which uses the diminutive suffix *-ka* meaning “something small”; since it appears in the prose section it cannot be merely a metrical device (*pada-pūraṇa*) as it might be if found in verse. For these reasons, the epithet *āyasmā* must mean “young” rather than “elder” or “venerable.” European scholars like Rhys Davids and Franke who have translated *āyasmā* in this way (“the venerable Cundaka,” *Dīgha-Nikāya*, p. 147

and “der ehrwürdige Cundaka,” *Dīgha-Nikāya*, p. 229) have done so through a limited knowledge of texts and a lack of knowledge of the living traditions of Sanskrit. All the same, the verse quoted above refers to Cundaka as a *bhikkhu*, and the Yu-hsing-ching states that he “entered *parinibbāna* before the Buddha.” If we judge Cunda and Cundaka to be the same person, it is not clear why Cunda the blacksmith should be called here a *bhikkhu*. Perhaps the composer of the verse referred to him in this way because he knew that although Cunda was a layman at the time he made a meal-offering to the Buddha, he later became ordained as a *bhikkhu*. In each version, though, the prose explanation of this section appears to be based on the above-quoted verse which had formerly been circulated orally.

The *suttanta* next mentions that the Buddha predicted Cunda’s future happiness as the merit of his offering as follows:

“(42) Then the Venerable Master said to the young Ānanda: ‘It might perhaps happen that someone may cause Cunda, son of the blacksmith, thoughts of remorse, saying: “It is not your merit, friend Cunda, and not your virtue, that the Tathāgata died after eating the last meal-offering, that which you offered.”’

“‘Ānanda, the thoughts of remorse of Cunda, son of the blacksmith, should be removed in this way: “It is your merit, friend, and your virtue, that the Tathāgata died after eating the last meal-offering, that which you offered. For, friend Cunda, I have heard directly from the Venerable Master that there are two meal-offerings which are of the same fruit, truly of the same result, of greater result and greater merit than any other offering. What are the two? One is the meal-offering after eating which the Tathāgata attains supreme enlightenment, and the other is the meal-offering after eating which he enters the state of the *nibbāna* with no residue. These two meal-offerings are of the same fruit, truly of the same result, of greater result and greater merit than any other offering. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has therefore accumulated deeds that will prolong his life. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has accumulated deeds that will increase the beauty of his features. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has accumulated deeds that will increase his happiness. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has accumulated deeds that will increase his fame. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has accumulated deeds that lead to heavenly rebirth. The young Cunda, son of the blacksmith, has accumulated deeds that lead to the acquisition of power.”’

““Thus, Ānanda, the thoughts of remorse of Cunda, son of the blacksmith, should be removed in this way” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 42).

Gotama Buddha was a man of deep compassion and therefore worried that Cunda might believe it was his fault that the Buddha had died after eating a meal that he had



*The Kakutthā River, where the Buddha bathed, drank, and crossed the stream to reach the mango grove.*

offered and was concerned that others might blame him. Thus he spoke of the merits that Cunda had gained by donating one of the two greatest meal-offerings. The first had been that offered by two pious merchants directly after he attained enlightenment; the second, Cunda's meal-offering. Suffering as he was from his illness, Gotama was still able to feel concern and compassion for Cunda's plight and attempted thereby to protect him.

The suttanta closes this section with a verse that extols the merits of making offerings.

"(43) Then the Venerable Master, perceiving how the matter stood, uttered at this time words of exultation:

"For one who gives, merit grows;  
In one self-restrained physically and mentally, malice  
does not arise.  
One who is good renounces all evil;  
As sensuous desire, anger, and delusion die away,  
He shakes off all bonds."

(Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 43)

Though the Buddha had fallen ill after eating Cunda's meal-offering, Cunda himself was pure of heart, and in such a one there is to be found great merit.

*To be continued*

# The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

## Chapter 7

### The Parable of the Magic City (4)

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

**TEXT** “Thereupon, when the Brahma heavenly kings had extolled the buddha in verse, each spoke thus: ‘Be pleased, World-honored One, to roll the Law wheel, and cause all the worlds of gods, Maras, Brahmas, monks, and Brahmins to be comforted and delivered!’

**COMMENTARY** *Monks.* “Monk” is a translation of the Sanskrit *shramana*, which is also translated into Chinese as *hsi-hsin* and *ching-ssu*, meaning “stopping mental activities” (through Zen meditation) and “pondering quietly,” respectively. *Shramana* is thus a general term for one who has renounced the world to become a monk, who shaves his head, wears Buddhist robes, endeavors to rid himself of all evils, devotes himself entirely to good, and practices intently to attain enlightenment. In India *shramana* originally meant a religious mendicant of any religion, but later its usage was generally restricted to a Buddhist practitioner.

