

DHARMA WORLD

For Living Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue

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

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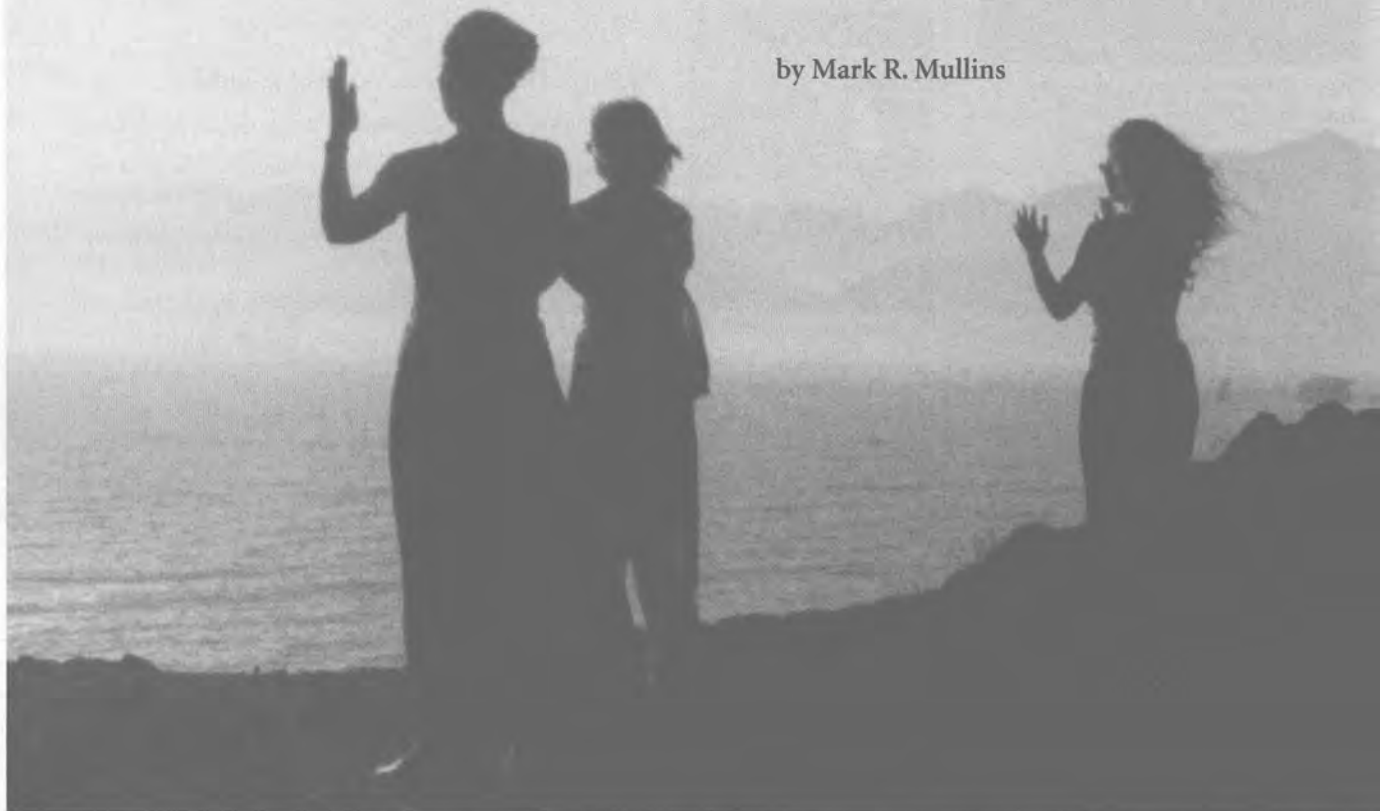
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Note: Because of their scholarly nature, some essays use diacritical marks or alternative spellings for foreign names and terms; other essays do not, for easier reading.

Emerging Forms of

by Mark R. Mullins



It may be hard for us to imagine now, but only a few decades ago many scholars assumed that religion and spirituality would soon be a thing of the past, as the process of modernization extended throughout the world. Secularization was regarded as an inevitable global process, explaining the consequences of modernization for both organized religion and individual belief and practice. It is apparent that certain forms of religiosity have weakened over the past century—established Christian churches in Europe, for example, or Shinto communities and Buddhist temples in rural parts of Japan.

At the same time, however, one can observe significant new patterns of belief and involvement with the sacred. The appearance of scores of new religious movements worldwide, the growth of postdenominational forms of Christianity, and the revitalization movements within Islam in recent decades have forced sociologists and historians to rethink this rather simplistic interpretation of the changing nature and role of religion in modern societies. The secularization paradigm, in other words, does not adequately

explain or account for the contradictory tendencies and ambivalent effects of modernization upon religious sensibilities and institutions. Without denying the insights provided by secularization theorists, it has become increasingly clear that we need to give equal attention to new patterns of “sacralization”—or new expressions of spirituality—that have appeared as human responses to the search for meaning in our troubled times.

In the context of Japan, religious involvement was for many centuries closely connected to a network of social obligations and duties—either to the extended family (*ie*), in relation to the *danka seido*,* or to the emperor and the nation under State Shinto. Since the establishment of religious freedom under the post-World War II constitution, however, religion has increasingly become a matter of personal choice. While the older ritual obligations connected to family and community have by no means disappeared, they have certainly lost some of their power.

In the early postwar environment, numerous new religious movements attracted the attention of seekers and

Spirituality



The new information technology has now enabled the exploration of various spiritual paths and traditions free of both the direction of a priestly class of religious professionals and the control and constraints of religious institutions.

Women practicing tai chi at sunset.

displaced masses in urban areas. These movements often encouraged individuals to cultivate their own spirituality rather than simply depend on the ritual performance of a priestly order, but at the same time expected serious commitment to the religious organization. Many of these movements have now become “established” new religions, and their appeal has diminished accordingly.

Organized religion—whether traditional or new institutions—is facing hard times in the current environment. In the Japanese context, for example, where roughly 30 percent of the population claims to have a personal faith of some kind, attitudes toward organized religion are extremely negative. Survey research has shown that most Japanese regard religious institutions as untrustworthy, gloomy (*kurai*), closed (*heisateki*), and, most recently, as dangerous (*abunai*). These attitudes have undoubtedly been cultivated by the media treatment of financial scandals related to religion, the “cult” problem, and the close connection between religion and terrorism in recent years.

In spite of these negative views toward institutional

expressions of religion, there remains a high interest in spiritual concerns. A look back over the past two decades, in fact, reveals a growing interest in the occult, mysticism, religious experience, and healing. Examples abound of new forms of spirituality appearing outside the structures of traditional religious institutions. One could say that a new counterculture or subculture has emerged and become a visible feature of many contemporary societies.

Strolling through almost any bookstore in Japan, one will come across a section of books under the label “the spiritual world.” This is usually a rather large collection of books found next to a smaller counter of books on traditional religion. Here one will find books, magazines, and videos on a wide range of topics, including astrology, divination, techniques of magical healing, communication with the spirits of the dead, and training methods for controlling the spirit world. There are also many translated New Age materials from the United States.

Along with these published materials, the Internet has become an important resource for people to explore their religious questions and concerns. With convenient access to the global purveyors of religion and spirituality, individuals can easily consider and experiment with beliefs and practices from a variety of sources. Each person is now free to cut and paste selected elements and construct an individualized spirituality. In addition to these private forms of exploration, the more adventuresome can participate in personal development seminars and form loosely organized

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spiritualistic groups, which focus on meditation, personal healing, channeling, divination, nature worship, and environmental concerns.

These new spirituality movements, as Susumu Shimazono refers to them, are still primarily concerned with the cultivation of personal spirituality and the transformation of individual consciousness. As Martin Repp points out in this issue, we also need to consider popular culture—*manga* and *anime*—to encounter Japanese who are disillusioned with established religious institutions yet continue to struggle with spiritual ideals and concerns.

What seems clear is that forms of spirituality and experimentation which emphasize sacred techniques for gaining power and a sense of personal well-being are increasingly attractive. These new forms of spirituality advocate new and old ways of controlling the “other world” of spirits and supernatural powers for personal protection, healing, happiness, and success in this world. These alternative forms of spirituality offer the possibility of religious experience without the excessive pressures of conformity demanded by the larger social system, and without the requirement of adherence to a rigorously defined belief system.

About a century ago the German historian of religion Ernst Troeltsch elaborated the church-sect typology first

advanced by Max Weber in his analysis of the social forms of the Christian religion. He added a third type, mysticism, a much less significant phenomenon at the time, to refer to a form of religiosity that was free of social organization and first became truly possible after the invention of the printing press. Perhaps we are now entering a new phase of human history in postmodern societies in which mysticism or religious individualism will become the dominant form of spirituality.

The new information technology has now enabled the masses to explore various spiritual paths and traditions free of both the direction of a priestly class of religious professionals and the control and constraints of religious institutions. What remains to be seen is whether these new forms of spirituality will simply contribute to the ongoing privatization of religious life and social disengagement or will eventually lead to the cultivation of individuals who in time will reemerge from their private worlds and subcultures to give new vision and direction to our global society. □

Note

* This is a system of family affiliation to a particular Buddhist temple, which was made compulsory by the Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) as a means of social control.

Photo: Kyodo

Some fifty citizens experience esoteric Buddhist meditation at a Shingon-sect temple in Tokyo on a Saturday morning in July 2004. Many people, including some without religion and some Christians, visit the temple for the meditation session held every two weeks, seeking spiritual comfort.

The Roots of Japanese Spirituality: A Linguistic Exploration

by Toji Kamata

Going beyond views of spirituality as the source of wisdom and compassion, this essay describes it as the compass of life, the fundamental power and orientation directing and driving life, and the indicator and magnetic needle of life.

In the 1980s the word “spirituality” (translated into Japanese as *reisei*) began to be used with increasing frequency to express new forms of belief and modern religious attitudes. Typical of this phenomenon was the World Health Organization’s consideration of a new definition of the term “health” in the late 1990s.

A Spiritual Dimension to Health?

The preamble to the WHO constitution defines health as follows: “Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” This definition was adopted at the International Health Conference, held June 19–22, 1946, in New York. It was signed by sixty-one countries by July 22 that year and came into force on April 7, 1948.

At the behest of WHO members representing the Eastern Mediterranean region (Afghanistan, Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen), the Executive Board considered a revised definition at its 101st meeting, in September 1998. In an article analyzing the debate and the reasons the revision did not go through, Kan Usuda and Hidehiko Tamashiro write, “One of the major reasons Arab countries put forward a revision at this time was that of the three indicators of ‘physical, mental and social well-being’ included in the existing WHO definition of health, all the emphasis had come to be placed on physical health, reflecting the limits to the maturity of Western medicine; not unconnected was the worldwide trend toward a reversion to traditional medicine in reaction to Western medicine’s overly quantitative and objective approach.”¹

Behind this was the heightened attention to and reappraisal of holistic medicine and alternative therapies, as

well as the traditional Arabian system of medicine known as *unani*, seen since the 1980s. As specific examples of alternative therapies Usuda and Tamashiro list homeopathy, naturopathy, holistic medicine, psychotherapy, psychic healing, sorcery, faith healing, aromatherapy, healing relaxation, moxibustion, shiatsu, *seitai*, dietetic therapy, lifestyle counseling, herbal medicine, *qigong*, hydrotherapy, therapeutic exercise, massage, electrotherapy, ultrasound therapy, light therapy, and counseling.

The amended definition put before the WHO Executive Board was as follows: “Health is a dynamic state of complete physical, mental, spiritual and social well-being and not

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merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” The fifty-second World Health Assembly, in May 1999, to which the amendment was officially submitted, referred it to the director general without deliberating it, however. And there the matter has rested.

What I would like to note is the addition of the words “dynamic” and “spiritual.” If the Executive Board had approved these changes and the World Health Assembly had passed a resolution to that effect, it would have signified worldwide agreement that spiritual enrichment was essential to health. Though matters did not progress that far, the amendment may have represented a backlash against modernity, a kind of “Copernican change.” In short, the proposal to add “spiritual” to the definition of health, emanating from the Islamic world, was resisted by Western countries and Japan.

The Concept of Spirituality (*Reisei*)

One leading figure of modern society who has strongly and widely promoted the need for spirituality from a practical viewpoint is the Dalai Lama, the supreme leader of Tibetan Buddhism. His peace activities have been praised, and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for peace in 1989. His peace movement perpetuates the Gandhian tradition. His emphasis on compassion and nonviolence epitomizes the practice of spirituality. He teaches that spirituality is the foundation of compassion and the source of wisdom and compassion.²

This spirituality is linked to the aspiration to enlightenment and to the Way. In other words, the basic drive toward enlightenment is spirituality. From that viewpoint, I regard spirituality as the compass of life, the fundamental power and orientation directing and driving life, the indicator and magnetic needle of life.

Elsewhere,³ I consider the concept of spirituality (*reisei*) from eight viewpoints: (1) universality; (2) religiosity and pan-religiosity; (3) equality and human rights; (4) liberation and the breakdown of exclusivity and bias; (5) the extent to which the meaning of *reisei* diverges from, or corresponds with, that of other Japanese words for spirituality—*shinsei* (*shin* = divinity), *bussho*, *shinsei* (*shin* = heart), and *seishinsei*; (6) ambiguity and elasticity; (7) whether its use in the WHO definition of health exerts pressure on atheists; and (8) a still deeper level of mental life—scrutiny of, interest in, and insight into the depth of the self (introspection). I conclude that spirituality (*reisei*) comprises three elements: holism, fundamentality, and depth (maturity).

The word *reisei* as used today includes multiple meanings. Rather than denote specific spiritual entities or ideal beings, such as God or the Buddha, it is a universal, overarching concept that can also encompass those meanings.

Thus, *reisei* is oriented toward universality, indicating a religiosity or pan-religiosity that applies to all religions. Because it is also oriented toward equality for all humanity, it serves as the foundation of human rights thinking. In addition, it can be used as a concept going beyond human rights to encompass all life. All these elements can be seen in the Dalai Lama’s idea of spirituality as something informed by compassion and cosmic responsibility. Therefore *reisei*, unlike *shinsei* (*shin* = divinity) or *bussho* or *shinsei* (*shin* = heart) or *seishinsei*, has begun to be used as a more liberating concept devoid of exclusivity and bias.

Thus, we can see that *reisei* indicates insight into, and interest in, a deeper level of spirituality (*seishinsei*), because it includes the three universal elements of holism, fundamentality, and depth. While being holistic and fundamental, *reisei* can indicate human deepening, maturity, and transformation. It can form the foundation of all religions, their common ground or horizon, and their shared heritage.

A Historical Overview of the Word *Reisei*

The word *reisei* began to appear in Shinto and Buddhist sources around the end of the Heian period (794–1185). In my view, its first use was in *Shinto hiroku*, attributed to Urabe Kanetomo,⁴ vice-minister of the Office of Shinto Worship from the end of the Heian period through the first years of the Kamakura period (1185–1333). One passage reads roughly as follows: “When heaven and earth were not separated, the sun, moon, and stars had not yet appeared and the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water had not yet taken form. Thus all was empty space, the truth of good and evil had not yet spread, and the essence of Shinto was tranquillity, spontaneity, harmony, emptiness, and *reisei*.” Another passage can be rendered: “Shinto upholds harmony, emptiness, and *reisei*, and does not traverse the two laws of life and death. Thus, the two ideographs of Shinto, the Way [*to*] of the Kami [*shin*], can be interpreted as meaning Kami beyond kami and the Way beyond the way. Kami was kami beyond kami, and the Way was the self-generated divine light.”⁵ Urabe defines the essence of Shinto as harmony, emptiness, and *reisei*, and Shinto as that which upholds harmony, emptiness, and *reisei*. Thus, he repeatedly uses *reisei* as the most important word to express the cosmic view at the core of the hidden meaning of Shinto.

At the opposite extreme, the Zen teacher Dogen (1200–1253) uses the word *reisho* (another reading of *reisei*) negatively in the “Bendowa” (Discourse on the Practice of the Way) section of his masterpiece *Shobo genzo* (Eye Treasury of the Right Dharma): “Your viewpoint is quite far from the Law. It is the statement of the non-Buddhist Shrenika: ‘There is *reichi* (mysterious wisdom) in our body. When it

meets with causation, we can tell like from dislike, right from wrong, pain from irritation, suffering from pleasure. All this is due to the function of *reichi*. But when our body decays, this wondrous entity [*reisho*] slips [out of our body] and rises in another world. So it may seem to decay here, but rises there. From this come the words “*Reichi* is immortal forever.” This is his viewpoint.”⁶ Dogen is critical of the idea that we can tell like from dislike, right from wrong, pain from irritation, and suffering from pleasure through the power of *reichi* and that *reisho* (*reisei*) remains even after death, declaring it to be a false view.

Later, Yoshida Kanetomo (1435–1511), the greatest Shinto thinker of the medieval period and the perfecter of Yoshida Shinto (also known as Urabe Shinto or Yuiitsu Sogen Shinto [Unique and Fundamental Shinto]), discusses *reisei* in his masterpiece *Yuiitsu Shinto myobo yoshu* (Essentials of Unique Shinto) as follows: “Question: Why do you call Shinto the Way of Truth (*shin*) rather than the Way of the Kami (*shin*)? Answer: Kami is the general name for good and evil, right and wrong, for all spirituality [*reisei*]. Because it elucidates the one and unadulterated, true Kami, it is called the Way of Truth.”⁷ Yoshida says that kami is the general name for all spirituality (*reisei*). And to express the nature of this one and unadulterated, true Kami, we talk about the Way of Truth rather than the Way of the Kami. Here, *reisei* means the fundamental principle that makes all things what they are, the primordial energy, the pure core of the ethics of good and evil, right and wrong. *Reisei* is the source of Shinto (the Way of the Kami, the Way of Truth).

