

# 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.

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# “Green” Cooperation among Religions: A Proposal

by Isao Fukada

*The major faiths could work together on the urgent, essential task  
of protecting and restoring the threatened forests of the world.*

**T**he Japanese word *mottainai* (wasteful, but often translated as “What a waste!”) has been popularized by Dr. Wangari Maathai, who in 2004 became the first Kenyan woman and the first environmentalist to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The word is now known and understood by many people around the world. The way *mottainai* has been adopted by people in many countries is perhaps one indication of how they have come to fear the serious consequences of the environmental problems that have followed in the wake of the growth of modern civilization’s pursuit of material abundance and convenience.

Japan must be counted as one of the leading nations in the practice of pursuing material abundance and convenience. As a result, however, it seems that the daily lives of the Japanese are now being driven toward wealth-induced poverty and convenience-induced inconvenience in the midst of overflowing garbage and industrial waste, global warming-induced climate change, and other threats to the environment.

Every day I am struck by how things that make life more convenient when we have them are usually things we could do without. Convenience products are certainly nice to have. Not having them, however, does not usually mean inconvenience to the point where we find it hard to function.

Therefore, we can just stop using those things we can do without—but the trouble is that action on the individual level alone will not bring about a solution, and in this lies the difficulty of environmental problems. I call this “systematized wastefulness.” If we are to lead lives that are to a certain extent civilized, we are bound to be involved in social systems that are systematically wasteful.

For example, individual good intentions and efforts will not suffice to stop supermarkets and convenience stores from handing out plastic bags, or department stores from wrapping customers’ purchases in multiple layers of packaging. Fundamental solutions to these problems will only be possible when systematically wasteful social systems change.

Thus, the ramifications of environmental issues are expressed in a multitude of ways, from problems on the daily-life level right through to those that are global in scale. As a result of the energy and food supply strategies adopted by many of the world’s nations, the power of immense capital is causing forests, for example the rain forests in the Amazon basin, to be cut down at a furious pace and converted into fields of wheat and corn. It goes without saying that the Amazon’s primeval

forests play a significant planetary role in supplying oxygen and putting the brakes on global warming.

What kind of approach can religions take in relation to such global-scale environmental problems? As Buddhists, we should try on an individual level to live without using an excess of material goods and in a way that is long on ingenuity and short on greed, while devoting our energies into environmental education for the younger generation.

Our environment can be roughly divided into three sets of factors: the human environment, the social environment, and the natural environment. What types of environmentally conscious action can we take in these spheres in order to build the kind of harmonious world advocated by Buddhism? I think that we are approaching a new dimension, not only in the seriousness of environmental issues, but also in the ways we as Buddhists live and communicate the Buddha’s teachings.

In July of this year, the Group of Eight (G-8) summit meeting will be held beside Lake Toya in Hokkaido, Japan. The Japanese government will give top priority at this meeting to discussing measures to deal with global warming. The World Conference of Religions for Peace, in which I am also involved, will take the opportunity to hold a conference at about the same time in nearby Sapporo entitled “Religious Leaders Summit for Peace: On the Occasion of the Lake Toya G-8 Summit.” As I write this it is not clear what kind of declaration the leaders of different faiths intend to make in the name of religious cooperation. It is my hope, and I think it will be borne out in the future, that the major religions will join in declaring “green” cooperation for the protection and restoration of endangered forests. □

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# Walking with the Earth

## The Environmental Crisis and Buddhist Responses

by John Clammer

*The good news is that many people as individuals and as parts of organizations of many kinds are beginning to formulate creative responses.*

Today the media are full of news bemoaning the extent of the environmental crisis that we now face. Although these problems have been building for a long time—in fact, their seeds lie in the Industrial Revolution and subsequent patterns of economic growth, urbanization, and “development” that dominated the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries—a curious culture of denial has prevented us from seeing the depth and extent of the massive and interconnected and historically unprecedented challenge that humanity and the rest of the biosphere now critically and unavoidably face. Although we have known about growing environmental problems for some time, a kind of paralysis seems to have gripped our leaders and opinion makers, in part, of course, because admitting to these problems and beginning to rapidly adjust the economies of, in particular, the already rich countries would have major effects on industry, on patterns of consumption and transportation, and on work. But while economic short-term self-interest is one major factor, at the root of the problem is the nature of our civilization itself—that we have allowed to emerge a form of human society that is deeply anthropocentric and cut off

from its intimate integration into the rest of nature. In fact, for many people, nature is simply a place for recreation and a source of raw materials, not the root of our being and the context in which we enter into the deepest relationships with our true selves and with the myriad other entities that make up the total biosphere of which we are actually, only a small and very dependent part. Unfortunately, however, despite our minority status in the universe, we are a highly intrusive species with the unique power to transform and even destroy that very biosphere on which we ultimately depend for our food, air, water, and psychological and aesthetic satisfaction.

The result has been human intervention on an unprecedented scale in the carefully balanced web of relationships and resources that make up the environment, so much so that some people are now arguing that we have reached the tipping point—the point of no return beyond which unknown and uncontrollable changes will begin to take place that will have massive effects on the human societies that have caused them in the first place. Whether we have actually reached that point is as yet unclear, but what is certainly the case is that we are suddenly facing as a species and as a civilization a set of interlocking and major environmental challenges that in their scale and complexity no past civilization has ever had to face before. It is important, then, to sketch out the nature and dimension of these challenges before we turn to the vital question of possible responses to them.

### Sketching the Environmental Crisis

A huge body of technical literature now exists on many dimensions of the fast-emerging (or already-arrived) environmental crisis, but it is important here to give a holistic picture of the interlocking nature of what at first glance seem to be separate events or processes. After all, the notion of ecology itself is a system of interrelated parts, and it is essential to keep this totalizing picture in mind. This also gives us a model of how these problems have come about. It is easy in retrospect to assign blame, but in fact many environmental experts now argue that what we are witnessing is

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*In this Burma News Agency photo taken on May 7, 2008, and released by China's Xinhua News Agency the next day, the devastation caused by Cyclone Nargis is seen in a village in the hardest-hit Irrawaddy delta, Myanmar.*

what they are calling “creeping environmental problems”—problems that have emerged in often tiny increments, at first largely invisible until they suddenly reach a critical point. As the environmental scientist Michael Glantz, who has done much to popularize the idea of creeping problems, argues, the destruction of a small part of a mangrove forest somewhere in Southeast Asia to create a shrimp pond does not signal a stage in the destruction of a whole forest ecosystem. But when, as has happened in Thailand and elsewhere as a result of demand for shrimps and prawns in the high value-added markets of Japan, western Europe, and North America, huge numbers of such ponds are constructed in the same locale, then a whole ecosystem is rapidly ruined, with the loss of the biodiversity that it contains and the removal of a natural coastal protection leading to the rapid increase in salinity of the soils immediately inland, and with a corresponding impact on rice and fruit cultivation, coastal erosion, and an increase in storm damage, as was dramatically and tragically demonstrated by the Southeast Asian tsunami, which did far less damage to areas still protected by their natural belt of mangrove forest.