• *Brahmins.* They are the members of the highest of the four castes of India. Since they take charge of religious and educational duties, “Brahman” is translated into Chinese as *ching-hang* and *ching-chih*, meaning “dweller in pure conduct” and “seeker of *brahman*, the fundamental principle of the universe,” respectively. Here, however, the term indicates lay practitioners as a whole, not only the priestly caste. It is a mark of Buddhism’s magnanimity that the Brahma heavenly kings begged the Buddha to deliver Brahmins, regardless of religious differences.

**TEXT** “Then all the Brahma heavenly kings with one mind and voice praised him in verse, saying:

‘Be pleased, honored of gods and men, / To roll the supreme Law wheel, / To beat the drum of the Great Law, / To blow the conch of the Great Law, / Universally to pour the rain of the Great Law, / And save innumerable beings! / We all devote ourselves to thee. / Proclaim the reverberating news!’

**COMMENTARY** *To beat the drum of the Great Law, to blow the conch of the Great Law.* What fine phrases these are.

The mighty host of the teachings of truth sound the drum and blow the conch horn, so that eventually they are heard throughout the world.

• *Devote.* This word is a translation of a compound of two Chinese characters, one meaning “follow and entrust” and the other meaning “entreat.” The Brahma heavenly kings are saying here, “We will abide by your teachings unconditionally; we entreat you therefore to expound them to us.”

**TEXT** “Then the Tathagata Universal Surpassing Wisdom silently gave assent.

“The southwestern quarter down to the nadir also [responded] in like fashion.

“Then, in the upper quarter, the great Brahma kings of five hundred myriad kotis of domains, all beholding the palaces in which they rested become augustly radiant with light such as never was before, were ecstatic with joy and amazed. At once they visited each other to discuss together this affair, [asking]: ‘What is the cause of this light in our palaces?’ In that assembly there was a great Brahma heavenly king whose name was Shikhin, who addressed the host of Brahmas in verse:

‘What is now the cause / That all our palaces / Are radiant with such august light / And made beautiful as never before? / Such a wonderful sign as this / Of old we have never heard nor seen. / Is it that a great virtuous god is born? / Is it that a buddha appears in the world?’

“Thereupon the five hundred myriad kotis of Brahma heavenly kings, with all their palace train, each taking a sack filled with celestial flowers, went together to visit the nadir quarter to investigate this sign. [There] they saw the Tathagata Universal Surpassing Wisdom on the wisdom terrace under the Bodhi tree, seated on the lion throne, surrounded and revered by gods, dragon kings, gandharvas, kimnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings, and others. And they saw [his] sixteen royal sons entreating the buddha to roll along the Law wheel. Then all the Brahma heavenly kings bowed to the ground before the buddha, made procession around him hundreds and thousands of times, and

then strewed the celestial flowers upon him. The flowers they strewed [rose] like Mount Sumeru and were also offered to the buddha's Bodhi tree. When they had offered the flowers, each of them presented his palace to the buddha and spoke thus: "Out of compassion to us and for our good, condescend to accept the palaces we offer!"

**COMMENTARY** *For our good.* As already discussed in detail, a buddha's acceptance of a gift freely offered is of great merit to the donor.

**TEXT** "Thereupon all the Brahma heavenly kings, before the buddha, with one mind and voice praised [him] in verse, saying:

'How good it is to see the buddhas, / Holy honored ones who save the world, / Who can compel the hells of the triple world / To deliver up the living.

**COMMENTARY** *Deliver up.* The Buddha does not rescue living beings unconditionally from the realm of suffering and distress (hell), but teaches them the truth through the Buddha Law and encourages and exhorts them to find their own way out of hell. It is therefore a mistake to stand idly by and wait for the Buddha to liberate us. We have to find our way out of the realm of pain and distress through our own efforts based on the Buddha's teaching.

**TEXT** The all-wise, honored of gods and men, / Out of compassion for the crowds of young buds / Can open the doors of the sweet dews / For the extensive relief of all.

**COMMENTARY** *The all-wise, honored of gods and men.* This too is a title of the Buddha; he is also called "the all-wise honored one," as a holy person who has all wisdom.

- *The crowds of young buds.* Here "buds" refers to the germ that causes plants to sprout. This was a common literary expression in ancient China, a metaphor for large numbers of living beings.