This medieval view of *reisei* is an ontological one, elucidating a kind of cosmic principle. In the Edo period (1603–1868) the National Learning scholar Hirata Atsutane (1776–1843) developed that cosmic view of spirituality into his own idiosyncratic view of spirituality. While harshly critical of Yoshida Shinto as “vulgar Shinto,” Hirata uses the word *reisei* in his *Mippo shujiburuiko*: “I am Musubi no Kami [the Creator God]. I assembled wind, fire, metal, water, and earth, allocating that good spirituality [*reisei*]. Eventually my body returns to the five elements; I am pure spirituality [*reisei*], the eternal self.”⁸ Thus Hirata put together the Shinto method of discipline known as *goshinkan*, which he practiced for self-cultivation and self-discipline. According to this, one is a manifestation of the good spirituality (*reisei*) of Musubi no Kami, the Creator God, and is one with heaven and earth; and this eternal self persists even after death. Hirata believed that the wisdom to understand the wondrous powers of Musubi no Kami was the work of Kuebiko, the kami that knows all things on earth, and disciplined himself while contemplating his oneness with Kuebiko.

In the Meiji era (1868–1912) Buddhist scholars began

using the word *reisei* to express features of their own thought. *Reisei* can also be found in Daito Shimaji’s *Nihon kindai shukyo shi* (A History of Modern Japanese Religion), Daisetsu Suzuki’s *Shukyo genron* (Fundamentals of Religion), and Suzuki’s translation of Emanuel Swedenborg’s *Divine Love and Wisdom*. From 1944 onward, Suzuki also produced a series of works discussing spirituality (*reisei*), including his *Nihonteki reisei* (Japanese Spirituality).⁹

From the Shinto standpoint, meanwhile, Onisaburo Deguchi (1871–1948), cofounder of the Shinto-based religious movement Omoto, wrote in the Omoto quarterly *Shinreikai*, “Omoto provides a forum for followers of Christianity, Buddhism, and other religions from various countries to gather to hone their spirituality [*reisei*] together and study doctrines adapted to the times.”¹⁰ Here, it is believed, spirituality (*reisei*) is perceived as a universal feature of human nature transcending organized religion. We must also note the American journalist J. W. T. Mason’s affirmative use of the word “spirituality” in *The Meaning of Shinto*. He writes that Shinto and Shinto shrines possess “Nature’s spirituality,” and that Shinto shrines in particular introduce one to a “universal spirituality” and enable one to restore spiritual vigor.¹¹

After World War II, and particularly from the late 1960s onward, *reisei* became the established translation of “spirituality” in the context of the countercultural movement. Eventually *reisei* became shorthand for everything pertaining to the spiritual realm. In *Seishin sekai no yukue* (The Future of the Spiritual Realm), Susumu Shimazono seeks to explain these trends in terms of the history of religion and religious studies, using the concept of what he calls “new spirituality movements.” He draws up a list of nineteen beliefs and concepts of the American New Age movement, headed by “self-realization by means of an experience of self-transformation or spiritual awakening.” He defines the new spirituality movements as “a cluster of movements that, while seeking individual ‘self-transformation’ or ‘spiritual awakening,’ believe they form a new phase of human consciousness and contribute to a new human civilization that reveres spirituality, transcending traditional civilization and the religions underlying it, as well as modern science and Western civilization.”¹²

The Academy Award-winning actress Shirley MacLaine, an iconic figure of Shimazono’s “new spirituality movements,” has noted that religion is not necessarily related to spirituality. Each religion, she says, claims that it and it alone has a hot line to God, but actually we all belong to God; we are all part of God.¹³ This understanding of spirituality is widely shared. For example, the physicist Masahide Aoyama records his impressions on first meeting the Indian guru Sai Baba: “Sai Baba must have wanted to say

that human spirituality, while rooted in a deep level of being, also transcends that." He adds, "Finally, there was only one thing I wished to say to Sai Baba: 'Swami, when I return to Japan, I want to write about the deep spiritual sciences of ayurveda and astrology and about you.'"¹⁴

Thus, "spirituality" (*reisei*) has been the buzzword of each age, endowed with the various messages and needs of the times. And so it continues today. It serves to check the shallowness and conceit of human intelligence and awaken us to the depths of humanity and the profundity of existence. □

Notes

1. Kan Usuda and Hidehiko Tamashiro, "WHO kensho no kenko teigi ga kaisei ni itaranakatta keii" [Why the definition of health in the WHO constitution fell short of amendment], *Nihon Koei shi*, vol. 47, no. 12 (2000). The authors summarize the arguments for and against amendment as follows. "The European Union representative, Voigtlander, opposed amendment. Arguing that it would be difficult to gain members' agreement at a time when many other issues called for attention and that amendment was not essential, he proposed referring the matter to the director general. The Argentine representative, Pico, also opposed amendment, saying that discussion of amendment should be deferred until after the WHO structural reform currently underway. The Chinese representative, Zhao, also opposed amendment. Declaring that the present definition of health was extremely clear and one with which people had been familiar for half a century, he maintained that amendment was totally unnecessary and without significance. The Japanese representative, Eiichi Nakamura, also opposed amendment. He argued that although the amendment had been submitted by specialists and was important, deliberation should be deferred; the amendment should not be discussed at the present assembly. The Australian representative, Whitworth, also opposed amendment. He argued that the matter should be referred to the director general on the grounds that there was no need to rush to a conclusion, since there was no agreement among members and the amendment was not of urgent importance. The Russian representative, Monissov, also opposed amendment, arguing that it was inappropriate to put forward such an amendment during a transitional period of organizational reform (reform accompanying the accession of the new director general, Gro Harlem Brundtland) and that there was no guarantee that amendment would render WHO activities more effective. The Sri Lankan representative, Jeganathan, also opposed amendment. Acknowledging that while the spiritual dimension was an extremely important indicator of daily life and sacred methods were important for understanding the meaning of health, all that transcended religion and it was undesirable to confuse the spiritual dimension with religion; he advocated deliberating the matter again at the next assembly or later. The Bahrain representative, Al Mousawi, however, argued for continuing deliberation on the grounds that weight should be given to the fact that the specialists of the Executive Board had been addressing this proposal ever since the 'spiritual dimension of health' was advocated at the 1984 assembly. Libya's Abudajaja said that the definition of health was an extremely sensitive issue

and that the spiritual dimension should be given weight but decided to follow the other members who wished to defer adoption. As a result of this discussion, the consensus was that the present definition of health was functioning adequately and that there was a less urgent need for deliberation than in the case of other pending issues. For this and other reasons, adoption was deferred without deliberation. It was decided that the director general would continue to review the definition of health together with other proposed amendments to the constitution."

2. Dalai Lama, *Kindness, Clarity, and Insight* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1984).

3. Toji Kamata, *Shinto no supirichuariti* [Shinto Spirituality] (Tokyo: Sakuhinsha, 2003).

4. The names of premodern Japanese historical figures in this article follow the traditional Japanese name order, surname first.—Ed.

5. Hitoshi Mure, *Chusei Shinto setsu keisei ronko* [A Study of the Formation of Medieval Shinto Theory] (Ise: Kogakkan University Press, 2000).

6. Yuho Yokoi, trans., *The Shobo Genzo* (Tokyo: Sankibo Bookstore, 1986), p. 836.

7. *Chusei Shinto ron* [Medieval Shinto], vol. 19 of *Nihon shiso taikai* [Encyclopedia of Japanese Thought] (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1977).

8. Hirata Atsutane, *Indo zoshi* and *Mippo shujiburuiko*, vol. 9 of *Shinshu: Hirata Atsutane zenshu* [New Edition: Complete Works of Hirata Atsutane] (Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan, 1977).

9. Suzuki Daisetsu *zenshu* [Complete Works of Daisetsu Suzuki], vols. 8, 23, 24, 25 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1968–70).

10. Toji Kamata, *Shinkai no firudowaku: Reigaku to minzokugaku no seisei* [Fieldwork in the Realm of Kami: The Genesis of the Study of Spirits and Ethnology] (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 1985).

11. J. W. T. Mason, *The Meaning of Shinto: The Primeval Foundation of Creative Spirit in Modern Japan* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1935).

12. Susumu Shimazono, *Seishin sekai no yukue* [The Future of the Spiritual Realm] (Tokyo: Tokyodo Shuppan, 1996).

13. Shirley MacLaine, *It's All in the Playing* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987).

14. Masahide Aoyama, *Risei no yuragi* [Fluctuation of Intellect] (Tokyo: Sangokan, 1993).

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Kina, Shokichi, and Toji Kamata. *Reisei no nettowaku* [Networks of Spirituality]. Tokyo: Seikyusha, 1999.

Drifting Faith: Civil Society and Public Philosophy in Japan

by Tomoya Kaji

In the new public sphere, each individual is supposed to have an image of the ideal society and possess personal aspirations, to link up with others, and work for a better society.

After World War II Japan's quality of life improved economically across the board, and people everywhere came to enjoy material prosperity. Defeat destroyed the prewar sense of values, and soon after the war there was a kind of religious boom as people sought faiths that could provide them with a new and dependable sense of values. During the period of rapid economic growth the pursuit of economic growth and material affluence became their objects of faith. The collapse of the so-called bubble economy at the beginning of the 1990s, however,

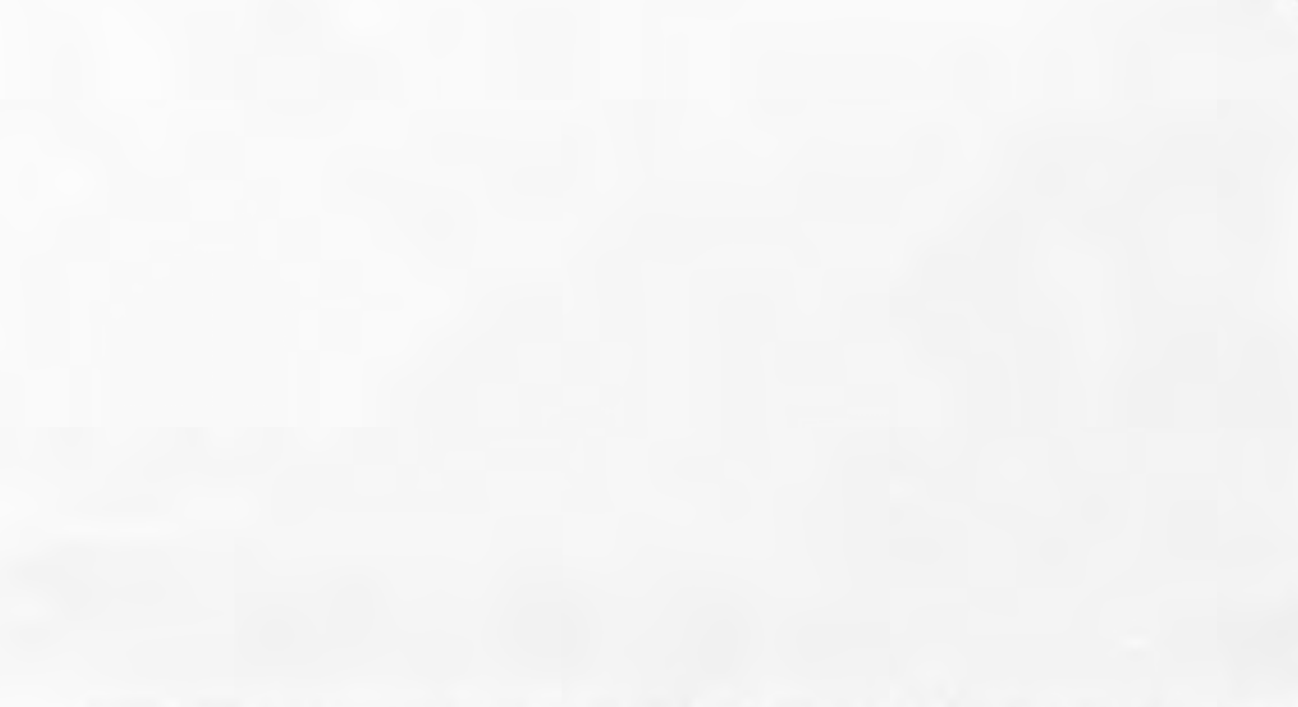
compelled people to make a new value shift. They had to abandon their belief that the activity targets of organizations like companies and government agencies were synonymous with their own targets for self-realization and that the expansion of organizations' profits ipso facto enhanced personal satisfaction. Meanwhile, it began to be stressed that improving the quality of life depended on not just economic and material well-being but other important factors, as well. The past ten-plus years have forced major changes to the Japanese people's forms of spirituality.

The New Public Sphere

The Japanese people's understanding of "the public" has also changed greatly in the last decade. Traditionally, "the public" meant, basically, that which was official or governmental.¹ This was the "public-private dichotomy," which saw public and private as existing in opposition to each other. But once a national minimum standard of living was more or less achieved and the provision of uniform government services was no longer able to satisfy people, it became necessary to respond to individual and thus diverse needs. Meanwhile, the time when government agencies had been able to command the lion's share of human and financial resources and of information came to an end as a network-type society in which these could be widely shared took form, and the government's comparative advantage diminished. In addition, the development of the Internet fostered an "ideology" holding that information and knowledge should be not pyramidal but flat in form, circulating freely and equally.

As a result, public services came to be regarded as the province not only of central and local governments and of

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Volunteers cleaning rocks along a seashore polluted by oil spilled from a stranded oil tanker in Fukui Prefecture in January 1997. Demonstrating deep concern for environmental pollution, many citizens took part in the cleaning, despite the cold weather.

public corporations and other “special corporations” but also of not-for-profit organizations (including public-interest corporations), nongovernmental organizations, citizens’ volunteer groups, and corporate philanthropy. This has come to be understood as the “new public sphere.”² In other words, whereas in the past public services were seen in Japan as services provided by the public sector (the government), today they are perceived as services rendered to the public.

When the public sphere ceases to be the responsibility of government alone, the question of how high-quality public services are to be provided—a question that once would have been limited to the issue of how to administer government—becomes one of governance: how to coordinate the various actors responsible for the public sphere in today’s society in order to achieve the desired outcomes. Today, the perception has shifted from government to governance, from government administration to public-private partnerships.

When the understanding of the public sphere changes in this way, what is expected of people in public society also changes. Traditionally, the ideal was “upright ordinary people.” An upright member of society was one who had a reliable job and earned a steady living, making ends meet

day by day in an inconspicuous yet honest and conscientious manner. While upright ordinary people did not go out of their way to serve others, they also did not depend on or inconvenience others. If they did inconvenience others, they expressed gratitude and made appropriate recompense. In short, they sought always to keep their accounts in balance. To them, contributing to the public interest meant selfless devotion to the government, sacrificing themselves without thought for personal gain or loss.³

In the new public sphere, however, each individual is supposed to have an image of the ideal society and possess personal aspirations, to come out of his or her shell, link up with others, and work together for a better society. The idea is that sustained voluntary activities of this kind will change and enliven communities. The old slogan was “Sacrifice personal interest to serve the public”; the new slogan is becoming “Make the most of the private to develop the public.”

In the early 1990s, when this new sense of values was beginning to emerge, a symbolic event occurred: the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake of January 1995, which devastated Kobe and the surrounding area. The creaky government machinery was unable to respond adequately in providing the expected relief to the victims, but NPOs and

NGOs throughout Japan and around the world stepped into the breach with impressive energy. Hordes of volunteers from every corner of the nation converged on the affected area, with people who had never before had anything to do with volunteer activities taking part. At the same time, due to the paucity of organizations and individuals equipped to act as coordinators so as to effectively utilize the human resources of the assembled amateur volunteer groups, it became apparent that in some cases volunteers' hard work was wasted. Universities around the nation set up courses and departments dealing with volunteer activities, and in 1998 the Law Concerning the Promotion of Specific Non-Profit Organization Activities (the NPO Law) was enacted. The year 1995 is known as "year one of volunteer activities in Japan."

From Voluntarism to Voluntarism

The word *volunteer* as used in Japan more often connoted charity than an expression of free will. This was because of the tradition of "sacrificing personal interest to serve the public."⁴ But a volunteer is one who engages in voluntary action, and underlying this is spirituality. Conceptually, there are two origins of the idea of the voluntary spirit, the principle of participating in society of one's own free will. One is voluntarism, a concept that began slowly to take root in Christian culture in the seventeenth century. This concept reflected the standpoint and principles of the voluntary church, which denied the superiority and dominance of the state in church-state relations and thus repudiated all state assistance to the church, maintaining that the church should possess a status independent of the state and be maintained by the church members. Whereas voluntarism connoted freedom *from* state power, it developed into the concept of freedom *to* participate, whereby independent churches and other groups conducted independent activities in society.⁵ The *y* was dropped from *voluntarism* as the concept of voluntarism arose.

Voluntarism came to include four distinguishing features: first, independent activities not compelled by others; second, a collective sociality characterized by mutual support; third, nonpayment, that is, no expectation of financial reward; and fourth, swift and innovative action when need arises.⁶ Ardor for independence through faith laid the foundation for the institutional principle of the spirit of voluntary, independent social activities.⁷ It is noteworthy that the spirit of encouraging independent involvement in society was based on autonomous faith.

In the context of the connection between faith and independence, another symbolic event occurred in Japan in 1995. When some of its members released deadly sarin gas in Tokyo subways in March, the organization Aum

Shinrikyo (Aum Supreme Truth) surfaced as a social problem. This incident, in which a cult whose members included many highly educated young people was involved in terrorism, horrified Japan. The young cult members, with their superior technological skills and knowledge, had lost touch with the fundamentals and principles that should form the foundation of life.

The existence of young people who possessed sophisticated knowledge but were spiritually immature became a social problem. Cult religions approached young people offering to save them from the fragility of their spiritual base. This was the result of Japan's failure, during its rapid-growth period, to recognize that the acquisition of technology and knowledge must be accompanied by the spiritual growth to support it.⁸

In short, two things became evident in 1995, fifty years after the end of World War II. One was the impetus to reform society by doing away with the traditional concept of the public sphere and participating voluntarily in society on an individual basis, as seen in the growing energy of volunteer and NPO activities. The other was the fact that the spiritual base impelling people toward such activities was still fragile and that they were searching for a new and dependable philosophy of the public sphere for all to share.