Let us now attempt to characterize the nature and extent of the looming global environmental crisis and the major categories of problems where we are clearly on the threshold of ecological degradation or even collapse.

### 1. Global Warming and Climate Change

It was recognized by some concerned scientists as early as the 1890s that the burning of fossil fuels could alter the global climate in unknown ways. As scientific knowledge has advanced and the isolation and identification of the so-called greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxides, and CFCs [chlorofluorocarbons, the substances used

as propellants in aerosols and in refrigeration]) that trap heat in the earth's atmosphere has become possible, it has also become slowly evident that human activities, and in particular our addiction to fossil-fuel-burning forms of industry, transportation, and heating, are altering the climate in ways that are likely to have serious consequences for life on the planet.

These include not only higher average temperatures but also a whole range of effects that stem from them, including melting of the polar ice caps, which leads to rising sea levels; loss of habitat for polar creatures, such as seals and the polar bear; changing and unpredictable weather patterns, as evidenced by the rise in the number and intensity of hurricanes (typhoons and cyclones) in the Caribbean, the South China Sea, and the Bay of Bengal; changes in seasons and unseasonable storms (as experienced in western Europe in the last several years); drought (as seen in the severe conditions prevailing in southeastern Australia for more than five continuous years); changing disease patterns (as formerly tropical diseases move into temperate zones); implications for agriculture, as growing seasons expand in some places (such as Canada) and decline in others; and unusually intense rainfall (as in southern India in March 2008, leading to widespread destruction of the ready-to-be-harvested rice crop). The consequences of such changing climate patterns are immense for low-lying coastal regions and cities and especially for the small island states of the Pacific and Indian oceans and for countries such as Bangladesh, in which flooding and increasing salinity of croplands combine with poverty and a fast-rising population to create a rapidly ticking social time bomb. Climatic change has of course occurred in the past, as witnessed by the periodic ice ages that have punctuated the earth's history. What is unique about the

present situation is that, for the first time, it is humanly induced and its consequences for a crowded planet are formidable in the extreme.

## 2. *Water: Scarcity and Pollution*

At the moment, the world's attention seems to be fixed on oil as the scarce resource, the lack of which will have major implications for industrial civilization. This deflects attention, however, from what is rapidly becoming the really scarce essential resource—water. We can live without oil, although this would involve huge changes in lifestyle and economy, but we certainly cannot live without water. Yet, unknown to much of the world, it is precisely water that is becoming the scarcest vital resource. There are a number of reasons for this—increasing demand as populations grow and as industry expands, especially in the developing world; the intensification of water use in agriculture not only to feed growing populations but also because of the shift to water-demanding crops to feed consumer markets in the affluent societies and in the new middle classes in the developing ones; and the move to the growing of water-intensive crops as biofuels as a shortsighted solution to the growing energy crisis.

At the same time climate change is bringing about droughts, urbanization is increasing globally and water supplies are shrinking. The great aquifers under the central areas of the United States, for example, are being depleted by agricultural and industrial use and by domestic demand in the cities at a rate far higher than replenishment rates. The Aral Sea in central Asia has declined more than fourteen meters (forty-six feet) since the 1960s as a result of water from its two main feeder rivers being diverted to irrigate expanding cotton production. Not only is there a growing absolute shortage of usable water in the world (the extraction of freshwater from seawater being an expensive and energy-intensive process), but industrial and consumption activities are making the situation even worse. International soft-drink industries moving into the Indian market, for example, have in some conspicuous cases drawn off so much water from local resources that they have caused immense damage to surrounding farmers, whose wells have run dry as a result of the drink manufacturers, pumping up groundwater from great depths in large quantities. Domestic usage in the growing cities—bathing and the huge amounts of water used in flush toilets, for example—likewise puts pressure on resources and often diverts supplies from the surrounding countryside to the urban areas. Furthermore, a major problem concerning water is not only the growing shortage but also the pollution of freshwater supplies—by the dumping of effluents into lakes and watercourses by industry, in particular, but also by the disposal of domestic wastes. The average housewife in Japan, for example, probably does not think about where her detergent goes every time she washes her dishes or does the household laundry. In fact, such detergents, many of them nonorganic or non-

biodegradable, are a major source of freshwater pollution in all the developed countries.

## 3. *Desertification and Deforestation*

Forests are one of the vital components of the earth's ecosystem. They are its lungs, the location of the richest biodiversity, the source of fruits and medicinal herbs, and one of its greatest beauties. Studies have even shown that "forest bathing," or prolonged exposure to a forest environment, has a very positive effect on the recovery rate of human cancer patients. The massive loss of forest cover that the world has experienced in the last century as industry has used its timber, with the expansion of arable and grazing-land forms of agriculture and with timber-intensive forms of consumption (for houses, furniture, fuel, toys, yachts, and any number of items), has a number of consequences. These include accelerated climate change (trees are natural air conditioners and forests are natural "sinks," or absorbers of carbon dioxide, one of the major greenhouse gases); soil loss, as topsoils are rapidly washed or blown away after the removal of forest cover; loss of the biodiversity of plant and animal life that forests nurture and represent; and, in the long run, in many areas such as the boundaries between the Sahara Desert and the north-central African forest belt, desertification as tree cover declines and overgrazing of the grasslands that replaces them takes place. The loss of biodiversity is especially hard to calculate in terms of its possible long-term implications. In addition to the irreplaceable loss of plant and animal species that will never again appear on the earth, little is known about the effects of this on the total ecology or about the loss of potentially beneficial medical plants or other resources.