- *The doors of the sweet dews.* We have seen in chapter 5, "The Parable of the Herbs," the expression "the Law, pure as sweet dew" (see the September/October 2002 issue of DHARMA WORLD). "Doors" refers to the gate of the Dharma, that is, the teaching.

**TEXT** Innumerable kalpas of yore / Have emptily passed without buddhas; / While world-honored ones did not appear, / Darkness has everywhere reigned. / Thriving were the three evil states, / Flourishing also the asuras, / While the heavenly host dwindled, / And dying, fell into evil estates;

**COMMENTARY** *Thriving were the three evil states . . . / And dying, fell into evil estates.* "The three evil states" refers to three states of mind: anger (hell), greed and covetousness (hungry spirits), and ignorance (animals). "Evil estates"

indicates the realms in which people who have accumulated evil karma will be born in their next life: the realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, and asuras. The concept of the six realms of existence and transmigration has this double connotation.

**TEXT** Not hearing the Law from buddhas, / Ever following improper ways, / Their bodies, strength, and wisdom, / These all dwindled away;

**COMMENTARY** *Their bodies, strength, . . .* This means physical strength. When people commit evil, it is only natural that their wisdom diminishes, and it stands to reason that their physical strength decreases, as well. Since body and mind are inextricably linked, the body of one who practices evil grows ever weaker and less attractive. Though there is no sudden visible change, it will inevitably appear over a longer period and, with the passing of time, be apparent to all.

**TEXT** Because of sinful karma / They lost their joy and joyful thoughts; / Fixed in heretical views, / Unconscious of the rules of goodness, / Not receiving the correction of buddhas, / They ever fell into evil ways.

**COMMENTARY** This extremely important passage vividly describes the mindset of degenerate human beings and the world in which they live.

- *They lost their joy and joyful thoughts.* People who have accumulated sinful karma can never feel relaxed and at ease. As a result, they are not happy. Even more to the point, not only have they lost their happiness, they cannot even consider being happy. However deep the abyss of despondency into which they fall, people whose minds are pure and honest are always able to dream of and aspire to happiness. They can easily be brought to salvation. In fact, merely having such a dream is a kind of happiness. But those who have accumulated too much sinful karma, to whom evil actions have accrued like a stain, think that their own world of evil is the only world, and therefore neither consider the possibility of spiritual happiness nor can have any wish to live the life of an average person. We must extend our help to such people as quickly as possible, guiding them to a point where they are able at least to feel like aspiring to happiness. This is the first step to salvation. Compared with such unfortunate people, how much better off are those who, however dispirited they may be at present, can retain the hope of somehow attaining happiness. If they direct their aspiration to the correct path, they will very soon achieve true happiness and joy. There is no doubt of this.

- *Fixed in heretical views.* The reasons people become fixed in false views are very similar to those which cause them to lose "their joy and joyful thoughts." People firmly fixed in heretical views (false or mistaken ideas or thoughts) are

utterly convinced of the truth of what they think, for their minds are too inflexible to consider the possibility of other ways of thinking. Even if confronted with the true Dharma, they do not acknowledge it and therefore allow themselves to become fixed in false views. Examples of such thinking can be seen in certain exclusivist religious groups.

Again, such people become unable to recognize “the rules of goodness,” models for good thoughts and deeds. So unconcerned are they that it is all the same to them whether or not such rules exist. Concerning this problem of apathy versus interest or concern, I would like to share remarks by the distinguished mathematician Kiyoshi Oka published in the *Asahi Shimbun* newspaper of May 2, 1965. Mentioning how he liked observing and experimenting on himself, he wrote how once he had to give up his research for three months and described the mental difficulties he encountered upon resuming work. He ascribed these difficulties to “a subtle difficulty in taking interest.” Oka classified “interest” into three categories: “social interest,” interest in objects of the world that divides the self and

others; “natural interest,” interest in objects of the world of form, including the world of nature and the spheres of reason and knowledge; and “supernatural interest,” interest in objects apart, in the broad sense, from the natural world.

Oka described how interest reemerged when he returned to his studies after a three-month gap: “It took me about ten days to cross, so to speak, two great mountain passes, going from a condition of merely ‘social interest’ to a state where I was able to transcend the difference between self and others, to separate myself from the framework of time and space, and find myself in a position of being able to maintain ‘supernatural interest.’ As I became increasingly aware of emerging into a place of ever-extending boundaries, I was filled with exhilaration. At that point my study became truly delightful and I began to feel as if a spring breeze were blowing within my heart.”