In Search of New Forms of Spirituality

I have encountered a situation that directly illustrates this. The Office of the Chapel and Religious Affairs at my university has been running work camps for students for seven years. Three years ago we also began holding an annual overseas work camp during the summer vacation. As dean of the Office of the Chapel and Religious Affairs, I set up the work camp in the Philippines, planned and implemented the program, and led it. The main activity is construction of housing for homeless people in the Philippines, a task carried out in partnership with Habitat for Humanity International, a Christian international NGO.⁹

The students participating attend twelve training sessions, including two retreat-type sessions, before going to the Philippines. After returning from the two-week work camp, they report on their activities at a special meeting and prepare written reports. The twenty-plus students taking part contribute the equivalent of \$1,400 each to cover travel expenses, accommodation, and vaccinations. This sum also includes a donation of \$250 to be applied to construction costs. Thus, the students invest a great deal of time and money up front, in addition to their labor as volunteers.

The students' motivations for participation and what they gain from the work camp are varied, but afterward almost all of them confess that they have discovered things about themselves. They say that the experience has enabled

Participants in the work camp in 2003 helping in the construction of housing for homeless people in the Philippines. Photo by author.

them to overcome weaknesses, or discover what they want to do in future, or take a good look at themselves. They express themselves in different ways, but what it boils down to is that the work camp has been a voyage of self-discovery.

In the preliminary training sessions and during the work camp itself we teach the students how various social problems, including the North-South problem and the poverty accompanying urbanization, underlie the construction of housing, stressing the meaning of international aid, that is, the meaning of participation by volunteers from Japan, and the significance of the spirit behind support from the Office of the Chapel and Religious Affairs and the Christian group Habitat for Humanity International.

As a result of a program designed to get students to pay attention to what is happening in the outside world, the participants all discover, to their amazement, what is going on in their inner world. This is a kind of paradox. Each participant, while searching within for a spiritual base, takes part in activities directed outward as he or she seeks to make a social contribution. This kind of voluntarism differs decisively from that based on a worldview that aims to build an independent society after having established a spiritual base.

The traditional value system, which held that special people burning with aspirations and a sense of responsibility should contribute to the public sphere, has crumbled.

In its place a new directionality has been established, in which people on an even footing, utilizing lateral linkages, motivated by modest aspirations, and willing to divide up responsibility among themselves should build a "good society." This much has been settled. It seems to me, though, that people are still in search of the spirit underpinning this ideal.¹⁰

This can be seen in the dominant slogan of today's society, too. There is widespread recognition that traditional institutions have become dysfunctional and that structural reform is necessary. Everyone also acknowledges that economic growth alone cannot make people happy. But Japan's prevailing slogan, "No growth without structural reform," amounts to no more than pouring new wine into old bottles. The new target is clear, but the spiritual base to support it, a spirituality going beyond "soulless specialists," is still drifting around somewhere. □

Notes

1. "Public righteousness" (*kogi* in Japanese), meaning government, also signified the public and the world (society).

2. See Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (MIT Press, 1989), part 3.

3. For a discussion of the principle of the public interest in different cultural spheres, see Glendon Schubert, *The Public Interest* (Greenwood Press, 1960).

4. This tradition has something in common with the European concept of noblesse oblige, which held that the aristocracy, which possessed both education and property, had a social responsibility.

5. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp. 176–88.

6. See Ram A. Cnaan et al., "Public Perception of 'Who Is a Volunteer': An Examination of the Net-Cost Approach from a Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Voluntas*, vol. 11, no. 1 (March 2000), pp. 45–65.

7. For the historical development of voluntary work, see Jacques Meurant, "Voluntary Service in Society Today," *International Review of the Red Cross*, no. 212 (Sept.–Oct. 1979), pp. 227–39.

8. As indicated by the expressions "Japanese spirit, Chinese knowledge" and "Japanese spirit, Western knowledge," in the past the Japanese understood spirit and knowledge to be separable. But no technology and knowledge can emerge or develop in the absence of an indigenous spiritual foundation.

9. In the United States, where it originated, Habitat for Humanity is one of the best known NGOs, second only to the Red Cross in terms of public recognition. Former U.S. president and recipient of the Nobel Prize for peace Jimmy Carter is a keen participant. See Jimmy Carter, *Living Faith* (Random House, 1996).

10. In U.S. society this spiritual basis is sought in Christian church life and citizenship. See Robert N. Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart* (University of California Press, 1985), pp. 196–249; Robert N. Bellah et al., *The Good Society* (Knopf, 1991), pp. 111–44, 179–219. For an international comparison of civil society, see Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture* (Sage, 1989).

A Vision of the Religion of the Future

by Soho Machida

Belief in a God with a specific name and attributes will one day be replaced by a deepening belief in Something Great that is the cosmic will, and the distinction between monotheism and polytheism will become irrelevant.

I do not know how long it will take, but someday humanity will share one religion, surmounting the barriers of ethnicity and culture. World Religion will probably not take the form of a unified doctrine eventually coalescing from the clamorous theological debates raging among existing religions. Instead, I foresee that some historical

event will precipitate a swift internal awakening that will lead to the sudden emergence of a new religion. What cannot be foreseen is when and where this will occur.

In World Religion, the concept of God may already have disappeared. Because of our belief in a specific God we have repeatedly clashed with followers of other religions. Therefore, outgrowing the concept of God is the first brave step toward arriving at World Religion.

Some may doubt that there can be such a thing as religion without devout faith in God, but that is a groundless fear. Belief in a God with a specific name and attributes will be replaced by deepening belief in Something Great that is the cosmic will. Something Great will be perceived as both transcendent and immanent; the distinction between revelational religions like Christianity and introspective religions like Buddhism will be meaningless. Something Great, while grand enough in scale to unify all humanity, will also inhere in every wayside tree and blade of grass. The distinction between monotheism and polytheism will also be irrelevant.

Once people acquire World Religion, they will enjoy the diversity of peoples and cultures, and will be able to empathize with one another in appreciation of the simple yet profound truth that all are protected and given life by Something Great. The road to World Religion will be hard, however. Before reaching its end, humanity may foolishly engage in further world wars or may be afflicted by global natural calamities. In short, with its present mentality humanity cannot hope for World Religion. God will not

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A group of Japanese Buddhist clerics chant a Buddhist hymn during a charity concert in Tokyo held by various religious bodies and artists in Japan marking the first anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

bestow the highest wisdom on creatures who, in thrall to envy, scorn, apathy, and all other evil emotions, cruelly discriminate against others.

Unfortunately, the advent of World Religion will probably require some form of culling of humanity. Only when a proportion of those of our descendants who survive become aware of the folly of fighting and of the importance of loving and supporting one another and attain a marked spiritual maturity will World Religion become a reality.

Before we are Japanese, or Chinese, or American, or Arab, we are human beings. Some human beings will become aware of the miracle that they are barely surviving on the surface that constitutes only a tiny part of the living, breathing Earth and will bow their heads to Something Great, that which has made this possible. Realization of World Religion will be realization of world peace in the true sense.

What, then, ought we living in the first years of the twenty-first century do? Bearing in mind the eventual realization of World Religion, we should explore new forms of belief. We should rack our brains over how to diminish the closed, exclusive aspects of the beliefs we hold. This is because, depending on the effort we put into the endeavor to create World Religion, we can reduce the number of human beings who lose their lives pointlessly.

With World Religion, the ability to perceive the reality of Something Great in a rational, even scientific, spirit will be valued over emotional belief in the existence of a formless

God. With religions that cling to the idea that the God we believe in is the one and only reality, it is hard to have a basis for dialogue.

Here Buddhism has a major role to play. In Buddhism, truth is not a reality but emptiness, or void. An empty being is not hollow, but is the surest form of being. In a world of emptiness, everything is equal and the particular and the universal exist simultaneously. Thus, Buddhists in the twenty-first century must not simply stand by and observe the phenomenal world, hiding behind a passive fatalism. They have a responsibility to speak out actively in the effort to realize World Religion. Not only is doing so advantageous to their own religious organizations; it is the ultimate mission laid on Buddhists ever since the Buddha's enlightenment.

In particular, the task facing Buddhists born in Japan, the first Asian country to modernize and a country that is now one of the world's major economic powers, is considerable. I suggest beginning by calling on Buddhists everywhere to tackle the task of translating Buddhist thought into a modern, intellectual, common language. This means translating the logical structure of ancient Indians into the logical construction of modern people. I believe that Buddhist thought contains profound wisdom that can be of great help when humanity eventually sets about establishing World Religion and that there is deep significance in transmitting this to the world. □

A Reflection: Religion and Science in Global Society

by Kuniko Miyanaga

Religion and science claim to know the ultimate truth, although their ultimate truths are unverifiable. They share the same barrier of human thought, although the ways in which they connect to that ultimate truth are different.

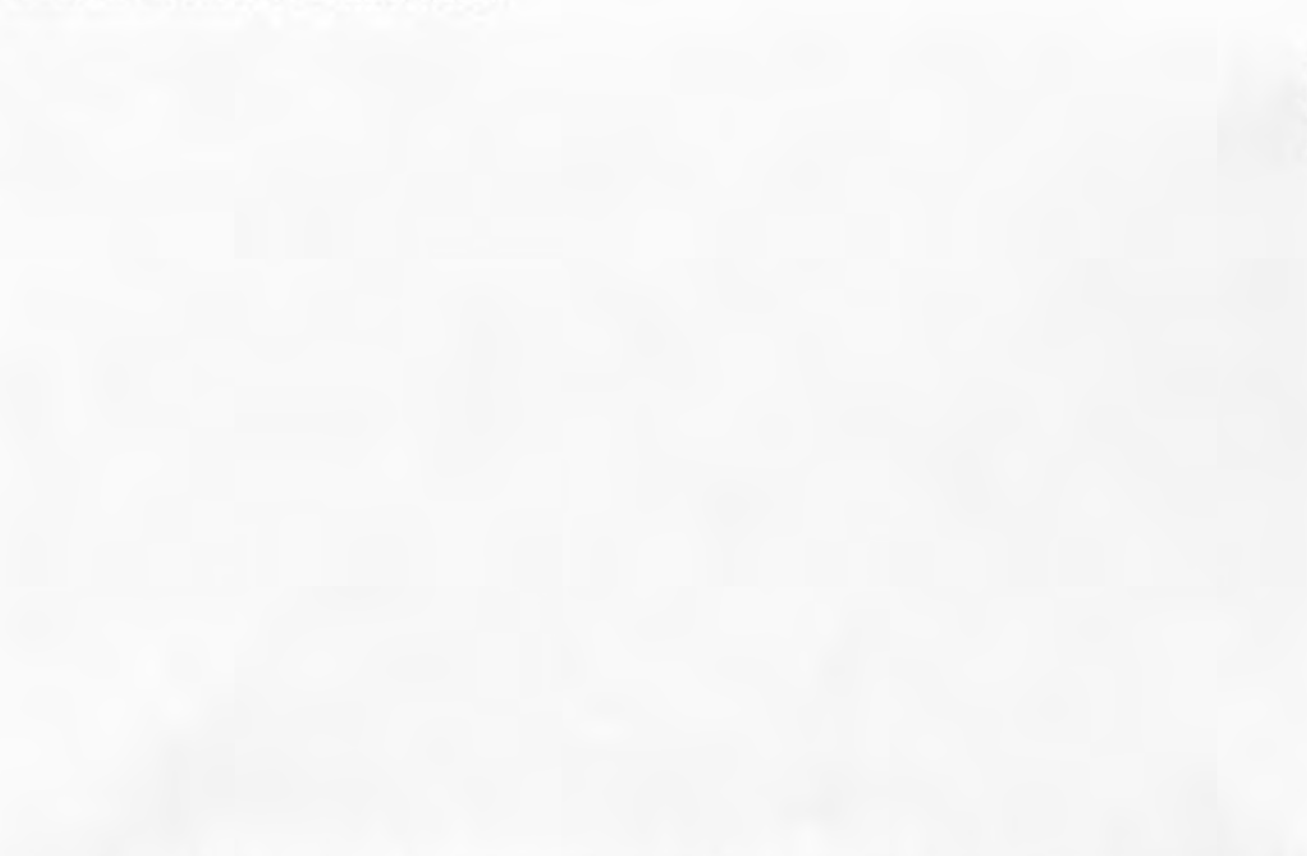
Think globally, act locally.” This business strategy reflects the complexity of today’s world and even illuminates a paradoxical tension between the global and the local. At the macro-level, the world appears to form a somewhat unified economic culture following shared global standards. At the same time, however, micro-level reactions against, or in response to, integration are diverse and even suggestive of backward movements toward local traditions. What follows is that the general scene is *not* necessarily exercised in the particular. Instead, increasing universalism under globalization generates its antithesis in the formation of local groups.

The truth behind “Think globally, act locally” is rarely brought into a global discourse, thus confirming Arthur Schopenhauer’s observation, “Truth is allowed only a brief interval of victory between the two long periods when it is condemned as paradox or belittled as trivia.”¹ This statement points to our limited epistemological capacity, in which we identify truth via identifying paradoxes that initially appear trivial. Once the truth is revealed through a paradox, however, it is no longer paradoxical or trivial. The world evolves through recognizing paradoxes which we often consider negligible as trivia.

Today’s world illustrates Schopenhauer’s paradox. In spite of global integration, local groups, often religious and mystical, emerge as a clear choice for those lost in imposed universalism. These groups are appealing because they favor

traditional values and choose to remain self-contained. There are many local groups, each adhering to traditional values but demanding full membership in global society. Yet, as a society, we cannot escape from the fear that

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Aum Shinrikyo leader Shoko Asahara giving a sermon to his disciples. The cult attacked the Tokyo subway system with deadly sarin gas on March 20, 1995.

groups which look peaceful today may become dangerous tomorrow—much like the Aum Shinrikyo sect, which appeared peaceful but ultimately gassed and killed people in the Tokyo subway. Whether we consider these groups as subgroups within global society or as negligible entities makes a significant difference in the course of our collective thinking and decision making.

The revival of traditional values is a challenge to the modern, scientific perspective commonly held in our democratic society. Let me begin my explanation with an example of evolution in modern society in which the epistemological progress in natural science led to changes in all other domains. In *From Copernicus to Einstein*, Hans Reichenbach suggests that “[Copernicus’s] statement that the earth does not occupy the center of the world means more than an astronomical fact.”² Indeed, it has changed the way we look at the world. Without this turn, modernization could not have occurred.

The industrial revolution followed this paradigm change, beginning with the shift from human energy or horsepower to the steam engine. Although the power of steam itself had been discovered in an ancient time, its systematic application to industry was new.³ This energy shift in industry was followed by another shift—from hand tools

to machinery or from manual work to machine work. These changes likewise entailed a change in familial social relationships, from an apprenticeship framed within the family and the home to factory employment independent of the family and outside the home.

The separation between employer and employee created the modern class system, which changed basic social orientations, including the relationships between generations, between men and women, and, ultimately, in the private domains of body, intimacy, and sexuality. Max Weber, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, and other philosophers sought to explain this new society which was a result of the epistemological developments in natural science. We have become increasingly aware of this process. The epistemological change in social domains follows the evolution of natural science.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Albert Einstein made another turn comparable to that of Copernicus with his theory of the relativity of simultaneity. His famous theorem depends on the assertion that “the simultaneity of distant events cannot be *verified*, it can only be *defined*.” This discovery “requires a decisive change in our views.”⁴ This new style of reasoning helps us to understand our society by demonstrating that some essential social phe-

nomena can be unverifiable yet definable. For example, in the belief of the Sekai Mahikari Bunmei Kyodan (World Divine Light Civilization Association), mystical aspects, such as spirit possession and the validity of exorcism, cannot be verified, but they can be defined.

The ever-expanding universe of science is as mysterious as the spirits found in religion. Both are built on the interpretation of immediate experience. Religion and science claim to know the ultimate truth, although their ultimate truths are unverifiable. They share the same barrier of human thought, although the ways in which they connect to that ultimate truth are different.

Here we find a position for a researcher like myself to study others. I am not a believer but an outsider. Keeping myself in this position, I explore others' personal definition of spirituality instead of its validity within society. Participation in others' paradigms is essential for anthropologists in order to initiate global discourse. In doing so, I try to relate to, and examine, their definition of factuality. Spirituality itself is not verifiable; because it is a human construct, however, the validity of its definition is verifiable.

This approach enables us to discuss both positive and negative results of the emergence of local groups through examining the validity of the definitions they construct. Positively, they often produce a modified traditional social system to meet demands in global society. Their distinctive features may include motivation for achievement, systemic integration through communal identity, and individuation within the system. Coordination between body and mind retained through traditional methods is commonly applied as an alternative to modern medical approaches in the

mainstream. Individuation within the system ensures psychological security, which is often difficult to obtain in wider society. Traditional values and practices assume new functions in a global context. This system should be entitled "New Tradition."

Depending on the context, these local groups can have a negative effect on wider society. Individuation, a momentum for creativity and social change, is trapped and restricted in the rigid, unchangeable system that is imposed on individual members. The system does not allow criticism or spontaneous changes of itself. Freedom is strictly limited to individually optimizing one's given conditions through choosing a variety of ingredients offered within the system. A democratic process of changing a system of individual members is not practiced, thus undermining the process of globalization.

Change has to come from outside. Wider society should help local groups to relate their internal individuation to the practice of democratic freedom. Then their traditions can be successfully combined with global discourse. Handling these local groups is a test of global society's democratic ability. □

Notes

1. Hans Reichenbach, *From Copernicus to Einstein* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970 [1942]), pp. 122–23.
2. Reichenbach, *From Copernicus*, p. 13.
3. William Cecil Dampier, *A History of Science: And Its Relations with Philosophy and Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961).
4. Reichenbach, *From Copernicus*, p. 60.

A Dialogue Traversing Different Paths to Truth

Albert Einstein together with Rabindranath Tagore, noted Indian poet and philosopher, in New York on December 15, 1930.

Photo: AP/WWP

War, Environmental Destruction, and Religion:

The Spiritual World of Hayao Miyazaki's *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*

by Martin Repp

For quite some time, various forms of popular culture, such as pop songs, *manga* (comics), and *anime* (animated films), have been treated as inferior forms of cultural expression compared with those of high culture. However, the great popularity of *manga* and *anime* has caused established religions to use them as a means to

spread their message, and many have used them to retell the story of their founders, their history, and their teaching. Yet these religious *manga* and *anime* seem to lack the originality, creative sense, and pervasive power of the “secular” genres. This may be one symptom of the deplorable fact that today many established religions, such as Buddhism and Christianity, lack the creativity in cultural expression they once possessed. It was through music, literature, theatrical performance, and visual art that in earlier times they transmitted their message convincingly to people.