## 4. *Population, Resources, and Waste*

The earth is already carrying a human population of six billion, and this figure is rising, especially in the developing world. While there has been a great deal of debate about the carrying capacity of the earth in terms of population, it takes little imagination to foresee the consequences of even higher population levels on a whole range of factors. These include intensive urbanization (with all of its attendant problems), huge stress on resources (water, fuels, food, space) and accompanying pressure on the few remaining areas of relatively unspoiled nature, increased social and political conflicts, and massive increases in the amounts of human-generated wastes. Already, waste disposal from industrial and domestic sources and from the throwaway consumer society is a major international problem, and waste disposal encroaches further on nature as more dumps are opened up, affecting water and air by way of pollution (waste entering groundwater or watercourses, or being burned), which poses an increasing health hazard that is unequally distributed socially—the poor and the marginalized being more likely to have waste-disposal facilities in their backyards than the affluent—a situation quite rightly called environ-

mental racism. There are major political and social issues here too, about the fair allocation of finite resources and the disposal of waste products.

It is now a well-known and much-quoted fact that if world society as a whole achieved the so-called standard of living (actually standard of consumption) of the already overdeveloped areas of the globe (Japan, Australia, western Europe, pockets of South Africa, and North America), four more planets would be needed to accommodate this situation. If per capita car ownership in China or India reaches that of Japan, not only will most of those new car owners have nowhere to go, as the roads and parking lots will be utterly clogged with traffic, but the amount of fuel needed would accelerate the extraction of the last oil by at least a decade, would put a huge strain on other resources (steel, for example), and would massively increase atmospheric pollution and acid rain (which does not stay where it is generated), to say nothing of global warming, worldwide. But clearly it is not possible to simply tell the developing world that they can no longer expect to have the technology and gadgets that the developed world has enjoyed. Rather, sane alternatives must be worked out and spread fairly and equally around international society, something that we will shortly turn to in more detail.

### 5. *Population and Food Security*

Already the average housewife, even in the most affluent societies, has started to notice the rising prices of basic commodities, expensive vegetables, formerly easily obtainable items suddenly not available. In much of the developing world, the problems are far more acute—shortages are commonplace, and even a small increase in price puts basic foodstuffs beyond the budget of the very poor. Rising populations, erratic weather patterns, water shortages, and demand for luxuries in the developed world and among the affluent sectors of the developing nations are only going to intensify this pattern. Poverty remains the number-one problem in most of the developing world, and it is a scandal to think that one-third of the total world population lives at or below the poverty line, with the deprivation and constant malnutrition that that implies. India alone has three hundred million people (more than twice the population of Japan) living in absolute poverty. While the link between poverty and population is a complex one, it is clearly the case that rising global populations are going to place more and more stress on available food supplies and agricultural land (more of which cannot be opened up without further deforestation), while urbanization is eating into available farmlands, especially near population centers. Many countries are already dependent on imports of foodstuffs. Who is deprived by one country's consumption is then an important political question (Japan, for example, consumes 10 percent of the world's total fish catch), and the possible technological "solutions"—for example, genetically modified foods—are untried and carry major risks. Food, like water, is an essential. Its avail-

ability in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality can no longer be guaranteed. Famine is still a real possibility for much of the world, and even the richest countries may no longer be immune from unprecedented food shortages.

### 6. *Conflict and Militarization*

It may surprise many to learn that collectively the world's militaries are the biggest and in many ways most dangerous polluters (more so even than industry). Not only do they dump, fire, explode, or drop huge quantities of materials, but many of these are highly toxic and/or dangerous in other respects. While the subject of conflict and violence is beyond the scope of this essay, the link between them and the environment is rarely made, and it should be. Not only does the militarization of the world misdirect scarce resources into unsustainable and in most cases pointless activities (using vast quantities of steel, rubber, chemicals, fabrics, and, of course, oil), but massive amounts of unrecorded pollution result from their use. Here again we need a holistic perspective that sees the links between the parts of a total world system.

For, in fact, all of these factors interact and intersect. This has led one commentator, the Australian environmentalist and former politician Colin Mason, to coin the phrase "the 2030 Spike,"<sup>1</sup> by which he means not only that all the factors that we have just discussed are active but that they are all converging. In his view, around the year 2030, all of these issues will peak—extractable oil reserves will be depleted, the population will be beyond carrying capacity, food and water shortages will have become critical, climate change will be irreversible, and warfare and militarization will be chronic features of the social landscape. Whether or not his exact date is correct is less important than the significant fact that he is correct in his main point—the convergence of numerous factors of environmental degeneration in a way that will fuel one another. This is a challenge that can no longer be ignored. The time of a culture of denial is well and truly over. The question then becomes: How can we collectively and individually respond to this growing crisis that will engulf us all, rich and poor alike, and for which we all bear a mutual responsibility?

### Responding to the Crisis

The good news is that many people as individuals and as parts of organizations of many kinds are beginning to formulate creative responses to these issues. At the individual level, handbooks and newspaper and Internet articles are appearing that suggest basic ways of living more ecologically and simply. At an academic level, more and more books are appearing that alert people to and address the environmental crisis. Programs are appearing in colleges and in the form of publications and study centers (although still few in number) on ecological literacy. And, perhaps a little late but in this case certainly better than never, religious thinkers in many faith traditions have begun to seriously address these

issues and to search for resources within their own scriptures that might suggest responses. Major collections of articles, such as that edited by Roger Gottlieb,<sup>2</sup> or textbook surveys such as that of David Kinsley,<sup>3</sup> have appeared on the bookshelves reviewing the contributions of different religious traditions responding to the environmental crisis. And since the pioneering work of E. F. Schumacher and his seminal book *Small Is Beautiful*, a large band of scholars and activists have begun to search for and propose ecologically responsible forms of economic organization and practice.

Very encouragingly, many of these voices have come from within the international Buddhist community, where the notion of engaged Buddhism has now begun to be applied to ecological issues as well as to human-rights and social-justice questions.<sup>4</sup> What is also significant about a great deal of this new thinking is the convergence of religious traditions, on the one hand, and the convergence of this religious thinking and certain significant strands of thinking about the environment, in particular the so-called deep ecology.