He went on to state: “Very simply, the difficulty in taking interest comes from finding it hard to take interest in the things of the wider world but easy to take interest in the

*The opening part of chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra, “The Parable of the Magic City,” copied by the founder.*

*Founder Niwano copying the Threefold Lotus Sutra. He was engaged in the copying of the entire sutra from mid-July through early October, 1960. His calligraphy was later mounted on the ten scrolls which were placed in the statue of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni enshrined in the Great Sacred Hall at Rissho Koseikai’s headquarters in Tokyo.*

*The ten scrolls of the Threefold Lotus Sutra ready to be placed in the statue of the Eternal Buddha.*



things of one's immediate surroundings. Unless one broadens one's mind, it seems impossible to take interest in the things of the wider world. Thus, one can measure the breadth or narrowness of one's world by the extent of one's interest. The supernatural realm is the broadest, and a community or society is the narrowest. I have come to understand this through intent observation.

"This means that people whose occupations are closely tied up with their society, like politicians, businessmen, lawyers, and journalists, need sometimes to sit in meditation lest they become 'frogs in a well,' as did the former military authorities, and fall into ever greater error as the generally accepted ideas of society cloud their eyes of human intelligence."

This is a passage worth rereading often, for it helps us to realize that possessing an interest in the broadest possible world or realm is the foundation upon which we maintain right mind in the true sense, create a fine intellect, and produce excellent work. And we cannot help feeling keenly the enormous importance of religion. A religious environ-

ment allows us to attain true "joy and joyful thoughts" and to know the true "rules of goodness" through the release of the mind into the supernatural realm.

**TEXT** The buddha is the eye of the world, / [And] after long ages appears. / Through pity for the living / He is revealed in the world, / Surpassing in his Perfect Enlightenment. / Great is our felicity, / And all other beings / Rejoice as never before. / All our palaces, / Made beautiful through this light, / Now we offer the World-honored One. / Condescend in compassion to accept them!

**COMMENTARY** This is another extremely important passage, in which we can identify two main points. The first is that the Buddha appeared in this world to be the eyes (that is, to open the eyes) of all those people whose interest is concerned with the narrow world alone, for he wished to lead them to the correct way of looking at things. It is not too much to say that this is the significance of the Buddha's salvation. The Buddha, however, was not like a god

*Above: Placing the sutra scrolls in the statue on December 8, 1960.  
Right: The statue of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, sculpted by Shinkan Nishikido. The statue was enshrined on March 4, 1964, in the newly-completed Great Sacred Hall.*

descending from heaven and conferring his teachings upon us backed by the force of his authority. He was born into the world as we were, experienced there all sorts of difficulties as a human being, and used those experiences as the springboard for his religious practice. As a result, he attained liberation from the world of suffering and achieved the Buddha's Perfect Enlightenment. He is therefore a model for us.

An entity like a heavenly deity is completely different from ourselves and cannot provide a pattern for our action. Such a god orders and people obey, though in the depths of their hearts they do not know why they must do so. They obey only because they fear the consequences of disobedience. The teaching of the Buddha, however, speaks directly to our hearts because it belongs to one who was born a human being like ourselves and who attained enlightenment after having experienced all sorts of joys and sorrows. Such a teaching we are able to comprehend and accept with gratitude. Since the Buddha is our model, we can be confident that we too will attain enlightenment if we practice constantly in accordance with his teaching. What greater happiness could there be than having such a conviction? That is why the Brahma heavenly kings say, "Great is our felicity." This is the second main point. The two phrases "The buddha is the eye of the world" and "Through pity for the living he is revealed in the world, surpassing in his Perfect Enlightenment" are well worth memorizing.

TEXT May this [deed of] merit / Extend to all [living beings] / That we with all the living / May together accomplish the Buddha Way!

COMMENTARY This passage is repeated by almost all Buddhist believers, not only followers of the Lotus Sutra, at the end of sutra recitations. It is therefore also known as "the concluding vow" or, based on its content, "the verse of universal transfer of merit." It can be said that this one brief verse contains the spirit of the extensive vow and practice of Buddhist believers.

Of course, "this [deed of] merit" refers to "worship through deeds." "Worship through offerings"—offerings of incense, flowers, and food—and "worship through reverence"—reverence, worship, and praise of the Buddha—are both expressions of true gratitude and devotion to the Buddha. Needless to say, they are important, but "worship through deeds," to receive and keep and to practice the teaching, is the highest form of veneration.