Thus, popular culture today exposes rather a deep gap between young people and established society, between the religiosity of youth and orthodox religions. The generation gap is also a communication gap. Such a discrepancy requires proper research. It is only recently that scholars have begun to take up popular culture as a subject in its own right. Even though representatives of traditional scholarship consider this kind of research to be inferior, the enormous popularity and success of *manga* and *anime* in Japan as well as internationally calls for more attention. Moreover, distinguished artists, such as Osamu Tezuka and Hayao Miyazaki, have raised the quality of *manga* and *anime* to the level of “elite pop culture” which contains challenging religio-philosophical thoughts.

The Story

In this essay I am going to treat a representative *manga* which presents not only basic problems of our modern world, including those of religion, but also certain views of spirituality. Hayao Miyazaki's *manga Nausicaä of the Valley*

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of the *Wind* serves the purpose. Miyazaki is an artist who is also concerned with contemporary spirituality. *Nausicaä* is set in a future postindustrial world which is the result of the misuse of science and technology. As we read at the beginning: "In a few short centuries, industrial civilization had spread from the Western fringes of Eurasia to sprawl across the face of the planet. Plundering the soil of its riches, fouling the air, and remolding life forms at will, this gargantuan industrial society had already peaked a thousand years after its foundation: Ahead lay abrupt and violent decline. . . . The complex and sophisticated technological superstructure was lost; almost all the surface of the earth was transformed into a sterile wasteland. Industrial civilization was never rebuilt as mankind lived on through the long twilight years."*

The scenario develops along two lines. One conflict consists of wars between different empires, and the other of the human struggle for survival against a nature which has become hostile due to manipulation by biological engineering. Both conflicts condition and perpetuate each other, since the pollution continuously diminishes the space for human life. This triggers military campaigns against other peoples in order to obtain new space to live, which again results in the increase of environmental disasters which further reduce possibilities for human and other forms of life on earth.

The geographical setting for the wars is as follows. The Kingdom of Torumekia lies in the east, whereas at its western border are the weak countries of the Periphery, including Torumekia's vassal, the Valley of the Wind. Farther to the west is the autonomous state of Pejitei. South of the Valley and Pejitei stretches the Sea of Corruption, threatening both countries by releasing a poisonous miasma. At the southern edge of the Sea of Corruption the Dorok Principalities are facing the same threat. Between Dorok and Torumekia is the Inland Sea.

The scenario develops as follows. In search of the "control unit" of a huge living war machine, Princess Kushana's Torumekian army destroys the state of Pejitei and kills most of its inhabitants. However, Kushana does not find the device, which would have provided her with ultimate military power and thus enable her to remove her father and assume the throne. Meanwhile, her brothers attack the Dorok empire, which is ruled by an emperor and the Council of Monks. Its capital is the Holy City of Shuwa, which is built around the hidden Crypt. The Crypt, controlled by the Council of Monks, keeps not only the secrets of advanced military technology, such as the God Warrior and the Heedra, but also those of achieving immortality. In other words, the Torumekian emperor pursues supreme military power and hegemony. Moreover, he wants to

attain immortality in a world which is threatened by death from all sides. The military actions are motivated on the one hand by greed for power and on the other hand by fear of extinction caused by the polluted environment.

In contrast to such a world, the Valley of the Wind is a small, peaceful place, even though it is equally endangered by the poison of the Sea of Corruption. It is here that the heroine of the story emerges—Nausicaä, the young daughter of the chieftain and the only surviving child out of eleven. Her mother and siblings, like many other members of the tribe, have died from the poisonous miasma of the Sea of Corruption. However, while Torumekia reacts to this threat by military action, the people of the Valley try to coexist peacefully with the hostile sea and neighbors. Moreover, the heroine secretly conducts experiments in which she discovers that the Sea of Corruption is not as threatening as previously thought. If its plants are given pure water, they do not produce poison anymore. Further, it becomes clear that the Climax Forest in the center of the Sea of Corruption turns poison into pure crystals, which again change into sand. In other words, this forest was created to cleanse the polluted world. Thus, apart from greed for power and fear of death, it is the mistaken human perception of the environment as being dangerous that has triggered the environmental and human catastrophes.

Nausicaä's new insight results from her attitude toward others, and this distinguishes her from most of the other characters: It is the purity of her heart and her compassionate love for all kinds of living beings. For example, she is not afraid of the giant insects, the Ohmu, which leave the forest and spread the poisonous miasma in the inhabited world when provoked by human attacks. Nausicaä treats them gently and compassionately and thereby disarms them. Her teacher, Master Yupa, the finest swordsman in the Periphery, has fostered this attitude in her. She knows how to "read the soul of the wind" and rides her glider, Mehwe, masterfully. When she proves that she has courage and skill in combat with enemies, Master Yupa realizes that she has grown up. Thus, when her father dies, she is qualified to become chieftain of the Valley of the Wind—even though he had wished her to be male.

As vassals of the Torumekian empire, the soldiers of the Valley are drawn into the conflict with the Doroks. However, with the support of Master Yupa and other loyal soldiers Nausicaä fights for peace and the prevention of an apocalypse caused by man and distorted nature. Her mission is precisely on the front line between these enemies. Through her compassionate love she changes foes into friends: Kushana slowly becomes a supporter of Nausicaä's cause, and the last survivor of Pejitei, Prince Asbel, refrains from taking revenge against the Torumekian princess. Nausicaä

even changes the God Warrior, the “last survivor of the giants who turned the world to ashes in the Seven Days of Fire,” into the “arbitrator who ends all war.” He adopts the girl as his “mother,” and she gives him a name, Ohma, meaning “innocence.” In her fight for peace she thus turns strangers and enemies into friends.

The story reaches its climax in the battle at the Holy City of Shuwa. The Torumekian emperor has defeated the Dorok army and killed its emperor. He tries to enter the Crypt in order to obtain supreme power and immortality. Meanwhile, in her attempt to prevent the environmental catastrophe triggered by the human fighting, Nausicaä observes that the floods of insects, the extended arm of the Sea of Corruption, neutralize themselves when converging from different directions to one place. She then hurries to Shuwa, only to find that the God Warrior Ohma has destroyed the Crypt. Before this source of human hubris is sealed forever, she detects the secret of the Master of the Crypt: he is the “shadow of death” who has continuously produced destructive clones and other evil designs.

The Religious Message

What is the religious aspect of *Nausicaä*? There are many elements, but here only a few can be addressed. Underlying the story is the notion that bad political rule goes hand in hand with corrupt forms of religion. One example is the emperor of Dorok, who started out as a “genuinely compassionate philosopher-king” but, being disappointed by the “stupidity of the peasants,” became corrupted by power and fell prey to the Master of the Crypt. Also, the Council of Monks can maintain control over the empire only by suppressing the “old religion,” which survives secretly. The people possess a “sutra” which teaches the salvation of the world in the midst of a pending global disaster, thereby providing hope. Further, the appearance of the savior is not accidental but the fulfillment of a “prophecy.” Hence, Nausicaä becomes the “messiah” saving the world by disclosing that the poisonous Sea of Corruption is essentially a purification organism, that the terrible God Warrior can be tamed by love, and that the real danger for this world is the secretive Master of the Crypt, the “shadow of death.” Her compassionate love is directed toward good and bad beings equally, and the latter are led to change their path for the better.

The religious core, in my opinion, is the purity of Nausicaä’s heart. In contrast to the military power of emperors (and control by official religion), the heroine seems a physically small and weak girl. However, her determination to save the globe is unshakable, and her pure heart, her sincerity, is not compromised by fear of death or desire for power. The founders of major religions teach such purity

People waiting to see Princess Mononoke, one of Hayao Miyazaki’s animated films, at a movie theater in Tokyo in 1997. Miyazaki’s animations, which depict the experiences of children in the spiritual realms and the interaction between human beings and nature, captured the hearts of Japanese and were mega-hits at the box office.

of heart, or utmost sincerity, and they warn of temptation by secular and religious power. However, in the course of their development, religions become an established part of society, start to compromise, and thus become corrupt. It is here that reforms occur. Religious reformers are always motivated by their sincerity to address the wide gap between ideal and reality.

In Japanese *manga* and *anime* we find many messianic figures like Nausicaä who try to save the world from disaster by their sincerity. Particularly in *shonen manga* (youth *manga*), the hero or heroine of the story is often a young person of sincere heart. The evil characters are adults who have compromised with destructive authorities. Thus, the spirituality expressed in such works can be perceived as a call by the younger generation for established religions to reform themselves and, instead of functioning as tools (or even inspiration) for violence, oppression, and destruction, choose a peaceful way of nonviolence and expose fraudulent governments. The war in Iraq is one such example. □

Note

* Hayao Miyazaki, *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind*, 4 vols., trans. David Lewis, Toren Smith, and Mat Thorn (San Francisco: Viz Communications, 1995–97), vol. 1, p. 3. All subsequent quotations are from this work.

Learning throughout Life

by Nichiko Niwano

Although birth, aging, sickness, and death are the human lot, the younger generation tends to have a strong aversion to thoughts of aging. Meanwhile, more and more mature people are perplexed about how to live after retirement. What can we do to age in a fulfilling way?

Everyone ages, but it is human nature to want to remain young and healthy as long as possible. We feel a tinge of anxiety and melancholy at the prospect of aging. What is the meaning of aging? What can we do to continue to find life worth living even as we grow older?

Buddhism teaches that birth, old age, sickness, and death are the human lot. No one can escape this progression. Buddhism regards birth, old age, sickness, and death as the “four sufferings.” The word suffering has dark and pessimistic overtones, but the Buddha tells us to gaze unflinchingly at suffering. To confront suffering directly rather than to try to evade or hide from it is the “truth of suffering” that clarifies its nature, and is the first step toward release from suffering.

The advent of a rapidly aging society has focused much attention on public anxiety over what will become of government pensions and the availability of medical and nursing care. As the young population shrinks, the number of working-age people is dwindling, but the number of elderly people keeps increasing. Given this reality, anxiety and doubts surrounding aging are simmering. What is the true nature of this suffering? To answer that question, we must first take a good look at aging.

The Japanese word for old age, *ro*, has three connotations. The first is chronological age. The second has to do with being experienced. The third involves thinking, that is, deep and perfect or complete thought. Thus aging is not simply adding on years; it must also be the process of striving to accumulate experience, to deepen one’s thinking, and to approach the ideal completion of one’s life.

How should we age? The “old-age plan” is one of the “five plans” propounded by the twelfth-century Chinese philosopher Chu Hsin-chung (1097–1167). The five plans are the “life plan,” or how to live; the “personal plan,” or how to

establish oneself in society through one’s occupation and a firm sense of values; the “home plan,” or how to run the home, including not just its economy but also relations between husband and wife and between parents and children; the “old-age plan,” or how to grow old making the most of mature values; and the “death plan,” or how to face death. These five plans encompass every part of our lives. It is important to formulate these plans ourselves and live according to them. Nations and organizations draw up long-term and short-term plans. If we draw up and follow plans for our own lives, we can approach the perfection or completion of our individual existence.

As we age, we experience a weakening of physical strength and of memory. No matter how much we wish to remain forever young, we do so in vain, having been given life in

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this impermanent world. It is important that we look squarely at the matter of aging and determine how best to deal with it.

One part of the painting *Rojin rokkasen* (The Six Aged Poetic Geniuses), attributed to the Zen painter and calligrapher Sengai Gibon (1750–1837), bears an inscription that reads roughly as follows: “The elderly have a tendency to be garrulous, irritable, grumbling meddlers. Others dislike those who say the same things over and over to their children and boast of their superiority.” Thus Sengai humorously describes old people, no doubt including himself. Generally speaking, as people age they do tend to repeat themselves, become irritable, and grumble about things. This inscription can be taken as a salutary warning to all of us.

The old-age plan is also the death plan. People often talk about winners and losers. Those who are materially successful and amass a lot of money are considered winners, while those who fall behind in life’s competition are regarded as losers. This way of looking at people reflects a sense of relative values, however. We do not want to lead the kind of life in which we are affected by society’s facile notion of winners and losers. The “wisdom of death” breaks through and eliminates this sense of relative values. The wisdom of death means seeing life in terms of the truth that everyone is bound to die. If we look squarely at the truth that the process of aging begins at the moment of birth and that being human means growing older, we will realize how foolish it is to live in contention with others and bring sadness to others, and that will determine how we live. The old-age plan and the death plan mean learning how we should lead the life we have received and what our life values should be.

Continuing to Learn as We Age

Japanese society is now aging faster than any other. We have progressed from a time when fifty years was considered a reasonable span of life to one in which most of us can expect to live eighty years or more. It is important that we firmly establish our own plans for our old age. Specifically, what goals should we set for growing older, and what should be our aim for day-to-day life?

One goal, it seems to me, should be to emulate the founder. I think the calm expression and loving words of the founder, his always smiling face, represent one life goal for us. As shown by the old saying “It is never too late to learn,” around the time of his sixtieth birthday the founder began studying painting and putting special effort into activities connected with international interreligious cooperation. It is said that the Buddha’s enlightenment also teaches that

human beings should learn throughout their lives. This is lifelong learning in the true sense.

What do we learn as we age? For us Buddhists, it means wishing to lead our lives following the Dharma. In other words, to always seek the Buddha Way. Wishing to lead life following the Dharma does not mean that understanding the law of transience is enough in and of itself; things are not that simple. The law of transience means that we and the situations and circumstances surrounding us are constantly changing. We must therefore always keep learning how to live in this world of impermanence. That means, as long as the life we are given continues, to keep learning is to live according to the law of transience.

The late Motoyuki Naganuma, special advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai, often used to say, “Now is the best now.” When one is 60 years old, 60 is the best now; when one is 70 years old, 70 is the best now. If one lives according to the law of transience, one realizes that every “now” is unique; one is truly living in the here and now.

One of the ancient sutras says, in effect, “Do not chase after the past. Do not place your expectations in the future. The past is past, and the future has not yet arrived.” For example, even if you wish that you could return to your thirties, when you had plenty of physical and mental vigor and could do your best work, that time is past and should not and cannot be retrieved. For us, living amid impermanence as we do, today is the best day; it is a day to be thankful for, an auspicious day. In short, every day is a good day.

As we grow older, we all experience a reduction in physical strength. On the other hand, we gain greater wisdom and the ability to make better judgments than was possible in our youth. Having accumulated broad life experience, we become more proficient in many things, our thinking deepens, and our selfish desires diminish. Thus we tend not to be as emotional as we were when younger and can judge things more fairly. As long as we seek the Buddha Way and have the wish to learn, that is how we develop.

The Dhammapada says, “This unlearned person / Grows up like an ox. / His bulk increases, / His wisdom increases not.” These stern words indicate that when one stops learning, one’s mind grows weak and flabby and one does not cultivate wisdom. Learning more and more as one grows older makes one savor life all the more. The older one becomes, the more one learns. Through learning one gains joy in the Dharma and thus peace of mind. If one stops learning, both disappear.

Aging is a sign that we have been given life. Because we are given life, we are privileged to age. I hope that we will be grateful for recognizing this truth and, without either making haste or delaying, will settle into a pattern of humbly leading our lives. □

The Jewel in the Topknot

by Gene Reeves

The Buddha has given many gifts and treasures, many sutras, and many practices, but there is one that stands above all the others—the Lotus Sutra.

The parable of the jewel in the topknot is found in chapter 14 of the Lotus Sutra. In Japanese this chapter is called *Anraku Gyo*. It is one of the more troublesome Lotus Sutra chapter headings to translate into English. The Chinese character for *gyo* is used in many different ways, but in this Buddhist context it means to conduct oneself, practice, or behave in some way. Though “conduct” would also work fine, I translate it as “practice.” The problem comes with *anraku*, which basically means

comfort. So you can find this chapter title translated as “Comfortable Conduct,” or “Ease in Practice,” or “Peaceful Practices.” The trouble is that while “comfortable conduct” is a perfectly good translation for the title by itself, none of these translations even approaches the meaning of the content of the chapter. This chapter is not about being comfortable.

I have sometimes used “Carefree Practices” to translate this title, but the chapter is not really about being carefree. The chapter is mainly about practices that will keep bodhisattvas out of trouble. Perhaps they could be called “safe” practices. They are practices that make it possible to be free from worry. For now, I have translated the chapter title as “Trouble-free Practice,” but perhaps it should be called “Practice That Will Keep You Out of Trouble,” or more simply as “Staying Out of Trouble.” Still, we should understand that what is involved is not just a matter of avoiding trouble; it is, as we can learn from the parable of the jewel in the topknot, much more a matter of seeking the good or positive in the midst of unavoidable difficulty.

Four Kinds of Bodhisattva Practice

At the beginning of the chapter, Manjushri refers to the bodhisattvas in the previous chapter who have promised that no matter how difficult it may turn out to be, no matter how much hostility they have to face, they will defend, embrace, read, recite, and teach the Dharma in the evil ages following the death of the Buddha. Now he asks the Buddha how these bodhisattvas should go about it. It is important, I think, to recognize that a terribly difficult age is the setting for this chapter.

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Detail from the Lotus Sutra Mandala, scroll 3, owned by the temple Honkoji in Shizuoka Prefecture, depicting the parable of the jewel in the topknot. Painted in 1335. Important Cultural Property.

The Buddha responds to Manjushri by outlining four kinds of practice and association that such bodhisattvas should follow. One has to do primarily with outward behavior, one with speech, one with mental attitudes, and one with intentions. The description of the first is far longer than those of the other three.

First, a bodhisattva should behave well, avoid temptations, and preach the Dharma. Behaving well includes being patient, mild, and unattached to anything, including unattachment. Avoidance of temptations includes not getting too close to or receiving special gifts from kings, princes, government officials and the like, participants in dangerous sports, heretics, entertainers, people who raise animals or fish, those who seek to become shravakas, and so on. Also male bodhisattvas should have no desire for women, being especially careful around them, and should never desire

children or young disciples. They should, of course, teach the Dharma to all, including those with whom they should not be closely associated.