Buddhism teaches the interrelatedness of all things. In the Avatamsaka Sutra appears the famous notion of the Jeweled Net of Indra, an idea that Thich Nhat Hanh has expanded into the practice of what he terms Interbeing.<sup>5</sup> When this foundational idea, which also constitutes the basic definition of ecology, is expanded, we find that it leads in a number of significant directions, starting with the notion of the ecological self, or the self and mind as embedded in a greater reality that in turn transcends the common idea of the restless striving individual, separated from nature and from other beings. When unpacked, this concept points us toward the perception of the sacredness or sheer miracle of nature and its myriad beings and complex and subtle processes and beauty, to the notion found in some schools of Mahayana

Buddhism of the buddhahood of all beings (including plants and animals); toward treading lightly on the earth as Schumacher suggested with his idea of a Buddhist economics based on simplicity and the reduction of wants and its parallel implication of going beyond grasping to appreciation and substituting a nonviolent relationship to nature for one of greed, exploitation, and domination; toward a fundamental nondualism or holism that sees the whole of existence, including nature, as part of an undivided totality; and finally toward right livelihood, finding and creating ways of

AP Images

*Portuguese and Italian KFOR soldiers measure radiation levels on a Yugoslav Army tank destroyed during the NATO bombing campaign in the western Kosovo town of Klina on January 9, 2001.*

being in the world that allow us to respect and nurture the larger biosphere on which all of us are ultimately dependent. This is a viewpoint that can be shared by all religious traditions and indeed gives them a basis for dialogue and common collective action in response to what is now a truly global crisis. □

## Notes

1. Colin Mason, *The 2030 Spike: Countdown to Global Catastrophe* (London: Earthscan, 2003).
2. Roger S. Gottlieb, *This Sacred Earth: Religion, Nature, Environment* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
3. David Kinsley, *Ecology and Religion: Ecological Spirituality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1995).
4. Stephanie Kaza and Kenneth Kraft, eds., *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala, 2000); Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions, 1997); Allan Hunt Badiner, ed., *Dharma Gaia: A Harvest of Essays in Buddhism and Ecology* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1990).
5. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1998).

# Reintegrating the World in Japanese Buddhist Poetry

by Jean-Noël Robert

*Human beings who reach enlightenment awaken through themselves  
the whole surrounding world. This is a daring elevation to  
its ultimate meaning of an older tenet of Buddhism.*

For much more than a century now, an unfading cliché in the Western appreciation of Japanese culture has been the idea that there is a special relationship between the Japanese people and nature. It is only fair to acknowledge that this cliché, wherever it came from at the beginning, has been carefully cultivated by wide circles of Japanese intellectuals and distilled through endless repetition. I remember that when I first resided in Japan from 1972, there was a commercial catchword on television that seemed to me rather bizarre. It said something like “Only the Japanese can understand the profound meaning of the four seasons” (*shiki no kokoro*). I’ve forgotten what kind of product it was supposed to glorify, but I wondered then how it was possible to be so parochial minded, especially in Japan, where Western culture was so pervasive and you could hear extracts from Vivaldi’s *Four Seasons* interminably playing in department stores, surely some evidence for the fact that even Europeans took notice of the changing seasons and that they found a meaning in each of them. This feeling of discrepancy was vividly reinforced much later, in the mid-1980s, when I took a party of Japanese scholars, who had come to Paris for an international conference on Japanese studies, to the Château de Vaux-le-Vicomte, not too far from Paris. When we entered a large reception room heavily decorated with florid paintings and the guide explained that each corner of the ceiling was decorated with pictures representing the four seasons, a colleague who is a specialist in Japanese history literally gasped: “You mean the French had a notion of the four seasons?” I had to explain that the French had very little to do with that, as the theme of the four seasons had been a very common motif for room decoration since at least Roman times. He seemed not a little bemused, and I couldn’t but think that the mentioned commercial message had had a damning and lasting influence. Well, of course, that CM, as they say in Japanese, was not the cause but only an effect of a deeply rooted belief in the singularity of the link between nature and the Japanese mind.

Another experience taught me not a little about the Japanese worldview. A number of years ago, I happened to attend another international conference, in Rome, devoted to the

Lotus Sutra. Here I met a Japanese specialist in Buddhism, and as we were discussing some point of the sutra, I was quite surprised when I heard him asserting without ambiguity that the Lotus Sutra taught explicitly the awakening of grasses and stones, of the plant and the mineral worlds. As far as I know, there is no such teaching in this sutra, and he listened very incredulously to me when I told him so. I could almost feel how sorry he was for my lack of understanding, and it was quite clear that all I could say only appeared as a superficial, raw reading of the scripture, without empathy for its deeper meaning. I was very intrigued by this episode in mutual misunderstanding, and it made me reflect on the way the idea of the awakening of the inanimate world could get to be so deeply rooted in Japanese Buddhism as to be a prism through which even the Lotus Sutra was read.

One of the most evident and important ways through which this peculiar understanding of the Lotus Sutra has been widely diffused to this day in Japanese culture, well beyond religious circles, is to my mind the literary subgenre known as *shakkyō-ka*, that is, “Japanese poems on Buddhist

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themes." There is no significant difference between a "Japanese poem on a Buddhist theme" and a literary *waka*, those short poems in five lines and thirty-one syllables that are considered the classical and perennial form of Japanese poetry. The main characteristic of a poem on a Buddhist theme, especially of the kind called *hōmon-ka*, or "poem on a dharma text," is that it is written under a caption usually taken from a Buddhist sutra. Not unnaturally, the Lotus Sutra plays a major role in this category, not only on account of its central place in Japanese Buddhism, for the Pure Land scriptures were very popular as well, but also for its intrinsic literary value, as exemplified by the wealth of its comparisons and metaphors, which without doubt stimulated poetic creativeness. The skillful interaction between scriptural quotations in Chinese and their poetical expansion in Japanese left room for a multitude of images that brought about a certain understanding of the scriptures. Through repetition and elaboration among generations of poets, this understanding became a tacitly acknowledged commentary. It must be added that the poets who most indulged in *shakkyō-ka* writing were not merely poets but, in their overwhelming majority, monks, and monk-scholars to boot, so that their poetical developments were deeply motivated by scholastic erudition. Their poetic imagery was in fact a cleverly devised doctrinal code.