In short, "worship through deeds" means to practice the Way of the Buddha selflessly, casting away all prior concepts and abandoning all delights of the five desires. Bowing before an image or a symbol of the Buddha and reciting sutras combine "worship through reverence" and "worship through deeds." Because such an act of devotion is a practice that allows us to forget and cast off our "small self,"

merge with the Buddha's mind, and absorb his teaching into our very body and spirit, it is without doubt the greatest of all forms of veneration. Nevertheless, such action is not undertaken just for the sake of our own peace of mind or our own enlightenment. We have to pray from the very depths of our being that the merit of our action will extend to all living beings so that we, together with all other people, may attain the Buddha Way. Because the verse has this meaning, we must not let ourselves recite it just as a matter of habit; as Buddhists we must recite it from the heart, filling it with the force of our great vow.

TEXT "Thereupon, when the five hundred myriad kotis of the Brahma heavenly kings had extolled the buddha in verse, each said to him: 'Be pleased, World-honored One, to roll the Law wheel; abundantly comfort; abundantly deliver!'

"Then all the Brahma heavenly kings spoke in verse, saying:

'World-honored One, roll the Law wheel, / Beat the drum of the Law, sweet as dew, / Save the suffering living, / Reveal the nirvana way! / Be pleased to receive our entreaty / And with thy great, mystic voice, / Out of compassion spread abroad / The Law thou hast practiced for infinite kalpas.'

COMMENTARY *And with thy great, mystic voice.* The Buddha's voice is indescribably beautiful; that is, the Buddha's teaching sinks into our minds pleasantly and comfortably. However true or correct a doctrine is, it will never bring great numbers of people to salvation if it sounds impersonal or rigid, for it will lack the fascination capable of drawing people instinctively toward it. Religious teachings must be able to touch people to the core with their warmth, purity, and comforting assurance.

• *Spread abroad the Law thou hast practiced for infinite kalpas.* The Brahma heavenly kings are saying, "We beg you to elaborate upon the truth in an easily understood way, the truth you realized as a result of practices that lasted a countless span of years, from the time you became a bodhisattva in the distant past."

TEXT "At that time the Tathagata Universal Surpassing Wisdom, receiving the entreaty of the Brahma heavenly kings of the ten regions and of [his] sixteen royal sons, at once thrice rolled the Law wheel of twelve divisions, which neither shramanas, Brahmans, gods, Maras, Brahmas, nor other beings of the world are able to roll. His discourse was: 'This [is] suffering; this the cause of suffering; this the extinction of suffering; this the way to extinction of suffering';

COMMENTARY *Thrice rolled the Law wheel of twelve divisions.* The buddha expounded the teaching of the Four Noble Truths in three ways. Four times three is twelve, and this indicates the Law wheel of twelve divisions. Since I

*A page from the Lotus Sutra copied in black ink during the Heian period (794–1185) on fan-shaped paper. The surface of the paper is decorated with cut and pressed gold-leaf techniques. National Treasure. Tokyo National Museum.*

have already discussed the Law of the Four Noble Truths in chapter 1, “Introductory” (see the March/April 1997 issue of DHARMA WORLD), I urge you to read that section again. I will limit myself here to a brief recapitulation of the main points.

The Four Noble Truths are the four kinds of realization: (1) the truth of suffering (realizing that this world is characterized by suffering, we should not attempt to flee from it but acknowledge the reality of suffering); (2) the truth of the cause of suffering (suffering inevitably has complex causes, and it is important to investigate and discern them clearly); (3) the truth of the extinction of suffering (suffering is extinguished without fail when we realize the law of dependent origination and sever all craving and attachment); and (4) the truth of the Way to the extinction of suffering (the way to extinguish suffering is the Eightfold Path: right view, right thought, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration).

These four truths were taught in three ways, called “the three turns of the wheel”: the indicative turn, the hortative turn, and the evidential turn. The indicative turn is to expound the Law by pointing out the true Dharma exactly as it is, of preaching the real aspect of all things and the fact that the essential nature of human beings is the buddha-nature. Shakyamuni taught the five bhikshus, who were his first followers, “Human existence is all suffering. Its cause is craving (thirst for, and attachment to, the objects of the five desires). Suffering will be extinguished when all such craving is abandoned. The way to extinguish suffering is by means of the Eightfold Path.”