The first thing such a bodhisattva should seek is a quiet place for meditation. One should also disregard differences, such as, for example, those between what is viewed as superior and inferior Buddhist ways, or between what is real and what is unreal, or between men and women. And, finally, a bodhisattva should recognize the truth of the central Buddhist philosophical idea of the insubstantiality and impermanence of all things—the truth of the interdependent origination or coming to be of all things.

Second, when teaching or preaching, bodhisattvas should teach in a “peaceful, comforting way,” never showing contempt toward other teachers of the Dharma, never finding fault with them by pointing out their weak points, and never

in any way showing hostility toward them. Rather, bodhisattvas should feel compassion toward them and enjoy inner peace of mind in order to bring peace of mind to others. They should not seek expensive gifts from those they teach, but rather seek only two things: their own awakening and the awakening of others. Free from such things as jealousy, anger, and illusions, such bodhisattvas need not have any sorrows or fears. They will never be threatened or driven out of monasteries. They will be free of worry, at least of this kind of worry.

True bodhisattvas, thirdly, should not despise or speak ill of those who follow other ways and should avoid fruitless quarrels with them. They should never tease or make fun of those who seek to follow any of the three ways. They should look upon all the buddhas as their loving fathers and upon all bodhisattvas as their teachers. With great compassion, patience, and gentleness, they should teach the Dharma impartially to all, never causing others to have doubts or worries. As a result they will have many good friends, and many followers who come to receive the Dharma from them.

Fourth, true bodhisattvas should feel great compassion and kindness toward monks and lay people who have not taken the bodhisattva way, and vow to lead them to the Way, that is, lead them to embody the Buddha in their own lives. Such a teacher of the Dharma will not only have many listeners among all kinds of human beings, even heavenly beings will come to hear and protect such a teacher.

At this point in the chapter, ostensibly to praise the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha tells the parable of the jewel in the topknot.

The Parable

A powerful, holy, wheel-rolling king sought the surrender of many lesser kings, and when they did not yield he went to war, winning many battles. In combat, many of his soldiers distinguished themselves, and so he presented them with all sorts of rewards—houses, fields, cities, gold, jewels, garments, elephants, servants—all sorts of good and valuable things. But there was one thing he held back and did not give—an extraordinarily precious and unique jewel that he kept in the topknot of his hair. Yet this great king, when he finally saw a soldier of great merit, gave to him the precious jewel from his topknot.

The Buddha is like that king, he tells Manjushri. He became king of this world and had to go to war with Mara,* the evil one, and his followers with his own army of followers led by sages and saints. To them he has given many gifts—many different sutras, various kinds of meditation practice, teachings such as nirvana, and so on. But he did not, until now, give the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of

the Wonderful Dharma. Now, like the king, the Buddha gives the Lotus Sutra for the benefit of all living beings. He does this because he sees that there are many people of great merit. Thus the sutra is the most excellent and profound of teachings, given last as the core of all the buddhas' teachings.

Jewels

In this story, we are told, the jewel kept in the king's topknot represents the Lotus Sutra. Here the symbolic meaning of "jewel" is quite different from that in the story in chapter 8 of the "hidden jewel," where the jewel symbolizes the ability that lies dormant within all living beings to become awakened. The main point here, once more, is to describe symbolically the relationship between earlier forms of Buddhism and the Mahayana, or Great Vehicle, and to explain why the Lotus Sutra was not taught earlier. Here, the Lotus Sutra is seen as the crowning achievement of the Buddha and Buddhism. The Buddha has given many gifts and treasures, many sutras, many practices, and so on, but there is one that stands above all the others—the Lotus Sutra.

It is important to see here, however, that the earlier or lesser rewards really are rewards. There is no suggestion that the earlier teachings of the shravaka way are wrong or bad or even misleading. Just as in the very first parable in the Lotus Sutra, the parable of the burning house, it is by pursuing the three small vehicles that the children are led to the great vehicle; here too there is no hint of going from bad to good, or from wrong to right, or from false to true. It is true that the Lotus Sutra proclaims itself to be better in some sense than other sutras, but this is a relative difference. The holy wheel-rolling king rewarded his soldiers with all sorts of good and valuable things before deciding that one was worthy of the jewel in his topknot.

The final verse portion of the chapter says,

For all these living beings
He has taught various things,
And as a great skillful means
Has taught these sutras.

And when he knows that the living
Have gained strength through them,
At last, for their sake,
He teaches this Dharma Flower.

In other words, it is because other sutras have been taught and people have gained strength from them that the Buddha is at last able to teach the Lotus Sutra. Other sutras and teachings prepare and open the way for the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

This means, of course, that while followers of the Lotus Sutra may think it is the greatest of sutras, they should not disparage other sutras or other teachings, just as is taught in the four trouble-free practices in the early part of the chapter.

Supremacy of the Lotus Sutra

In what way is the Lotus Sutra superior to or better than other sutras? In this story, this is not explicit, but if we look below the surface, we may find an answer to this question.

The jewel in the topknot is very valuable, but we are not told in what way it is more valuable than other valuable things. The text says that the Lotus Sutra is “supreme,” the “greatest,” the “most profound,” the “highest.” But there are only a couple of hints or suggestions as to *how* it is supreme among sutras. One is that the Lotus Sutra, like the jewel in the topknot, is withheld to the last. But, surely, merely being last is not necessarily a great virtue and would not automatically make this sutra any better than any other. The second thing we are told is that the Lotus Sutra “can lead all the living to comprehensive wisdom.” Thus, we may think, the reason that being last is important in this case is because being last makes it possible for the Lotus Sutra to take account of what has come before and be more inclusive than earlier sutras. While much use is made here of what are basically spatial metaphors, such as highest, or most profound, the real superiority of this sutra lies in its comprehensiveness. And this comprehensiveness is not so much a matter of repeating doctrine and ideas found in earlier sutras as it is a matter of having a positive regard both for the earlier sutras and for those who teach or follow them.

This is why three of the four practices urged on bodhisattvas at the beginning of the chapter involve having a generous, respectful, positive, helpful attitude toward others. Rather than reject other teachings and sutras, the Lotus Sutra teaches that all sutras should be regarded as potentially leading to the larger, more comprehensive, more inclusive, wisdom of the Lotus Sutra itself.

It is quite interesting, I think, that here the reason for finally teaching the Lotus Sutra is not because other sutras have not worked well, but that because of them there are many people of great merit. The sutra teaches that there have been many kinds of Buddhist teachings and sutras in the past. Now the supreme Lotus Sutra is to be preached. Why now?

The Reward of Rewarding Others

This same question has to be faced by any religion that claims to have a special revelation, even just a special beginning. Why now? Usually, the answer is some kind of great

evil, terrible pollution, or awful sin, something extremely negative that makes some kind of special intervention necessary. In Christianity, God sends his only beloved son to save sinners, people who basically do not deserve to be saved. But not in the Lotus Sutra. Here it is because of the goodness, that is, the merit of many of his followers, that the king at last gives the great jewel to them.

The king understands his responsibility to be one of rewarding people for, and according to, the merit of the good they have done. That is, he is looking for the good in people and for the good things they have done. What the Lotus Sutra teaches is that we too should be about the business of seeking out the good in other people and rewarding it where possible. It is very easy to be critical of others, to find fault with them, especially perhaps, when it comes to those to whom we are the closest, such as those in our families and those with whom we work every day. For those who would be followers of the Lotus Sutra, while it is important to understand the teaching of buddha-nature, understanding or accepting the idea of universal buddha-nature is nowhere near as important as actually putting that idea into everyday practice by seeing and respecting the buddha-nature in those around us.

Such a practice is likely to lead to a happier and more rewarding life for all involved. Thus, it is not accidental that this parable, which might at first seem unrelated to the first part of the chapter, is actually quite closely related to the whole idea of practice that leads to a rewarding life. The theme of the parable is not just the withholding of the jewel, but the rewarding of all kinds of treasures, including, and especially, the greatest treasure one has to give. This is a practice that leads to a trouble-free life, that is, to a life that is relatively free of worries in part because one has many friends and followers and no enemies.

In the prose section, it is said that the radiance of the wisdom of those who follow the Lotus Sutra will shine like the sun. The point is that one can see nothing in darkness. All there is, is a lack of light. If we provide light, even a very little light, darkness will disappear. That is why the radiance of the wisdom of one who follows the sutra is like the radiance of the sun—it lights up the world, bringing happiness both to others and to oneself.

The *Chakravartin* King

While this story is about a king and his army, compared with many other religious texts, the Lotus Sutra is remarkably free of military imagery. Apart from this story, the only armies mentioned in the Lotus Sutra are the armies of Mara, a sort of an Indian version of the devil or Satan. Terms such as “soldier,” “general” (except for the “generals

of heaven”), “war,” “military,” “battle,” and so on simply are not used in the Lotus Sutra.

Even here, it is relevant to note that the powerful, holy, wheel-rolling king who is at the center of the parable is not primarily a warrior. He is a holy *chakravartin-rajā*, an ideal ruler or king in Indian mythology, a king who rules not by force but by righteousness and doing good. *Chakra* is the Indian word for wheel and a *chakravartin* is a wheel turner, a title that could be given to any powerful ruler, the idea being that as the wheels of his chariot roll along all obstacles in the ruler’s path are destroyed. In Buddhism, however, the wheel becomes the Dharma wheel, and the *chakravartin* could become a symbol of one whose teachings are so powerful that they overcome all obstacles and cannot be stopped.

Today, when so many seem to think that the only way to safety and happiness for humanity is through war, and through constantly looking for evil in order to punish it, it is good to know that the Lotus Sutra teaches that the way to peace is through seeking out and rewarding the good in others. For many, it is precisely this positive thrust of the Lotus Sutra—its affirmation of the opportunities offered to us within this life, where suffering is pervasive—that makes it the supreme sutra. In this story, this parable of the jewel in the topknot, we can see both the idea that the Lotus Sutra is supreme and the idea that it is supreme precisely because it directs us to seek out and reward the good that we can find everywhere.

After all, it is not only holy wheel-rolling kings who have jewels to give. Anyone, by seeking to reward others, can find their own life greatly enriched. Even if such a practice does not always lead to comfort, and you can be sure that there will be times when it will not, it can lead to a kind of equanimity that might be called “trouble-free.”

The chapter closes with the idea that those who read the sutra will be rewarded in many ways and will have marvelous dreams assuring them of ultimately becoming buddhas. That is, receiving the sutra not only changes our outer lives by making us more positive and happy, it even helps to make our dreams more pleasant. □

Note

* Mara, variously called the evil one, the god of death, and the god of temptation, is an individual in early Buddhist texts, which contain many stories of his attempts to frustrate the Buddha both before and after his awakening. In stories of the Buddha’s encounter with Mara just before his awakening, Mara comes to him on an elephant and disguised as a *chakravartin-rajā*. Later, this Mara became many devils, and the idea that there are four Mara kings emerged.

Bodhisattva Universal Virtue (Samantabhadra) mounted on a sacred six-tusked elephant, surrounded by Hariti and several rakshasa women in traditional costumes of the Japanese court. All are described in the Lotus Sutra as guardians of those who accept and uphold the sutra. They are depicted in this Kamakura-period painting as mounted on a cloud and appearing before practitioners to help and protect them. Color on silk. Hanging scroll. 112 x 55 cm. Important Cultural Property.

WCRP Europe Meeting in Italy Focuses on the Role of the Media

The European chapter of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) held an interreligious assembly entitled "Religions and the Media in Europe" September 9–12. Over 500 people attended the three-day meeting held in Genoa, Italy, that was sponsored by the local WCRP section. Speakers from throughout Europe represented the multireligious dialogue under way among those of the Baha'i, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, and Zoroastrian faiths. It was the second WCRP meeting aimed at discussing the role that the media play both in fostering peace and in distorting the news. Although WCRP Europe was long interested in this subject, as the very first meeting on the media dates back 15 years, this conference was the ideal sequel to the WCRP Media Conference held in Rome in February 2003. An interreligious conference held in Graz, Austria, in the summer of 2003, organized with the cooperation of WCRP Europe, also had a special section devoted to the media and how they affect dialogue and peace in the world.

"We are here representing various religious communities, and as such we often believe that we are something special, and should therefore be treated accordingly, but we forget that the media have no obligation toward us," said Jehangir Sarosh, Zoroastrian moderator of WCRP Europe. When the news of an event is not reported correctly, he continued, "the media may end up fomenting situations of conflict." "We are all aware that words are more powerful than guns and a sentence in a newspaper can produce

more hatred and violence than anything else can."

The message by Chiara Lubich, president of the lay Catholic Focolare Movement, and an honorary president of the WCRP, emphasized that as Europe occupies a privileged position in terms of interreligious dialogue, because of the multireligious and multiethnic roots of its inhabitants, "the media have the duty of reporting the news—concerning interreligious dialogue—with no hidden purposes that might cast a shadow on the dialogue under way." Therefore, an "attentive relay of information is necessary," according to Ms. Lubich, who stressed that it is also important that the person reporting the event "overcome all forms of ideological prejudice."

Lisa Billig, Jewish journalist and vice-moderator of WCRP Europe, and Yasemin Taskin, Muslim journalist, spoke together about the media and religions in Europe. Ms. Billig emphasized a series of mistakes that the media risk making when talking of different faiths and spoke about visual and verbal "close-ups" that often falsify the truth. She gave the example of photographs published in the press presenting clashes in the Middle East where only a part of the event was given and therefore the reader was unable to get the whole picture. "This happens visually in photographs, and it also happens verbally in the description of the event, leading to a distortion of the truth." Other elements leading to media distortion, according to Ms. Billig, are half-truths on the event being reported, and the yearning for sensationalism that frequently characterizes the policy of large-circu-

lation newspapers and magazines. Mr. Taskin underlined that in Italy, especially, there is a very superficial approach in the media's presentation of news related to Islam.

Father Jacques Dupuis, Jesuit priest and theologian, emphasized the importance of finding a common denominator among religions, the risk being the accentuation of the fear that encourages violence and war. In this context, he said, the media play a major role: they can either foment suicide-bombers and acts of injustice, or, on the contrary, sow the seeds of peace. On the basis of the documents issued from the Second Vatican Council and the statements of Pope John Paul II, Father Dupuis reaffirmed the Catholic belief that God is present and operates in every religious tradition. This is why Christianity today recognizes the value of all religions that act under the Spirit of God.

Karl A. Kumpfmüller, from the Peace and Development office of Graz, in his address on Intercultural Information said that according to a survey conducted after the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the U.S., twenty percent of Austrian adolescents are now afraid of Islam, and forty percent claim to be afraid of further attacks by "Islamic groups." He said that people in Europe are very much afraid of Islam, not because as a religion it presents elements of fear, but rather because the media manipulate information in such a way as to create "a clash of civilizations, a conflict between the East and the West." This is exactly the opposite of "intercultural information" and it is based on prejudice and xenophobia. In order to avert this process of the media influencing the population, "it is important to focus on education of adults and children alike," he said. "Intercultural information is the prerequisite for integration, as it is seen as a mutual process of giving and receiving." Kumpfmüller

Panelists at the WCRP Europe interreligious assembly entitled "Religions and the Media in Europe," held September 9–12.

pointed out that this is not always a balanced relationship, as there is "a clear difference between the information on the majority culture and that on the minority culture," the news on the minority culture often being incomplete or biased. A lack of information on the minority culture often leads to mistrust and eventually to acts of racism—"the fact that in Europe there is an increasing number of acts of violence against foreigners is a reason for concern," he added. Inter-cultural information can be achieved only if there is empathy with the other partner in the dialogue, Kumpfmüller said, for this leads to respect for the other and weakens the feeling of being culturally superior. "Only then is it possible to entertain a relationship with others without prejudice and with the same rights in a context of cultural reciprocity," he said. "Respect for the culture of the other and seeing that our culture has an ongoing relation with other peoples' cultures are vital to the integration of the minority and majority cultures that is taking place in Europe."

On this subject, Jehangir Sarosh recalled that European countries are facing a problem of social, political, and cultural integration suffered by ethnic minorities. When a church is erected, we all celebrate the event, he

said; "the same should happen when a synagogue or a mosque or a temple of some minority religious tradition is erected." People are not united by the fact that they live in the same city, he said, but because they share the same values and principles. "This is why dialogue between faiths and cultures is so important, because it fosters integration without assimilation," he affirmed. Mr. Sarosh also pointed out that the "other world religious traditions present in Europe can play a major role in establishing good inter-religious relations," and mentioned the catalytic role played by the Jewish Community in the Interreligious Council of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Grazia Cabano, speaking on behalf of the local WCRP Genoa chapter, which organized the conference, said that for there to be true dialogue it is important that all partners in the dialogue have a deep knowledge of their own religious faith.

Also presented during the meeting was a project relating to the creation in Genoa of a Council of Religions that enjoys the support of the municipality of Genoa and of local authorities. This council will deal with all those problems and issues concerning the different religious faiths and the way in which they relate to one another.

The conference was closed by a

torchlit procession attended by over 600 people from the ancient roads of the Jewish quarter to the mosque located near the city harbor, where a joint prayer for peace was held.

Father Giovanni Cereti, newly elected general-secretary of WCRP Italy and one of the founders of the national chapter, recalled that one of the very reasons for its foundation in 1980 was the need to have in that country the only truly multireligious movement, through which believers of all faiths might meet and cooperate on a plane of absolute equality.

WCRP Italy, which held its National Assembly in a suburb of Rome, October 30–November 2, proposed the creation of a national body on multireligious information and consultancy for the media, in other words, an organization that may act as interlocutor to supply correct and detailed information to media workers. The National Assembly also announced its decision to support the peace plan of the Chechnya government in exile. The peace plan, endorsed by 134 members of the European Parliament, envisages complete disarmament by the Chechens, withdrawal of Russian troops, and United Nations control over the area until proper elections can be held.

Father Cereti spoke on dialogue and reconciliation. He stressed the common fear by members of different faiths of losing their own identity by opening up to other religions, but, he added, if dialogue is mutual enrichment, then people should not be afraid of dialogue and pluralism.