A most concrete example of this application of dogmatics to poetics can be seen in pieces written by the famous monk and scholar hailing from the Tendai school but who was a decisive figure in the spread of Pure Land doctrines in Japan, Genshin (d. 1017). We are lucky enough to have at

least two poems he wrote summing up the gist of the chapter on medicinal herbs of the Lotus Sutra, and the interesting thing is that the two poems are widely divergent in their tenor. Let me quote this one first:

Though rain as it falls  
From the vastness of the sky  
Does not discriminate,  
The plants it moistens  
Grow in their diverse ways

(*Senzai Waka-shū*)

We have here a most orthodox, even if a bit dull, embroidery on the sutra: it is the same rain, that is, the Buddha's teaching, that falls on all sentient beings in their diversity and all of them profit differently, according to the keenness of their faculty, from its beneficence. We can be sure that an Indian monk contemporary of the Lotus Sutra would not have been surprised by this poem, had he had a chance to hear it.

This other poem, now, from the hand of the same Genshin, opens quite unexpected vistas (I chose here one of two versions):

Since it is a rain  
Of the very same savor  
That falls upon them,  
Plants and human beings  
Will ripen into buddhahood

(*Shokugoshūi Waka-shū*)

Here, quite astonishingly, we have the opposite view from the former poem: the plants do not grow any longer each one according to its species but, together with human beings, their common destiny is to become buddhas. It is very interesting to notice that the same argument, namely, the uniformity of the rain falling on earth ("does not discriminate" in the first poem, "of the very same savor" in the second one), leads to contradictory conclusions: diversity in one case, unity in the other. Of course, everybody even moderately familiar with Tendai teachings will understand that the first poem stands on the side of the conventional, or "vulgar," perception of things ("truth"), while the second alludes to the "supreme" truth, the "very same savor" of the poem (in Japanese "one taste") standing for the One Vehicle. The composition of such poems, unwearingly repeated along the ages, no doubt gave the Japanese reader fitting spectacles to read the teaching of the awakening of the plant and mineral worlds into the text of the Lotus Sutra.

This literary practice had such a powerful impact that we can see it attaining near-perfection in the works of a poet as masterful as Jien (1155–1225), monk, scholar, and poet, who gave us the first collection of a hundred poems devoted to the Lotus Sutra. It is easy to see that he had wholly integrated the idea of the awakening of nonsentient beings, as is shown in this poem in the collection, *Shūgyoku-shū*, four of which I will site:

Even a faint flower,  
If we focus our mind  
On its contemplation,

Is as ourselves a servant  
In Buddha's abode

Here again we have, clearly expressed, the idea of a common destiny of plants and men. Moreover, in Jien's time, this idea had become so deeply rooted that the plant imagery could work both ways, and the physiology of plants can explain the development of buddha-nature, although, to be fair, some Chinese Buddhist poems had already hinted that way:

Since trees and grass  
Grow roots, and twigs and leaves  
Are sprouting,  
How much more will it be true  
For the seed in the human mind?

The seed (*tane*) here is the seed of buddhahood lying at the core of our nature, the possibility for every human being to awaken to buddhahood. The idea of this precious seed is put to rich use by Jien, as we can see from this piece:

In this summer pond,  
Since from the beginning  
A seed is lying,  
Pure and immaculate,  
Will it blossom into a flower?

I cannot give here a full account of the intricate meanings that are crammed into this deceptively simple piece, but it

will have been clear to all monkly readers that the poet had in mind the teaching of the Original Awakening (*hongaku*). The pond being a very common metaphor for the heart, and the blossom of the lotus flower for the awakening of mind, there would have been no doubt as to the meaning conveyed.

But then, the scale of the metaphor can change and take us from the simple image of the mind as flower to a grander vision of the whole world as animated. Here again, Jien has a very telling piece:

At Iwashimizu,  
In their truth do flow  
Along the stream  
The leaves of words  
He is now speaking

His collection of one hundred poems on the Lotus Sutra was offered by Jien to the Japanese deity Hachiman in his shrine at Iwashimizu (a toponym that can be punningly understood as “I shall not speak”) near Kyoto; as an embodiment of the well-known conception known in medieval Japan as “original basis and its emanations” (*honji-suijaku*), this Japanese Shinto war god was considered, according to a preface written by Jien, to be the embodiment of Mahā-Vairocana, Śākyamuni, and Amitābha. The adverb of time *now* (*ima*) in Lotus poetry mostly means the age when the sutra had been preached by the Buddha. It is therefore the age when the reality of things was disclosed to all of those who can understand and uphold this scripture. Thus, as often happens in Jien’s Buddhist poetry, the poem is divided into two periods: the period when the Buddha has not yet exposed the truth (*Iwashi* = *iwaji*, “does not speak”) and the “now” of the Lotus Sutra. Jien then makes a most skillful use of the very old Japanese term for word, (*koto no ha* = *kotoba*), which can be understood to mean “leaves of words,” from which naturally rises the poetic image of leaves flowing down a mountain stream. Thus the word of the Buddha is relayed through the ancient Japanese gods (*kami*), and their means of transmission is the natural landscape. This poem thus appears as a telling image of the doctrine called “the inanimate preaches the dharma” (*mujō-seppō*): nature itself in its entirety explains the same teachings as the sutras.

But is nature itself really inanimate? Is it inorganic—soulless, in more Western parlance? Jien gives us very discreet hints in his poems, which are ours to discern and understand. We find thus twice in the corpus I translated (nos. 150 and 169) the well-known poetical expression *munashiki sora*, meaning literally “empty skies” and usually describing the sky where the moon has not yet risen. If we follow a very common practice in Japanese poetry derived from Chinese verse and transpose the pure Japanese words *munashiki sora*, which are not written in Chinese characters, into the usual *kanji* characters with which they are usually written, we are

surprised to discover a very important word of the Buddhist vocabulary: *kokū*, meaning “empty space” (*ko* = *munashi*; *kū* = *sora*).