The hortative turn encourages practice of the Buddha’s

teaching. Though people hear the Buddha preach, saying, “This is the truth,” not all immediately put his teaching into practice, applying it to their own lives and religious practice. Therefore Shakyamuni invariably recommended that people actually practice the teaching. Speaking of the Four Noble Truths, he taught the five bhikshus, “You must understand what suffering is, you must come to a conclusion about the causes of suffering, you must prove to yourselves that suffering can be eliminated, and you must practice the Path.”

The evidential turn is the Buddha’s bearing witness to the fact that he has actually practiced the teachings. Even if a person is taught the Buddha Law and encouraged to practice it, a sense of anxiety will still remain in the listener’s mind. If, however, the person can be assured of the truth by the Buddha’s saying, “Here is the living proof,” that person will be inspired to undertake the same practice. Shakyamuni thus taught the five bhikshus, saying, “I myself have already comprehended suffering; I myself have already come to a conclusion about the causes of suffering; I myself have already proved that suffering can be eliminated; I myself have already practiced the Path.”

These three stages of preaching constitute a thoroughgoing system of guidance.

*To be continued*

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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.

# How Violence Hampers Interfaith Dialogue

*Transcendence and Violence: The Encounter of Buddhist, Christian and Primal Traditions*, by John D'Arcy May. New York/London: Continuum, 2003. 225 pp. US\$39.95.

This important new book deals with the often emotion-charged subject of the relationship between religion and violence. In doing so forthrightly, it could not be more timely. That is because today, just as in less "civilized" periods of the distant—and not so distant—historical past, almost the entire range of human conflicts can be found to have a religious element at some level, whether or not it is consciously acknowledged by the participants in the violence.

In these pages, Professor May, a distinguished Australian scholar in the field of interfaith dialogue, presents four explicit case studies of the encounters of Christianity and Buddhism with a variety of primal traditions of the Asia-Pacific region: Aboriginal Australia and Melanesia in relation to Christianity, and Thailand and Japan in relation to Buddhism. Relying not only on research by others, but also on his own first-hand knowledge of the areas he discusses, he takes an unflinching look at the role the religions have played in promoting or condoning violence, often with the goal, spoken or unspoken, of further propagating the faith.

His detailed analyses of the failures of the great religious traditions in these encounters make compelling reading. Professor May's cogent review of how the attitudes of religious purists give way to those of religious extremists is especially pertinent in these early days of the twenty-first century, when religion is seen to be an element in disputes ranging from all-out civil wars to campaigns for political independence that make it a practice to conduct suicide bombings against civilian targets, from the so-called "pre-emptive" invasion by one country of another sovereign state in the name of a "national security" to guerilla-style insurgencies against established governments.

In the author's own words, "The appalling events of 11 September 2001 and the downward spiral of violence in the Middle East have shown us the depths to which religiously fueled violence can descend, and the 'war on terrorism' declared by the West in response rings hollow when measured against the atrocities of Western imperialism throughout the modern era."

Professor May begins his new book by citing the failures of European Christianity at the time that Nazi Germany was attempting to exterminate Europe's entire Jewish population and of Theravada Buddhism in Sri Lanka in preventing the years of ongoing violence against the Hindu Tamil minority. In the first two main parts of the book, "Christianity's Pacific Voyage" and "Buddhism's Asian Journey," he deals straightforwardly with the disillusioning missteps of faiths

ostensibly dedicated to encouraging peace and nonviolence.

In chapter 3, "The Buddha in Sacred Space: Japanese Buddhism in War and Peace," Professor May presents a concise yet thorough overview of the historical development of Japanese Buddhism and what he sees as its social limitations in the prewar, wartime, and postwar periods, all in the space of a mere nineteen pages. This is a remarkable achievement in successfully distilling the essence of a difficult topic that helps to prove that the author, currently associate professor of interfaith dialogue at the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College, Dublin, is well suited to tackle the subject of his book. His personal background includes an early period as a Roman Catholic seminarian.

He opens his concluding chapter, "Beyond Violence? The Deconstruction of Absolutism and the Completion of Religion," with the provocative statement that "It is illusory to think that 'Buddhism' and 'Christianity,' taken as some kind of organic, homogeneous wholes, can dialogue in the abstract by comparing and correlating doctrines." Instead, he says, "They are emerging into a new shared context, not of their making, which results from the dynamic of new, a-religious transcendence implicit in the rise of science and the explosion of technology."

In explaining that "all the religious traditions [now] have to face past failures, present inadequacies and future possibilities together," Professor May has made a major contribution toward encouraging the kind of genuine interreligious dialogue that over time can produce meaningful results for the promotion of real peace instead of the plague of constant violence that continues to infect so many areas of the globe today. □

W. F.