The national chapter thus vouched its support for actions and educational projects moving in this direction within Italian society. It announced that it will bring forth the project on media and religions and also discussed plans aimed at increasing the youth section of the WCRP. □

Eva Ruth Palmieri

Making a Dream Come True

by Noriko LaMar

A Japanese member of Rissho Kosei-kai now living in the United States addressed the Los Angeles branch meeting on June 27, 2004, the day the organization's president, Rev. Nichiko Niwano, visited the branch. This is a slightly edited version of her talk.

I am very honored to have the chance to present a testimonial on this special day, when President Niwano is visiting us at the Los Angeles Church.

I was born on May 3, 1947, in a small village called Hikami in Kagawa Prefecture, which is on the island of Shikoku in western Japan. My parents moved from Hikami to Takamatsu City when I was three years old and started a hobby shop in order to give children lots of dreams by promoting scientific and mechanical hobbies. This was right after World War II, and the future looked bright. My father gave me a chance to go to America as a youth exchange student in 1965, and I studied at St. Petersburg Junior College in Florida for two years. I met my husband for the first time just one day before I was ready to return to Japan. He fell in love with me at first sight and came to Japan to get me, and we got married five years later, in 1972.

I was led to Rissho Kosei-kai by my aunt, in 1977, at the Kawasaki Branch when I lost my second unborn child while my husband was working for *Newsweek* magazine after he graduated from Sophia University in Tokyo. The following year, we moved to the

United States. I have been a member of this Los Angeles Church since then.

In 2004 we are celebrating our thirty-third anniversary, and many things have happened during those years in our international marriage. An international marriage is blessed by combining two different cultures. Also, we are able to share the valuable experience of living freely in the vast United States, which is quite unlike the crowded nature of Japan. I appreciate that our children can speak two

languages freely and that they grew up surrounded with and can understand both cultures now.

However, I did not have the ability to speak English fluently with my husband from the beginning. The language problem was a big gap in the beginning of our marriage, especially the pronunciation of "l" and "r," which was very difficult for me, and we had some problems communicating sometimes. American humor is still difficult for me to understand and I often feel left out while my husband and children are laughing and amused by it.

Moreover, it may be the difference in personal history or national character, but my husband was short-tempered and had a stubborn sense of justice, which made him quarrelsome with others when he was young. I did not like his short-tempered action and asked him to correct his fault, and I even forced him to study Rissho Kosei-kai Buddhism in order to change himself. I felt critical toward him when our opinions did not match, especially concerning such things as children's love, marriage, and Rissho Kosei-kai matters, and I often used to wonder why he was always the way he was. He often lost his job then, and

Noriko LaMar is director of the English Group at Rissho Kosei-kai of Los Angeles.

every time he lost his job I got frustrated with worry about money and the children, and then we would quarrel with each other. I was the one who brought up divorce to him, which he had never even mentioned once in our life together. I brought my problem to a hoza counseling session at church, and the hoza leader told me, "Your husband's losing his job is a reflection of your own fault." But I didn't understand at that time how my husband's losing *his* job was *my* fault.

No matter what the situation was, I loved Rissho Kosei-kai's teachings and I just kept on attending church, served on my duty day, went along with others for the memorial services, helped others, and led others to this teaching as much as I could. The reason I could continue this practice and manage so long was because the many church leaders and the members often listened to my complaints on the phone and helped and encouraged me from time to time. Moreover, I have had a dream, maybe it is an outrageous dream, but I have always wished earnestly to become just like Founder Niwano, who always had a shining, smiling face. I have never forgotten. I still dream that I would like to become just like Founder Niwano someday.

One day, I learned that a friend whom I had introduced to the Los Angeles Church was arguing with her husband in a strong tone of voice, and she pushed the argument as she wanted make clear that her viewpoint was as clear as the difference between black and white. I felt as if I was looking at myself in her image. I used to argue with my husband to make things clear in the past also. Through watching my friend, I could see that what I was doing was wrong. After that, I had to put a lot more effort into listening to my husband well and to be kind to him, as well as responding to his love. I also began to make a concerted effort to keep things neat

Ms. LaMar with other participants in one of the English satellite church meetings of the Los Angeles Church, which took place in Costa Mesa, Orange County, on September 26, 2004. The participants, some of whom had been unfamiliar with Buddhism, experienced ritual ceremony, sutra recitation, and meditation, and were also entertained by a story about the Buddha.

and in order for him, as he wants to keep things uncluttered. When I started to accept him the way he is, I began to understand his deep feelings little by little. Then I started to see myself more clearly than when I was looking at him critically before.

The funny thing is that I began to feel happier with more gratitude every day while I was able to see things in my mind more clearly, and I could correct my actions more smoothly. Then I began to feel that I love my husband more than ever before.

My husband suddenly lost the ability to walk because of blood clots in his leg in September 2002. I became scared when I saw his swollen and purplish leg. After he got this sickness, we found out that his body has a tendency to produce thromboses naturally. When my husband told me that his doctor told him that he has to take

a blood-thinning medication for the rest of his life, I started to worry and began to think, "Why is this happening to me? I deeply love him now, and what will I do if something happens to him?" I felt very insecure, worrying about him for a few days, even though I continued to pray at my home altar.

Just then, the September 2002 issue of *Yakushin* (a Japanese-language magazine for members) arrived. An article jumped to my eyes—it was President Niwano's article about sicknesses. It was as if the sermon had been written for me, because the title was "Sickness Is the Benefactor That Leads to Enlightenment." In the article, he wrote that no one can escape from getting old, getting sick, and approaching death someday, once they are born into this world. That is why we have to undergo the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness, and death, and it was

Sutra recitation during a satellite church meeting on September 26.

a good chance for me to accept that “I received the best opportunity to see clearly how to live,” rather than “getting sick in the mind” this way and that about the illness itself. After I read President Niwano’s sermon, I felt completely peaceful. Becoming sick was a natural thing, and I was encouraged to live with sickness itself and also with my husband’s illness.

Because my husband’s and my life together is restricted and finite, I want to cherish our everyday life with gratitude and to value my husband while being able to shine with happiness. Also, I wanted to practice my bodhisattva practice continuously, more than ever, for the happiness of the people surrounding me. Through my husband’s illness, my gratitude and love toward my husband became stronger, while I realized how important my husband is to me. I am very thankful for my husband’s patience, love, and support. He has been putting up with me, without divorcing me, for the last thirty-three years, even though I used to be so selfish. Thank you, Mike.

It has been twenty-seven years since

I joined Rissho Kosei-kai. I have met many different people and I have led more than twenty people to this church in the past. It seems that I am good at spreading the seeds of this teaching, but I have also been realizing that I am not good at supporting those people. Maybe the words, “Ms. LaMar is very selfish,” which people at church used to say about me in the past, shows my weak point in the past as my selfish nature. I was unyielding and unwilling to make myself want to consider and serve others.

I met a friend, a Persian girl named Ellie, at my company around June 2002. Soon after we met, she lost her job and she had severe troubles in her life. I helped her just as if she were my own sister—well, actually better than that. While she was attending church on duty day, hoza sessions, and ceremonies with me, she started to become interested in learning Buddhist teachings and joined Rissho Kosei-kai. Her complaining about things gradually decreased and she became happier and more peaceful. I also could spend more pleasant and memorable times

together with her. Also, I noticed in myself that I have a tendency to express things positively in English while I was speaking it. Ellie is living in Sweden now, close to her parents. This experience allowed me to understand clearly from the bottom of my heart that anyone can become absolutely happy and peaceful with these Buddhist teachings, no matter how different one’s nationality, language, or cultural background.

From July 2003, I was assigned to be director of the English Group. We started our English satellite church in Orange County from January 2004. It is becoming our pleasure every month, although it is also a big challenge for our English Group. Ed and Lani Orcutt have been offering us their house as the place for our satellite church meetings, and Debbie has been participating each month and our meetings are gradually becoming more active.

My mother passed away at age eighty on April 20, 2004. I had my mother’s forty-ninth-day memorial service at my home. Many members from church, family, and friends came to attend the service, but most of my family and friends were American and English-speaking people. I was very thankful and I appreciated that we could have such a service here in America with American people. I am sure my mother is pleased and proud that I am doing my best to spread the Buddhist teachings here in America. One of my dreams is to have a Sunday service every week with three hundred American participants who can attend our service every Sunday someday with the support of my husband, family, community, and English Group people. And I would like to swear to President Niwano, before the Buddha, that I will do my best to make this dream come true someday soon.

Eternal Buddha, Founder Niwano, President Niwano, thank you very much. □

Rissho Kosei-kai Organizes Assistance for Victims of Niigata Earthquake

At 5:56 p.m. on October 23, a devastating earthquake of magnitude 6.8 hit central Niigata Prefecture, on the northwestern coast of Japan's main island of Honshu. Several strong aftershocks and many weak ones followed throughout the night and over the next two weeks. According to the November 1 report by Niigata Prefecture's headquarters for disaster countermea-

Fund decided to donate 26 million Japanese yen (as of November 10) in emergency aid to nine towns and one village that were damaged.

On October 25, Rissho Kosei-kai dispatched five volunteer members to local branches in Niigata for onsite inspections. On October 28, President Nichiko Niwano issued a message of encouragement to victims not only of the earthquake, but also of typhoons, which struck Japan from August through October. On October 30, Rissho Kosei-kai also sent Rev. Hiroshi Hasegawa, one of its directors, to conduct a further survey of earthquake damage.

paign for the victims of the earthquake and typhoon. It opened a bank account accepting donations from well-wishers throughout Japan from November 14 to January 31. □

Members Observe Annual Week of Prayer for World Peace

A multireligious Week of Prayer for World Peace was observed October 17–24, during which people of all faiths throughout the world were encouraged to pray wherever they were for world peace. The event is promoted by an association called the Week of Prayer for World Peace, founded in the United Kingdom and consisting of thirty-seven religious organizations—including Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist—and other nonreligious groups. Rissho Kosei-kai has been a devoted supporter of the event from the beginning.

This year, to mark the peace movement's 30th anniversary, on each day of the week, before their morning devotions, whether in the Great Sacred Hall in Tokyo, their local branch, or at home, Rissho Kosei-kai members recited special invocations for world peace submitted by members across the country. Moreover, some branches held interreligious prayer meetings in their communities, in cooperation with local members of various faiths. In Nara, some 30 members of the Nara Branch joined in services held at Todaiji, where a leader of the temple emphasized the importance of each member of the various faiths pondering what he or she could do for world peace. In Fukuoka some 200 people gathered at Munakata Shrine, where a Shinto priest emphasized the importance of taking initiatives for world peace, especially with regard to the current situation in Iraq. □

A member cheers an elderly woman in an elementary school gymnasium, which was used as a temporary shelter for people whose houses were damaged by the earthquakes.

asures, 36 people were killed and about 2,400 injured. Social infrastructures were also damaged, including national highways and water supply, and a bullet train was derailed. More than 100,000 people took refuge in temporary shelters.

Taking these facts into consideration, on October 24, Rissho Kosei-kai organized a headquarters in Tokyo for disaster countermeasures and relief activities in cooperation with Rissho Kosei-kai's local offices for disaster relief in Niigata. The Buddhist organization made its local branches available as shelters and sent 13,000 meals to victims. The Rissho Kosei-kai Peace

On November 4–5, Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, chairman of Rissho Kosei-kai and director of its headquarters for disaster countermeasures, made onsite inspections in the cities of Ojiya, Tokamachi, and Echigo Kawaguchi, and visited local branches to encourage members who had taken refuge in branch buildings.

During his visit to Tokamachi, Rev. Yamanoi visited the Suganuma area, where Founder Nikkyo Niwano was born, and confirmed the extent of damage to the visitors' center at the founder's birthplace and to the house of his birth. Rissho Kosei-kai also decided to conduct a fund-raising cam-

The Distribution and Veneration of the Buddha's Relics

by Hajime Nakamura

One man came forth to mediate among the groups disputing to receive the relics, saying he would divide them fairly among the Buddha's followers.

There followed a dispute between several tribes over the disposal of the relics. According to the Pāli text, King Ajātasattu (Ajātaśatru) of Magadha, the Licchavis of Vesālī, the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu, the Bulis of Allakappa, the Koliyas of Rāmagāma, a Brahmin of Veṭṭhādīpa (Veṭṭha Island), and the Mallas of Pāvā, hearing that Sakyamuni had died in Kusinārā, sent messengers to the Mallas of Kusinārā.

“(24) And Ajātasattu, king of Magadha and son of the daughter of the king of Vedeḥa, heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then Ajātasattu, king of Magadha and son of the daughter of the king of Vedeḥa, sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: ‘The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and I am a Khattiya. I am worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. I will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and I will venerate them there.’

“The Licchavis of Vesālī heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Licchavis of Vesālī sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: ‘The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and we are Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.’

“The Sakyas of Kapilavatthu heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Sakyas of Kapilavatthu sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: ‘The Venerable Master was the greatest of our clan. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.’

“Then the Bulis of Allakappa heard that the Venerable

Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Bulis of Allakappa sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: ‘The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and we are Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.’

“The Koliyas of Rāmagāma heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Koliyas of Rāmagāma sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: ‘The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and we are

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).

Conflict over the distribution of the Buddha's relics. Part of a relief carved around the first century C.E., on the western gate to Stupa No. 1 at Sāñcī, in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.'

"A Brahmin of Veṭṭhadīpa heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Brahmin of Veṭṭhadīpa sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: 'The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and I am a Brahmin. I am worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. I will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and I will venerate them there.'

"The Mallas of Pāvā heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Mallas of Pāvā sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā, saying: 'The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and we are Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.'"

These seven supplicants all sent messengers to the Mallas of Kusinārā, pleading their suitability to receive a portion of the relics and promising to erect stupas to house them. The grounds for suitability were for the most part based on shared Khattiya status, on a clan relationship (the Sakyas), or on eligibility as a Brahmin. The Buddha's death had a considerable impact among the people of eastern India. It is said that King Ajātasattu repented his past misdeeds when he heard of the Buddha's death. The Sanskrit and Tibetan texts describe the unusual zeal with which Ajātasattu prepared to receive the relics. He ordered his Brahmin minister Varṣākāra (Varṣākāro brāhmaṇa-Magadha-mahāmātro) to go with the army to Kuśinagarī to take possession of the relics.

The names of the groups that wanted portions of the

relics are mentioned in the Yu-hsing-ching, the Pan-ni-yüan-ching, etc., but they are lacking in the Fo-pan-ni-yüan-ching and the Ta-pan-nieh-p'an-ching.

The Mallas of Kusinārā maintained firmly that they would not give up the relics:

"(25) On hearing these things, the Mallas of Kusinārā said to the assembled people: 'The Venerable Master died in our territory. We will not give away any portion of his remains.'"

Distribution of the Relics and Stupa Veneration

When a dispute broke out, a man appeared to mediate the situation, telling the crowd that there should be no conflict among the followers of the Buddha. The Pāli text gives his name as the Brahmin Doṇa.

"(25) 'Listen, all of you, to one single word from me. Our Buddha was the teacher of forbearance.

"It is wrong that conflict should arise over the distribution of the relics of the best of men. Let us all come together in amity and joyfully distribute the eight [portions].

"Let stupas be erected far and wide, so that all people may believe in the One with Vision [the Buddha].'" (Mahā-parinibbāna-suttanta, VI, 25)

Thus a compromise was reached—to divide the relics into eight portions:

"(25 [continued]) 'Well then, Brahmin, you divide the relics of the Venerable Master into eight, and distribute them well and fairly.' 'Very well,' replied Brahmin Doṇa to the assembled people, and he divided the relics of the Venerable Master into eight, and distributed them well and fairly, and then said to the people assembled: 'Give me that urn [which contained the relics], I beg of you, and I will

Transportation of the Buddha's relics. The urns containing the Buddha's relics are put on the heads of elephants. This relief, carved in the second century B.C.E. on a stone that was part of a railing surrounding a Buddhist stupa at Bhārhut in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, is now on display in the New Delhi National Museum.

erect a stupa for it and venerate it.' They gave Doṇa the Brahmin the urn."

Just then the Moriyas of Pipphalivana arrived and requested a portion of the relics, but because the distribution was complete, they were given the ashes.

"(26) The Moriyas of Pipphalivana heard that the Venerable Master had passed away at Kusinārā. Then the Moriyas of Pipphalivana sent a messenger to the Mallas of Kusinārā saying: 'The Venerable Master was a Khattiya, and we are Khattiyas. We are worthy to receive a portion of the bones [relics] of the Venerable Master. We will build a stupa in which to deposit them, and we will venerate them there.' 'No portion of the Venerable Master's bones are left. The bones of the Venerable Master have already been distributed. Take, therefore, the ashes.' And so they took the ashes and left." (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, VI, 26)

Thus ten stupas were built in all: the eight stupas housing the eight portions (*sarīrathūpa*) distributed among the various tribes; the stupa for the urn in which the relics had been collected (*kumbhathūpa*), which was erected by the Brahmin Doṇa; and the stupa for the ashes (*a gārathūpa*) at Pipphalivana. The stupa for the ashes is still venerated as a sacred place; it was there that the rulers of the Malla dynasty held their coronations.

"(27) Then Ajātasattu, king of Magadha and son of the daughter of the king of Vedeha, built a stupa in Magadha for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Licchavis of Vesālī built a stupa in Vesālī for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Sakyas of Kapilavatthu built a stupa in Kapilavatthu for the relics of the Venerable Master, and

held a feast in celebration. The Bulis of Allakappa built a stupa in Allakappa for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Koliyas of Rāmagāma built a stupa in Rāmagāma for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Brahmins of Veṭhadīpa built a stupa in Veṭhadīpa for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Mallas of Pāvā built a stupa in Pāvā for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Mallas of Kusinārā built a stupa in Kusinārā for the relics of the Venerable Master, and held a feast in celebration. The Brahmin Doṇa built a stupa for the urn of relics, and held a feast in celebration. The Moriyas of Pipphalivana built a stupa in Pipphalivana for the [Master's] ashes, and held a feast in celebration. Thus eight stupas were built for the relics, the ninth stupa was built for the urn, and the tenth stupa was built for the ashes. This is what happened [in times of old]. (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, VI, 27)

The various versions of the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta end with the following verse, though they are not consistent with the transmission just quoted.

(28) Eight portions were there of the relics of the One with Vision.