Now, there is a work very highly considered in Tendai dogma in which both the word and the concept *kokū* play a most important role: it is the concise but rewarding treatise brought from China to Japan by Saichō at the beginning of the ninth century, written by the sixth patriarch of the Chinese Tendai (T’ien-t’ai) school, Chan-jan (Tannen, in Japanese), and somewhat cryptically entitled *The Adamantine Lancet* (*Kongōbei-ron*, in Japanese). Under the form of a dialogue held in a dream between an honest Buddhist follower with a philosophical bent and a rough-looking hermit, the idea of the “inanimate having (buddha-) nature” is scrutinized from a variety of angles, starting from a decisive quotation taken from the Sutra of Perfect Nirvana (*Nehan-gyō*): “The buddha-nature of sentient beings is just like space; it is neither interior nor exterior. If it were interior or exterior, how could it be called ‘all-pervasive?’” To state it rather bluntly, inasmuch as it is possible to give a definite interpretation to a text that its author himself is careful to present as a dream talk, inanimate objects of the outside world such as trees, grasses, and stones do possess buddha-nature and thus can awaken, in the measure that they have an unalterable relation with the mind of a Buddhist adept.

The human beings who reach enlightenment awaken through themselves the whole surrounding world. This is a very daring elevation to its ultimate meaning of an older tenet of Buddhism: the distinction between direct and indirect karmic retributions (*ehō* and *shōhō*), meaning that an individual must assume his or her own karmic burden, which will materialize as an individual body endowed with a certain social status, a fair or ugly appearance, good or bad health, and so on, but that a group of individuals who share the same world they live in would have a karmic responsibility in the constitution of this world. We who live in our common world at the beginning of the twenty-first century and enjoy, or bear, our modern environment, are in some way the makers of this environment. This refers not only to direct action (the daily production of refuse, for example) but, more deeply, to moral action: our past deeds, good or bad, did their share in the world we have to assume now. Starting from this, Chan-jan proceeds gradually to demonstrate that there is no object independent from mind and that there is therefore no distinction to be made between animate and inanimate: the inanimate therefore possesses buddha-nature, as it is an emanation of the One Mind.

It is thus fairly obvious that the integration of the outside world as an organic being, which is, as will now be easily understood, firmly based in Tendai doctrines, is not a mere literary conceit forced on the Lotus Sutra but is the result of a contemplative reading of the sutra that must be viewed in its own right as a valid exegetical method. There is no doubt that it can be an inspiration for an environmentalist interpretation of the Lotus Sutra. □

# Considering the “Rights of Nature”

by Nobuyuki Sato

*The concept was originally proposed in the United States as a topic in environmental ethics. Two perspectives must be kept in mind when considering the concept.*

In 1995, an actual lawsuit was filed in Japan in which the Amami rabbit (*Pentalagus furnessi*) sued the national government. Lawsuits such as this, which may seem odd when first heard about, came into being in the 1970s in the United States, and are based upon the concept that is called “the rights of nature.”

## A Call for Environmental Rights

Japan’s period of high economic growth that began in the latter half of the 1950s was also a period of major environmental pollution. The circumstances in the country at the time were such that, even as factories were emitting pollutants, the majority of the victims of the emissions could not obtain relief, on the grounds that the emissions were occurring on privately owned property and that it was affirmed that the corporate activity was supporting high economic growth. In this context, the Osaka Bar Association’s Study Group on Environmental Rights moved forward with a study of the subject of environmental rights, which was advocated in 1970 at the annual convention of the Japan Federation of Bar Associations on the Protection of Human Rights, publishing its findings in 1975. The group’s document “Environmental Rights” states, “We have the right to manage the environment and to enjoy a good environment, and on the basis of these rights, if a person or entity is recklessly polluting the environment and obstructing or attempting to obstruct our welfare, we also have the right to demand its abatement or prevention.”

Even though this was a watershed concept, to this day it has not been accepted by the Japanese courts; even within academia, it has not been universally supported. Why is that? On the one hand, it is because the courts have been averse to the broad and amorphous nature of environmental rights and have gone about the issue of redress to injured parties through other, more concrete and limited legal principles. I must also point out the structural limitation included in this way of thinking. That is, this type of environmental right is based upon the concept of people having the right to manage and enjoy the environment, which is itself based upon the theory, serving as the foundation of the modern

system of laws, that there is a distinction between the subjects of rights (persons) and the objects involved (things). Consequently, for example, when there is destruction of the natural environment in a remote place, it is difficult to make it an issue, since no human party is directly harmed.

## The Advent of the Rights of Nature

One of the alternative concepts to be considered regarding this structural limitation is “the rights of nature.” The background for this is the shift from viewing nature as something that human beings utilize, and seeing the value of nature as merely the value of its utilization, to the viewpoint that humans themselves are a part of nature and that nature and ecological systems have value in and of themselves. Thus nature, and not just people, can be regarded as the subject of certain rights.

The concept of “the rights of nature” was originally proposed in the United States as a topic in environmental ethics. Aldo Leopold’s *Sand County Almanac* (1949) is representative of this. Later, in the 1970s, Christopher Stone argued for the rights of nature as a legal theory in his essay “Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects” (45 Southern California Law Review 450 [1972]), contending that trees could legally sue as plaintiffs in a lawsuit.

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The courts are by no means all-powerful, which is sometimes misunderstood, however. If, in order to deal with a problem, those whose rights and benefits have been infringed intend to recover them by appealing to force, including acts of violence, society on the one hand will abound with force, and on the other hand will also abound with those who cannot recover their rights and benefits because they have no strength. In this scenario, the institution that we call a court of justice is, to begin with, to make restitution prepared by the state for the use of such force, which it shall prohibit. It follows that only a party that has suffered a violation of its rights and benefits can generally be a plaintiff in a court proceeding.

For example, even if a development action by the government results in the destruction of the natural environment, unless there is a specific injured party a suit cannot be brought in a court of law. This system may appear at first to be irrational, but in a democratic nation the majority decisions of its citizens are latently, and of its elected politicians, directly, the basis for the government's development actions, and it is intrinsically antidemocratic for a court to overrule such actions.

In other words, allowing a suit to be filed on behalf of specific injured parties sets the scene, for instance, for protecting the rights and benefits of individuals that cannot be usurped, not even by a majority. Looked at in this way, there is a certain rationality to the way of thinking that says that issues of damage to the natural environment caused by government development actions should intrinsically be resolved by the legislature and not by the courts.

Unfortunately, however, people tend to be indifferent to issues that do not directly involve their own interests. There is no assurance anywhere that the principle of majority rule is a suitable way to pass along a good natural environment to our children, or to give any more than a passing thought to the extinction of species, or to consider the equilibrium of the entire ecosystem. That is surely the reason that Stone wanted trees to be given standing to bring suit as plaintiffs.

In the United States there have been a great number of lawsuits in which nature itself has been the plaintiff. Of course, it has been "persons" that have actually brought suit, but those persons have been considered to be along the lines of conservators or trustees for nature, and they have been given standing to sue even though they were not themselves the "injured party." One of the first of these cases was *Sierra Club v. Morton* (405 U.S. 727) decided by the United States Supreme Court in 1972. The Sierra Club, an environment-protection organization, had sued to block a permit issued for the development of a ski resort in the Mineral King Valley in Sequoia National Park in central California. Although in the end the Sierra Club was denied standing, the dissenting opinion of Justice William O. Douglas, that the valley itself should have been the plaintiff, made a large impact. Later, a river in upstate New York was the plaintiff in the

*Amami rabbit* (*Pentalagus furnessi*) is a primitive dark-furred rabbit that is often called a "living fossil." In 2004 Japan's Ministry of the Environment categorized it as an endangered species.

case of *Byram River v. Village of Port Chester* in 1975, and an island was the plaintiff in 1979 in *Palila v. Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources*; in both of these cases the decisions were construed in such a way that persons were the conservators and trustees for nature.

### Perspectives in Considering the Rights of Nature

I think that it is necessary to have in mind at least two perspectives when considering the rights of nature.

First, as for the direct effect on the legal system of the rights of nature, it is necessary to have a perspective on the division of roles between the legislature and the courts. As we saw above, the argument for the rights of nature in the United States has led directly to an opening of the doors of the courts, and by opening up, the courts have taken on the major problem of protecting nature and the ecosystem. This brings about the necessity of once again looking at the respective roles of the government and the courts. For example, in the United States, in addition to the principles of the judicial precedents mentioned above, under the laws of Congress, any citizen may sue in order to protect an endangered species. That means explicitly transferring authority from the legislative branch, where the process of

adjusting interests is involved, to the judicial branch, in what might be termed a state of emergency created by the possible extinction of a designated species.

Meanwhile, in 1995 in Japan, four wildlife species, including the Amami rabbit, as well as an environmentalist organization and individuals sued, as coplaintiffs, to have the permit for a golf course development revoked. Without acknowledging any construction whereby the environmentalist group and the individuals were conservators or trustees of the Amami rabbit, the court rejected the lawsuit on the grounds that there should be an anonymous "person" who could state its name as "Amami rabbit," but that no such "person" had been identified. One could criticize the court's posture as being overly conservative, but viewed from another point of view, in such a situation, in which the legislature does not fully indicate the role that it demands of the courts, one can say that the court's action was inevitable.

Second, the "rights of nature" approach is also a bit dra-

matic in its sense of pressing for a change in the "people v. nature" thought pattern, but for it to lead to a restructuring of the entire legal and social system, simply revamping the text of the laws will not be sufficient. Even if, for example, the Japanese Constitution were to provide for nature itself to be the subject of rights, only a human being would be able to assert and protect those rights. Even if people are charged with the duty to protect nature, in light of the fact that nature is without a voice to speak for itself, it is ultimately left to the wisdom of human beings—and this is not limited to the wisdom of any one particular group of people—to decide specifically what, if anything, should be done. Consequently, when considering the rights of nature at the level of changing thought patterns, it is naturally not merely a legal technicality, but something that requires the collaboration of many fields: religion (especially Buddhism), philosophy, ethics, and education. I heartily invite people of religion to play a more active role in this. □

## People of Religion Promote Grass-Roots Activities to Protect the Environment

As part of environmental protection activities that Japanese people of religion have been involved in at the grass-roots level, Rissho Kosei-kai members participated in the Electricity-Reduction Movement, a campaign for using less electricity and thereby reducing the emission of carbon dioxide, a major factor in the greenhouse effect, for three months during the winter of 2004 and again during the summer of 2005. The members took every opportunity in their daily lives to save electricity at home and at branches, as well as at their work places.

The campaign was proposed by Shinshuren, the Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan. To establish a lifestyle based on the spirit of "knowing satisfaction with little," members across Japan have promoted various unique activities, which in turn have raised the consciousness of members concerning how our daily activities affect the global environment. Some Rissho Kosei-kai members cooperated with people of other Shinshuren member organizations by forming an environmental committee, through which they set an example of earth-conscious lifestyles and encouraged the public to participate in the campaign. The Shinshuren secretariat collected the data on electricity consumption during the campaign. Shinshuren also held a seminar on global environmental problems at its Tokyo headquarters on September 27, 2005.

Youth members of Rissho Kosei-kai participated in the Youth Day in May, which has been observed every year

throughout Japan with the theme "Raising the Winds of Social Change." On this day young members participate in various activities for the betterment of society and the building of world peace. This year, some 19,000 members took part in the activities that were promoted by 239 branches. Many of the branches focused on the problem of ecological crisis, collaborating on such projects as beautifying the environment, environmental studies, and fundraising to support environmental protection projects. □

*Young Rissho Kosei-kai members cleaning up a coastal windbreak forest in Kakegawa, Shizuoka Prefecture, during the Youth Day on May 18 of this year.*

# Promoting Global-Warming Countermeasures with Japan in a Leadership Role

by Masaru Machida

*The problem encompasses the entire planet, and the victims are also the perpetrators. Energy-saving technologies developed in Japan can help.*

At present there are four major issues that threaten peace in the world: (1) the fear of the occurrence of nuclear war; (2) the threat of intensified ethnic and religious confrontations; (3) the threat posed by AIDS-related diseases caused by the human immunodeficiency virus and new strains of influenza; and (4) delays in counteracting the sudden worsening of the global environment. The rapid worsening of the global environment, in particular—the effect of which has already been seen in the form of climate change—has created a sense of crisis in almost every country. Attention has become focused on global warming caused by greenhouse gases, especially CO<sub>2</sub>, which are emitted with the consumption of fossil fuels.

It was in the context of this sense of crisis that last year's Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and to former U.S. vice president Al Gore. They were awarded the prize for raising public awareness of climate change caused by human activity and for their efforts in laying a foundation for measures necessary to counteract climate change.