Seven portions of them are venerated in India [Jambudīpa].

The other portion [of the relics] of the best of men [the Buddha] are venerated by the *nāga* kings in Rāmagāma. One tooth is venerated in the heaven of thirty-three deities;

Another is venerated in the city of Gandhāra.

Yet another tooth is venerated in the realm of King Kāliṅga.
 And another tooth is venerated by the *nāga* kings.
 Through their radiance, the earth is made bountiful,
 ornamented by the supreme objects of veneration.
 Thus the relics of the One with Vision [the Buddha] are
 well honored by those who are honored.
 They are thus venerated by *deva* kings, *nāga* kings,
 human kings, and the greatest of all people.
 Place the palms of your hands together and venerate
 them.
 Rare indeed it is to meet a Buddha even in a hundred
kappas.

(Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, VI, 28)

Here we have an extremely mythical explanation of the relics.

According to the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts, the “Brahmin called Dhūmra [*dhūmrāsagotro brāhmaṇa*€] divided the relics of the Venerable Master into eight portions.” The first portion was given to the Mallas of Kuśināgarā, the second to the Mallas of Pāpā, the third to the Bulas of Calakalpa, the fourth to the Brahmins of Viṣṇu Island, the fifth to the Krauḍyas of Rāmagrāma, the sixth to the Licchavis of Vaiśālī, and the seventh to the Śākyas of Kāpilavāstu. Each of these tribes built a stupa to venerate the relics. The eighth portion was given to Varṣākāra, a

Brahmin councilor [of the king] in Magadha, for which King Ajātaśatru built a stupa in Rājagṛha. And “the jar which had contained the relics, which had been thrown away, was given to a Brahmin called Dhūmra, and he built the ‘stupa for the urn of relics’ [*kumbhastūpa*] in Droṇagrāmaka to venerate it.” Also, a student called Pippalāyana (Pippalāyano māṇavaḥ) requested a portion of the relics, but the Mallas of Kuśināgarā gave him the ashes. Thus there were ten places of veneration—the eight relic stupas (*śarīrastūpa*), the stupa for the urn of relics, and the stupa for the ashes (*a gārastūpa*). In the verse quoted in the texts, however, there were seven places of veneration in India (Jambudvīpa), one cared for by Droṇa and “venerated by the Nāga king of Rāmagrāma.”

The Sarvāstivādin text, translated as the P’i-nai-yeh tsa-shih, is virtually identical to the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions. Because the various texts record very different information, it is difficult to discover the historical facts underlying their descriptions. At the very least, however, the relics were distributed in some form or other. Nevertheless, several weeks must have been required for the news of Sakyamuni’s death to reach Magadha and for a messenger to be sent to Kuśinagarī requesting the relics. It is also very likely that the recipients of the relics returned to their homelands and deposited them in stupas built for the purpose. Later legend relates that Aśoka retrieved the relics from the various stupas and had them redistributed

Photo: Isamu Maruyama

The Buddha’s relics were divided into eight portions and venerated by various peoples who had some connection with him. A relief excavated in Gandhāra. Lahore Museum.

among eighty-four thousand stupas. The recipients of the eight portions of the relics as they are recorded in the various texts appear in the table below.

The various traditions do not agree on the number of relic stupas that were erected. The Yu-hsing-ching and the Ta-pan-nieh-p'an-ching state that there were ten, while the Pan-ni-yüan-ching and the Ta-pan-ni-yüan-ching, as quoted in the Shih-chia-p'u, fasc. 4, give eleven. The Fo-pan-ni-yüan-ching seems to state that there were eleven, but it is ambiguous.

The distribution of the relics and the erection of stupas are themes often represented in Buddhist art of later times.

Discovery of the Relics

In 1898 the Englishman William C. Peppé, on his estate at Piprahwa near the Nepalese border in India, excavated an ancient stupa, in which he found a relic urn. Brāhmī letters from several centuries B.C.E. engraved on it stated that it contained the relics of Sakyamuni. We can regard the relics as those of Gotama Buddha, whose historicity they verified. The relics within were presented to the king of Siam (Thailand); in 1900 a small portion was donated to the

Buddhists of Japan. (They are at present enshrined at the Nittaiji temple in Nagoya under the care of the heads of nineteen different sects in an alternating system.) The talc stone urn (about 51 1/2 in. x 31 3/4 in. x 26 in.; lid, 5 in. in height) is in the Indian National Museum in Calcutta. It is not on general display, but is guarded in a special room whose key is in the possession of the museum's director.

Peppé's Birdpur Estate is in the village of Piprahwa in the Basti district, a half mile south of Pillar 44 on the India-Nepal border and some ten miles southeast of Kapilavastu. The relics were discovered in a mound (stupa) 116 feet in diameter, which is a little smaller than the great stupas of Bhāṭṭiprolu and Amarāvati, which measure 138 feet in diameter. The stupa was constructed of layers of brick and clay mortar piled toward the center. In early January 1898, a soapstone (steatite) vase was discovered ten feet from the top. The interior was filled with clay, in which were found beads, crystals, gold ornaments, and so on. At the same depth was a circular pipe; it was filled with soil and surrounded by brickwork that had characteristics of the Aśokan period. Approximately 1 foot in diameter, it descended for 2 feet and then narrowed to 4 inches. Some

Recipients of the eight portions of the relics as recorded in the various texts

Pāli text (VI, 27)	Sanskrit text (LI, 9–6)	Pan-ni-yüan-ching	Yu-hsing-ching
8) Kosinārakā Mallā (Kusinārāyaṃ)	1) Kauśināgarā Mallāḥ	6) King of Kuśinagarī, the people of Kuśinagarī	1) Country of Chū-shih
7) Pāveyyakā Mallā (Pāvāyaṃ)	2) Pāpiyakā Mallāḥ	1) The Mallas of Pāpā	2) People of the country of Po-p'o
4) Allakappakā Bulayo (Allakappe)	3) Calakalpakā Bulakāḥ	3) The Bulis of Calakalpaka	3) Country of Calakalpa
6) Veṭṭhadipako brāhmaṇo (Veṭṭhādīpe)	4) Viṣṇudvīpiyakā brāhmaṇāḥ	4) Brahmins of Viṣṇudvipa	5) Country of Veṭṭhadipaka
5) Rāmagāmakā Koliyā (Rāmagāme)	5) Rāmagrāmiyakāḥ Krauḍyāḥ	2) Krauḍyas of Rāmagrāma	4) Country of Rāmagrāmaka
2) Vesālikā Licchavī (Vesāliyaṃ)	6) Vaiśālakā Licchavayaḥ	5) The Licchavis of Vaiśālī	7) Country of Vaiśālī
3) Kāpilavattavā Sakyā (Kāpilavattusmiṃ)	7) Kāpilavāstavyāḥ Śākyaḥ	7) The Śākyas of Kapilavastu	6) Country of Kapilavastu
1) Rājā Māgadho Ajātasattu Vedehiputto (Rājagahe)	8) Rājā Māgadho 'jātaśatruḥ Vaidehīputraḥ	8) King Ajataśatru of Magadha	8) King Ajataśatru of Magadha
9) Doṇo brāhmaṇo (kumbhassa thūpaṃ akāsi)	9) Dhūmasagotro brāhmaṇāḥ (kumbhastūpaṃ pratiṣṭhā-payati)	9) Brahmin Doṇa	9) Brahmin Hsiang-hsing
10) Pippalivaniyā Moriyā (Pippavane aṅgārānaṃ thūpaṃ akāmsu)	10) Pippalāyano mānavāḥ (aṅgārastūpaṃ pratiṣṭhā-payati)	10) Brahmin Moriya?	10) Pi-po ts'un-jen; a man from Pi-po Village, Chiao-t'an

of the bricks in the surrounding brickwork had been cast in a mold; some were quite rough. Beneath eighteen feet of brickwork a large slab of stone was found lying due north and due south 31 1/2 inches east of the center of the aforementioned pipe. This slab was a lid for a sandstone coffer measuring 4 feet 4 inches x 2 feet 8 1/4 inches x 2 feet 2 1/4 inches. The lid fit the coffer tightly. Within the coffer the following items were found:

- A soapstone vase 6 inches high and 4 inches in diameter
- A soapstone vase 7 inches high and 4 1/2 inches in diameter
- A soapstone vessel 5 1/2 inches high and 5 1/2 inches in diameter
- A small soapstone box 1 1/2 inches high and 3 3/4 inches in diameter
- A lidded crystal bowl 3 1/2 inches high and 3 1/4 inches in diameter, with a hollow fish-shaped handle

Chisel marks on the sandstone vases are so sharply defined that they look new. The crystal bowl is highly polished and at first glance seems to be a modern glass utensil. There appear to have been wooden vessels, too, but only small fragments of them remain. The coffer in which they were found is made of good-quality solid soapstone; carving it out of a solid block of stone must have involved enormous labor and expense. This stone did not come from the uplands of northern Nepal. The lid weighs 408 pounds; coffer and lid together weigh 1,537 pounds.

Brickwork continued for two feet below the bottom of the coffer. The height of the stupa is 21 1/2 feet from the base of the brickwork to the summit. The relic urns contained bone fragments, easily recognizable and appearing very recently interred. The only inscription, however, was on the lid of the smaller jar. Several hundred items were found in the coffer, including two seals (perhaps coins) with swastika marks, a carving of an elephant, a small human figure, a carving of a bird, and a number of jewels. The inscription reads:

*Sukiti-bhatinam sabhaginikanam saputa-dalanam
iyam salila-nidhane Budhasa bhagavate sakiyanam*

(This is the container of the relics of the Buddha, the World-honored One of the Śākyas; and was [the donation of] the honorable brothers and their sisters, and their wives and children.)

Scholars have translated this inscription in various ways.

The Brāhmī letters are similar to those of the Aśoka

A soapstone urn containing the Buddha's relics, which was discovered at a Buddhist stupa in Vaiśālī in 1957. Patna Museum.

inscription at Rummindei nearby, except that diacritical marks for long vowels are missing, and *l* is used instead of *r*, as in Māgadhi. Most scholars agree that the inscription is pre-Aśokan. The rhyme form is considered to be *udgīti*.

We do not know who is meant by Sukiti (Skt., Sukīrti). It is the name of one of the buddhas of the past under whom Sakyamuni is said to have studied, but this is irrelevant to the present discussion. J. E. Fleet thought that Sukīrti might refer to Mahānāma, the grandfather of Viṣṇudabha. Fa-hsien and Hsüan-tsang reported that the bones of the massacred Śākyas had been collected and buried. S. Lévi believed that *sukiti* was a common noun meaning "honorable" or "blessed."

More important is that both Fleet and Lévi believed that the remains belonged to the Śākyas, not to Gotama himself. On the other hand, E. Senart and A. Barth thought the relics were those of Sakyamuni. The key lies in the interpretation of the words *Budhasa bhagavate sakiyanam*. I myself have no objection to translating them as "of the Buddha, the World-honored One of the Śākyas," since there are examples among later Indian inscriptions of a person's clan name being expressed in the plural genitive case. It is therefore acceptable to regard the relics as those of the historical figure of Gotama Buddha.

To be continued

Achieving Peace in a Globalized World

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 daily faith.

Since the end of the cold war, the world has become increasingly globalized. While, on the one hand, a greater sense of international responsibility has developed, on the other hand, regional and ethnic conflicts have increased. Perhaps this phenomenon could be called a historical necessity as we move from a period dominated by the confrontation between two great powers, and the nations allied with one or the other, to one in which individual countries and ethnic groups seek their own way in the world, putting greater emphasis on their own ethnic and cultural history. The result is that the contemporary world is being pulled in two opposing directions, toward unity and toward divisiveness. This is truly a difficult time.

We are taught that human beings are social animals. That would mean it is instinctual for them to form groups. The impulse to do this is not logical but emotional. And so people will fight to the extent of giving up their lives if it seems necessary for the preservation of their own group. This is not logical behavior, and it is why even the intervention of the United Nations cannot prevent groups of people from fighting each other. As long as we assume that nothing can be done because such behavior is instinctive, however, no solution will be found.

For thousands of years, the human race has survived by forming protective groups, because without them its continuing existence would be threatened. With that in mind, some people might hold the view that it is only human nature for such groups to fight each other. However, from another point of view, we should be able to see the truth

that no one can live entirely alone, that the lives of people on this earth must be sustained through mutual support with others. Facing this ultimate reality directly, we must recognize that if we do not disseminate a way of life based on the truth to people everywhere, it will not be possible to bring lasting peace to the world.

Whereas Czechoslovakia experienced an upsurge in nationalism and peacefully separated into two countries, the Czech and Slovak republics, and both are now members of the European Union, Yugoslavia disintegrated into civil war among its ethnic groups, all seeking to establish their own national identity. The outside world could find no good way to resolve the situation, and the entities that emerged were unable to make a contribution to Europe as a whole.

Compared with the former Yugoslavia, with its five major ethnic groups, four languages, and three main religions, Japan seems to be a land truly at peace. Although the Japanese are blessed with stability, if they begin to regard their peaceful lives as a matter of course and lose their sense of national identity, with everyone acting according to their own interest, Japan will lose its vitality. People who cannot truly love their own country cannot expect to be understood by the rest of the world.

I am not speaking of nationalism and patriotism in the narrow sense, but broadly in terms of genuine affection and respect for one's country. I believe it is on such a foundation that we can develop ways to contribute significantly to world peace.

The Spirit of the One Vehicle

One of the most distressing things for me, as a person of religion, is to hear people say, "Religion causes wars and makes things worse." Religion does not cause war; people

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

effort we had made would turn out to be in vain. However, in 1979, during a time of much uncertainty and many problems the religionists who were involved in the activities of the WCRP continued their efforts, and I was honored with the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion, receiving it directly from the hands of His Royal Highness Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. During my acceptance speech at the Guildhall in London, I said, "I interpret the awarding of the Templeton Prize to me as encouragement from God and the Buddha to continue on the path I have followed thus far."

It was a hundred years ago [this was written in 1993] that the World's Parliament of Religions was held in Chicago to commemorate the discovery of the Americas by Columbus. It was the first time representatives of different religions had gathered under one roof. To mark the centenary of this event, representatives of the major religious bodies in the world gathered in India in the largest such gathering of the world's religionists in the twentieth century. It was just as I was putting the final touches to this manuscript in July [1993] that I received word from the International Interfaith Organizations Coordinating Committee that I had been named the first recipient of its Centennial Award. Since there are many people throughout the world who are far more deserving than I, I hesitated to accept the award at first. But I noted the words of the Swiss theologian Hans Küng that were quoted in the prospectus that I received: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions."

More than a thousand years ago Saicho founded the Japanese Tendai Buddhist denomination to practice the teachings by incorporating the diverse strands of Buddhist practice, such as the esoteric teachings, meditation, practice of the precepts, and the repetition of the Buddha's name by means of the spirit of the One Vehicle of the Lotus Sutra. He once said, "A net with only one eye is of no use in capturing a bird." In these words he suggested that only one religion cannot save all people. Surely this understanding, the very essence of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, must be the starting point for interreligious cooperation. I think Saicho's and Hans Küng's words fundamentally have a lot in common. It is in this sense that I gratefully accepted the Centennial Award, interpreting it also as encouragement from God and the Buddha for me to have faith in the path that I was treading and to continue to walk along it.

A Lesson from Mathematicians

Professor Johan Galtung is a Norwegian mathematician who also set up the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo, of which he was the director for ten years. He is

Rev. Nikkyo Niwano with other WCRP representatives in the Rose Garden of the United Nations headquarters in New York. They visited the UN during the third assembly of the WCRP, which was held in Princeton, New Jersey, from August 29 through September 7, 1979.

do. This is why I have worked so hard to bring about the establishment of the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP). I have continued to reiterate for many decades now and in many parts of the world how important religion is in helping people to develop their character and how necessary interreligious cooperation is for bringing about world peace.

It goes without saying that great energy is needed to keep the WCRP going. Some people once said to me that supporting the organization would be like throwing a handful of water on thirsty soil, and sometimes I did think that the

well known for developing a mathematical model for a theory of peace. The rate of population growth, shifts in food production, reserves of resources, and climate data were all entered into a computer to show the kind of future humankind faces. What was very clear in the result was how close the world is to famine. Professor Galtung issued a warning to all humanity based on what the computer indicated. It was mathematicians, not normally thought of as being linked with religion, who grasped the importance of this danger, and felt it keenly to be the necessity of religion to deal with it, more than people of religion themselves had done. His assumptions based on the computer-enhanced survey are more concrete and persuasive than the eschatological expositions of religious figures.

When we are confronted by such facts, it becomes ever more clear that the only way left for us, as I have said over and over again, is to share our common wealth, not robbing it from each other. This is the road the twenty-first century must take. What do we need to do to ensure that this happens?

Many great teachers of the past have told us that it is necessary to change people's hearts and minds before peace can be achieved. Shakyamuni spent his whole life teaching people how to attain the true self, that is, how to bring forth the buddha-nature that is inherited by us all. When we infer the mind of the Buddha, our mission as Buddhists becomes very clear. Shakyamuni told us, "Let us now set forth to teach, for the sake of the world, for the sake of humankind, and for the benefit and happiness of people everywhere."

Instead of stumbling about the dark room in which we find ourselves, we should open a window in the room of our own accord. Let us who have learned the teachings of Shakyamuni open the windows of people's minds. And let us uphold the torch of the Buddhist teachings in the darkness of ignorance. I would like to repeat that this is what will lead you all to the realm of joy and tranquillity.

I am grateful to be able to welcome my eighty-eighth birthday (in the Sino-Japanese way of counting, and considered an auspicious age) in 1993. The Chinese Confucian scholar Wang Tao-k'un said, "One should not have regrets in old age. One should only regret having spent one's life in vain." I also pray from the depth of my heart that I did not spend my life in vain, but led a life that served as a gift for other people. I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have walked the Buddha Way with me until now. Going hand-in-hand not only with all of you, but also with all the successive great teachers in the long line of Buddhist history, I will spend every day that remains to me doing my best not to lose the determination to trod the path of Buddhism. □

Kshitigarbha (Jpn. Jizo) standing on a lotus pedestal, made of Japanese cypress, now in the possession of the Nara National Museum. Height: 36.6 cm. Inlaid crystal eyes. Thirteenth century.

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 8

The Five Hundred Disciples Receive the Prediction of Their Destiny

(4)

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

TEXT At that time the World-honored One, desiring to proclaim this meaning over again, spoke thus in verse: “Kaundinya Bhikshu / Will see innumerable buddhas, / And after asamkhyeya kalpas have passed, / Accomplish Perfect Enlightenment. / Ever emitting great light, / Perfect in the transcendent [powers], / His fame spread over the universe, / Revered by all [beings], / Ever preaching the supreme Way, / His title will be Universal Light.

COMMENTARY *Perfect Enlightenment.* Perfect Enlightenment (*anuttara-samyaksambodhi*) is also called unsurpassed, righteous, and perfect enlightenment, that is, a buddha’s enlightenment. The Chinese translation of the term *anuttara-samyaksambodhi* emphasizes that the enlightenment of the buddhas of past, present, and future is identical, being the enlightenment that is the correct understanding and realization of the universal truth.

TEXT Pure will be his domain; / His bodhisattvas all will be brave; / All mounted on wonderful buildings, / They will travel through all lands / With unsurpassed offerings, / To present them to the buddhas. / Having made these offerings, / Their hearts will greatly rejoice / And soon return to their own domain; / Such will be their supernatural powers.

COMMENTARY *They will travel through all lands with unsurpassed offerings, to present them to the buddhas. Having made these offerings, their hearts will greatly rejoice and soon return to their own domain.* Absolute truth is absolute truth, regardless of country. The brave bodhisattvas therefore will go to other lands, proclaiming the Dharma. The greatest

offering that can be made to the buddhas is the practice and dissemination of the Buddha Way. “Unsurpassed offerings” thus refers to spreading the teaching. Such an offering naturally results in a feeling of great joy; the bodhisattvas then, with a pure feeling of satisfaction, return to their own domain. “Soon” means “instantaneously”; it symbolizes that the teaching transcends all limits of time and space.

TEXT That buddha’s life will be six myriad kalpas; / His Righteous Law will remain twice his lifetime, / The Counterfeit Law double that. / His Law ended, gods and men will sorrow.

COMMENTARY *Gods and men will sorrow.* “Sorrow” here does not mean “worry” but “fall into suffering and distress.” It is natural that a place where the true Dharma is not practiced is filled with suffering.

TEXT Five hundred other bhikshus / One by one shall become buddhas / With the same title, Universal Light; / In turn [each] shall predict, [saying]: ‘After my extinction / So and so shall become buddha; / The world which he instructs / Shall be as mine of today.’ / The splendid purity of their domain / And its transcendent powers, / Its bodhisattvas and shravakas, / Its Righteous Law and its Counterfeit Law, / The length of its kalpa period, / All will be as that above stated.

COMMENTARY *In turn [each] shall predict.* This phrase means that the successive predictions will be made not by Shakyamuni Buddha himself but by the holders of the title Universal Light as they receive it. This series of predictions

will continue in the world without cease, and we ourselves are part of the chain. Each of us can become the Tathagata Universal Light. Knowing this, we cannot help being filled with renewed hope and courage.

TEXT Kashyapa! You now know / Of these five hundred self-reliant ones. / The other band of shravakas / Will also be like them. / To these, who are not in this assembly, / Do you proclaim my words.”

COMMENTARY *The other band of shravakas.* These are the seven hundred shravakas of the original twelve hundred who have not yet received the prediction of buddhahood.

• *To these, who are not in this assembly.* It can be conjectured that these are the five thousand shravakas who left the assembly during the discourse of the chapter “Tactfulness.” The Buddha also refers to these, as well as to countless numbers of people of later times who will hear the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. We should appreciate too that these words indirectly hint that the Buddha’s words should be transmitted to those five thousand proud shravakas.

TEXT Thereupon the five hundred arhats present before the Buddha, having received [this] prediction, ecstatic with joy, instantly rose from their seats, went before the Buddha, made obeisance at his feet, repented their errors, and rebuked themselves, [saying]: “World-honored One! We have constantly been thinking that we had attained final nirvana. Now we know that we were just like the foolish ones. Wherefore? Because we ought to have obtained the Tathagata wisdom, and yet were content with the inferior knowledge.

COMMENTARY *Final nirvana.* This is the state of ultimate peace, that is, the Mahayana nirvana (see the January/February 1999 issue of DHARMA WORLD).

TEXT “World-honored One! It is as if some man goes to an intimate friend’s house, gets drunk, and falls asleep. Meanwhile his friend, having to go forth on official duty, ties a priceless jewel within his garment as a present, and departs. The man, being drunk and asleep, knows nothing of it. On arising he travels onward till he reaches some other country, where for food and clothing he expends much labor and effort, and undergoes exceedingly great hardship, and is content even if he can obtain but little. Later, his friend happens to meet him and speaks thus: ‘Tut! Sir, how is it you have come to this for the sake of food and clothing? Wishing you to be in comfort and able to satisfy all your five senses, I formerly in such a year and month and on such a day tied a priceless jewel within your garment. Now as of old it is present there and you in igno-

rance are slaving and worrying to keep yourself alive. How very stupid! Go you now and exchange that jewel for what you need and whatever you will, free from all poverty and shortage.’ The Buddha also is like this.

COMMENTARY This is the fifth of the seven parables of the Lotus Sutra, the parable of the gem in the robe.

• *You . . . are slaving and worrying to keep yourself alive. How very stupid!* It is true that in actual life we have to work hard to provide ourselves with food and clothing. It is a completely different story, however, when it comes to practicing the Buddha Way. If we are not aware of the buddha-nature (the priceless jewel) with which we are originally endowed, and think that the defilements are the original, inevitable accompaniment of human beings, and make efforts only to remove them (“slaving and worrying to keep yourself alive”), we put the cart before the horse.

While it is not erroneous to strive to eliminate the defilements, to do so is to take a roundabout way, which is silly. Thus the sutra says, “How very stupid!” We must grasp from this parable that to realize the buddha-nature within ourselves is the shortest way to salvation, and that it is also the true path of the Buddha Dharma. I will explain this in more detail below.

TEXT When he was a bodhisattva, he taught us to conceive the idea of perfect wisdom, but we soon forgot, neither knowing nor perceiving. Having obtained the arhat way, we said we had reached nirvana; in the hardship of [gaining] a living we had contented ourselves with a mere trifle.

COMMENTARY *Perfect wisdom.* This means the wisdom of knowing the truth of all things.

• *In the hardship of [gaining] a living.* This refers to the practice of the small vehicle.

TEXT [But] our aspirations after perfect wisdom still remain and were never lost, and now the World-honored One arouses us and speaks thus: ‘Bhikshus! That which you have obtained is not final nirvana. For long I have caused you to cultivate the roots of buddha goodness, and for tactful reasons have displayed a form of nirvana. But you have considered it to be the real nirvana you had obtained.’

COMMENTARY This very important passage elucidates the connection between religious practice in former lives and religious practice in the present life. While the sutra says earlier that “we soon forgot [the idea of perfect wisdom], neither knowing nor perceiving,” here it states that “our

aspirations after perfect wisdom still remain and were never lost.” This may seem a contradiction at first glance, but it is not. Though we have forgotten what occurred in former lives in the surface mind (the conscious mind), that memory is retained in the hidden mind (the subconscious mind). Thus the passage “our aspirations after perfect wisdom still remain and were never lost” means that this strong desire is retained securely in the deepest part of the subconscious mind. To think that our mind, our will, and our aspirations arise and disappear when we are born and die in this world is a very shallow and shortsighted understanding of the situation; they are by no means so fleeting.

Our religious practice is not limited to this life; it continues from former lives to future lives as we seek buddhahood through our continued aspiration. It is because we had this aspiration that we have been able to meet the Buddha Dharma, and the Lotus Sutra in particular, in this life. That is why I hope you will recall that aspiration in the depths of your own hearts. In the same way, to guide others to the Buddha Dharma is to help them remember the aspirations that they themselves had in former lives.

• *For long I have caused you to cultivate the roots of buddha goodness, and for tactful reasons have displayed a form of nirvana.* The brevity of this passage perhaps obscures its true meaning. “For long” means “for a long time during former lives.” “The roots of buddha goodness” indicates the large amount of merit necessary to attain a buddha’s enlightenment and that virtuous action (that is, the bodhisattva practice) is the root of attaining buddhahood. During former lives, therefore, the Buddha caused the shravakas to accumulate the bodhisattva practice, making them plant the roots that bring about buddhahood. Being reborn in this world, they have entirely forgotten this in their surface minds. As I mentioned above, however, since those roots remain within the hidden mind, the Buddha, in order to cause them to sprout, taught the shravakas tactful teachings according to their capabilities, showing them the state of mental peace (“a form of nirvana”) attained through removing the defilements and, making this a starting point, tried to bring them to a buddha’s enlightenment. Like children who do not know how deeply concerned their parents are about them, the shravakas were completely satisfied with attaining that halfway stage and settled themselves there. This is the meaning of “you have considered it to be the real nirvana you had obtained.”

TEXT World-honored One! Now we know we are really bodhisattvas predicted to attain Perfect Enlightenment. For this cause we greatly rejoice in our unprecedented gain.”

COMMENTARY *We are really bodhisattvas.* They had thought

of themselves as “passive believers,” as religious practitioners seeking the personal enlightenment of the shravaka. But they discovered that in fact they had become “active believers,” that is, bodhisattvas who can attain buddhahood through their actions for the sake of other people and society and through their efforts to spread the Dharma. I do not need to elaborate on what a weighty realization this was. We too must act for the good of society, based on our own realization that we are simultaneously shravakas and bodhisattvas.

TEXT Thereupon Ajnata-Kaundinya and others, desiring to announce this meaning over again, spoke thus in verse: “We, hearing his voice / Predicting [for us] unsurpassed comfort, / Rejoice in our unexpected [lot] / And salute the all-wise Buddha. / Now before the World-honored One / We repent our errors; / [Though] countless Buddha treasures [awaited], / With but a trifle of nirvana / We, like ignorant and foolish people, / Were ready to be content.

COMMENTARY *[Though] countless Buddha treasures [awaited], with but a trifle of nirvana.* This phrase means that the Buddha’s teachings (“Buddha treasures”) are immeasurably great; gaining nirvana (individual peace of mind) is only a tiny share of them.

TEXT It is like [the case of] a poor man / Who goes to the house of a friend. / That friend, being very rich, / Sets much fine food before him. / A priceless precious pearl / He ties in his inner garment, / Secretly giving it and departing / While he sleeps on unaware. / The man when he arises / Travels on to another country / In search of food and clothes to keep alive, / Suffering great hardships for his living, / Contented with ever so little, / Wishing for nothing better, / Never perceiving that in his inner garment / There is a priceless jewel. / The friend who gave him the jewel / Afterward sees this poor man / And, bitterly rebuking him, / Shows where the jewel is bound. / The poor man, seeing this jewel, / Is filled with a great joy; / Rich, in possession of wealth, / He can satisfy his five senses. / Such were also we.

COMMENTARY *Fine food.* This refers to the hospitality of fish and meat excepting grain.

• *To keep alive.* This means to support oneself, earn one’s living.

• *Bitterly rebuking him.* The Chinese character translated as “rebuking” means here not so much “censuring” as “warning” or “pointing out a mistake.” The expression translated as “bitterly” has the connotation of “carefully explaining the reason.”

• *He can satisfy his five senses.* The “five senses” are the desires that originate in the five sense organs. He thinks he can live as he likes, able to satisfy the demands of the five senses.

TEXT For long has the World-honored One / Always pitied and taught us / To cultivate the highest aspiration; / But because of our ignorance, / We neither perceived nor knew it; / Gaining but a little of nirvana, / Contented, we sought no more. / Now the Buddha has awakened us, / Saying this is not real nirvana; / [Only] on attaining the highest Buddha wisdom / Is there real nirvana. / Now, having heard from the Buddha / The prediction and its glory, / And the command we receive in turn, / Body and mind are full of joy.”

COMMENTARY [Only] on attaining the highest Buddha wisdom is there real nirvana. Through these words the Buddha shows the ultimate stage of Mahayana teaching. This is a phrase well worth memorizing.

• *The command we receive in turn.* See p. 43 of this issue.

Let me now comment in more detail on the parable of the gem in the robe. The “priceless precious pearl” is the buddha-nature, possessed equally by all living beings, without exception. We are not aware that we have the buddha-nature, however, for we are in a drunken sleep; our minds remain unawakened.

We think that the phenomenal appearance of the physical body represents the essence of the self and that the mind is an appendage of the body. Therefore we run about pursuing our desires in order to satisfy body and mind and chasing madly after food and clothing. Such action proves that we are not aware of our buddha-nature. This is the meaning of drinking ourselves to sleep. As long as such a situation exists we will never be able to find happiness. Because body and mind appearing as phenomena have no fixed real existence, even though we think they do and that they are our true form, we can never find absolute satisfaction. Eventually the body dies and decomposes. The mind too changes at a great rate. What filled it with joy at one time is a source of sadness and anguish when the surrounding conditions change. No sooner is one desire fulfilled than other forms of greed and lust arise and new desires well up to take its place. Ultimate satisfaction is impossible.

Thus Shakyamuni taught us that we must eliminate the defilements that arise from greed and that the first step toward liberation is to realize that all phenomenal things, including our own body and the circumstances surrounding it, are no more than temporary manifestations born of the coming together of causes and conditions. This is the

teaching of the law of dependent origination. When we realize this law and our mind is no longer swayed by our desires and surrounding phenomena, we achieve permanent heart’s ease and are troubled no more. This state is what is called the small-vehicle nirvana.

It is easier to describe this state than to achieve it, however, for it is beyond the reach of an ordinary person. Only those bhikshus of exceptional capability who left home, became Shakyamuni’s disciples, separated themselves from the secular world, and gave themselves to intensive religious practice could attain that state. Therefore we must not on any account scorn their achievement, though Shakyamuni admonishes us against the inclination toward the two vehicles. Shravakas and pratyekabuddhas such as these are very rare in this world, and of a highly purified mental state. Therefore they are deserving of our deepest veneration.

All the same, the attainment of peace of mind is not true relief, for it simply negates the temporary manifestation of the physical body and the desires that arise from it and so does not establish the true self. Unless the true self is established, a person lives only heteronomously, just like flowing water, and does not create energy capable of acting freely and unrestrictedly outward. All living beings wish to act freely; this can even be said to be the meaning of life. Human beings in particular have as their essential quality free action and the ability to create what has value. If we do not understand clearly the nature of this essence, this “real self,” and establish it deep in the mind, we cannot experience true human fulfillment and joie de vivre, or be said to have attained true relief. What Shakyamuni wanted finally to teach is this, for he desired to bring us to the clear realization that though our mind and body are, being phenomena, highly unreliable, we have as our essence the firm and undying buddha-nature.

Many people, though, have no knowledge of their own essence and are either swayed by ever-changing forms of the body and environment and go from one emotional extreme to the other or find satisfaction only by completely denying the defilements. This is the same as a man who lives from hand to mouth, not knowing a priceless jewel is concealed in the lining of his clothes. Such a person is relieved the moment he realizes that he possesses the jewel, for he can sell it and live as he wishes. This is the kind of life I referred to above, a life of free and unrestricted action. Though previously the man has tried with all his might to support himself (to attain individual enlightenment), he now is able to use all kinds of bodhisattva practices to bring joy and happiness to those around him. This applies very closely to our own lives.

Since we are not ordained Buddhists, we think that it is

Inscription by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano of the opening part of chapter 8 of the Lotus Sutra, "The Five Hundred Disciples Receive the Prediction of Their Destiny," mounted on a scroll ornamented with a frontispiece painted in gold and silver ink.

all but impossible for us to eliminate all our defilements in the way the great bhikshus of old did. Of course greed should be removed, and it is possible to achieve that through religious practice. It is also essential to realize that phenomena are only temporary manifestations. This is also possible, through careful study of the Buddha's teaching. Yet both achievements are very difficult unless one is a particularly able person. If only a small number of people are capable of this attainment, society as a whole remains completely unaffected.

The way that large numbers of people are capable of following and that can bring society as a whole relief can be narrowed down to knowledge of the human essence (the buddha-nature). By this means we realize that our essential attitude is to work positively for all people and society, not seeking our own happiness alone, and act freely and unrestrictedly to create the Land of Tranquil Light in this world. To realize this is to become one with the Buddha.

It is important that we always remain aware that we have been given life and are sustained by the Buddha, and we should try to live our lives in that knowledge. By doing so we ensure happiness both for ourselves and for others. When we are imbued with such a positive spirit, it becomes impossible for us to do evil. Just as a carving knife that is in regular use is sharp and free of rust, constant action for good makes evil an impossibility. The defilements themselves are transformed into positive and valuable functions. For example, the defilement that leads a person to want to become rich will function as good by transforming into the effort to excel in one's work. This is the state that is called "the defilements themselves are indivisible from enlightenment."

To know our essence, to realize our buddha-nature, is to illuminate the world, to become a person of worth who

works for society in a variety of ways. Such a person is titled the Tathagata Universal Light. But I must emphasize that however much we excel in our work, however excellent our achievements are, we are not the Tathagata Universal Light unless that work serves to make society more radiant, in the broadest sense of the word. To give an extreme example, if you possess the best brain in the world or the most advanced technology, you do not merit the title Universal Light if your efforts are directed toward the creation of weapons capable of annihilating humankind. Again, if you use your ability for personal gain, or for the gain of the group or nation, disregarding the happiness of people as a whole, you do not deserve to be called Universal Light and are rather a demon (*yaksha*) who darkens the world. On the other hand, if you work hard in your job for the benefit of society, illuminating your workplace and family with your own radiance of character and lifestyle, it does not matter how inferior a position you hold or how low your intellectual capabilities are. Your actions show you to be an admirable Tathagata Universal Light.

You too can surely become Tathagata Universal Light, for you have within you the brilliant gem of life. Become conscious that you possess it; be confident of its presence within you. The Buddha has guaranteed its existence. Not to believe his testimony is indeed the action of a fool. Only believe, and this very day you can become a Tathagata Universal Light.

To be continued

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

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