Concerning global-warming countermeasures, at the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP3) held at

Kyoto in 1997, Japan was the chair and the Kyoto Protocol was adopted. The protocol determined target values for emission by the developed countries of greenhouse gases, and all of those countries are making efforts to attain those targets with the exception of the United States, which withdrew in midstream. Moreover, in July of this year, Japan will chair the Group of Eight (G-8) summit meeting to be held at Lake Toya in Hokkaido, and one of the main items to be taken up is to be global-warming countermeasures. It is oddly fortunate and with a deep sense of destiny that Japan should once again have been given the opportunity to be in the leadership position in steering countermeasures to global warming.

I would like to present my thoughts on why Japan should be taking the lead in moving forward with global-warming countermeasures, as well as on Japan's experience in controlling air pollution caused by harmful automotive exhaust gas and the Japanese energy-saving technology essential to counteracting global warming.

## Japan Overcame Air Pollution Due to Exhaust Gas

In Japan in the 1960s, a lot of air pollution was being generated in places like Yokkaichi City and Kawasaki City, the result of the effects of harmful exhaust gas from factories, automobiles, and so on. The Environment Agency was formed in 1971 to deal with this issue, and after a variety of countermeasures were undertaken, air quality was improved to the point that in the 1980s air pollution from exhaust gas had been overcome. Figure 1 illustrates the change in the concentration levels of sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), an indicator of exhaust gas, and the photographs comparing Yokkaichi City in 1970 and 1992 confirm the improved situation.

Air pollution owing to exhaust gas is a local problem that can be clearly seen in terms of the victims, or the residents, and the perpetrators, or the persons causing the emission of the exhaust gas. I will describe what roles were played by the victim-residents, the perpetrator-emitters, and the government and local authorities in tackling the problem.

First, the role of the victim-residents developed mainly through neighborhood protest actions. These took the form

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Masaru Machida is an environmental counselor officially registered in the Ministry of the Environment of Japan, and serves as president of the 21e-net Co., Ltd., which develops environment monitoring systems and environmental business. In 2000, as a specialist in the field of environmental conservation, he set up 21e-common, an environmental NGO, to plan programs for the prevention of environmental pollution. He is also a member of Rissho Kosei-kai.

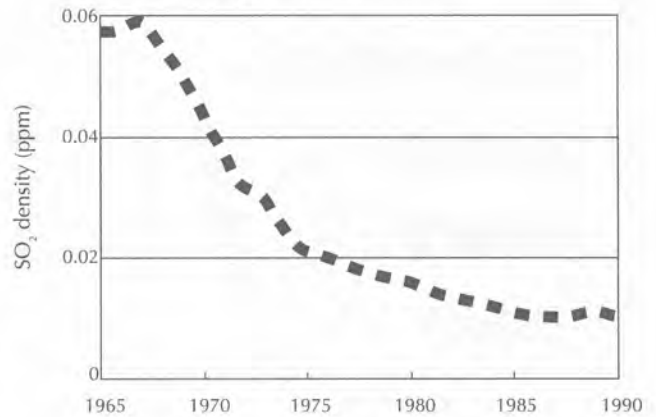
of such steps as petitions to the government and local authorities; demonstrations against the emitters' building of plants; actions to shut down the plants' operations; and citizens' lawsuits, claiming health injury against the government and the emitters. Next, what the emitter-perpetrators eventually did was to develop emission-control technology and install emission-control equipment to manage the emissions at their source. Last, what the government and local authorities did included regulating emissions through laws and ordinances, entering into agreements on pollution control with the individual emitters to limit emissions, and subsidizing the installation of emission-control equipment. Further, they performed on-site inspections of the sources of discharge and provided emitters with information on emission-control technology. It was through the roles and cooperation of these three groups that today the air pollution situation has improved.

It should be pointed out, however, that there is almost no record of any role played by people of religion. From what few records I can confirm, other than collective memorial services for those who had died from causes attributed to air pollution, it seems that their role was minimal.

### Making Use of Japan's Energy-Saving Technologies to Counteract Global Warming

The problem of global warming, unlike the local problem of air pollution, encompasses the entire planet. Moreover, because the emission of greenhouse gases, the source of global warming, arises from human life itself, there is a problem in

Fig. 1 Change in Average  $\text{SO}_2$  Concentration Over 15 Years (1992)  
Source: White Paper on the Environment

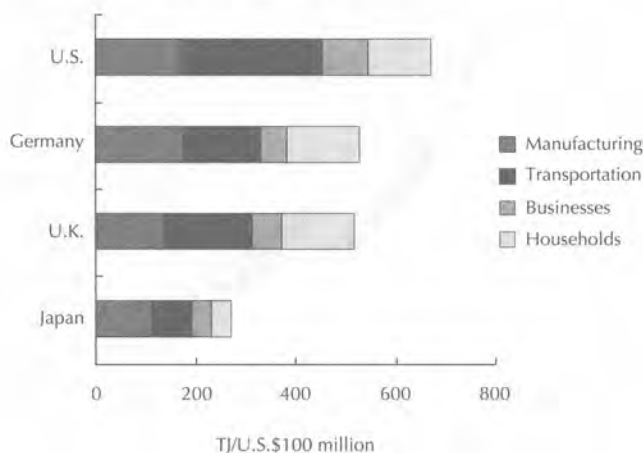


that although all people are the victims, they are also the perpetrators.

For that reason, countermeasures aimed at the reduction of greenhouse gases in Japan are divided into four fields—the manufacturing industry (electrical power generation, high-energy-consuming industries, and other industries), transportation, businesses (offices and the like), and households. Additionally, the fields of agriculture, forestry, and garbage/waste are being put forward. Countermeasures being promoted jointly by all of these fields are a reduction in energy consumption and the proactive introduction of energy-saving technologies.

Fig. 2 Energy Consumption per GDP by Category (2000)

Source: Ministry of the Environment



Japan is a country with meager natural resources, including sources of energy. For this reason, Japan has moved ahead, since the two oil crises of the 1970s, with reductions in energy consumption and developments in energy-saving technologies.

In order to measure the extent of Japan's energy-saving technologies, in other words, its energy efficiency, I have compared Japan's energy consumption per gross domestic product (GDP) with that of other Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) member nations—Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. As Figure 2 shows, Japan's energy efficiency is the highest, about twice that of Germany and the United Kingdom and two and a half times that of the United States. Japan will aggressively disseminate to high-energy-consuming countries such as the United States, China, Russia, and India the energy-saving technologies that have made this energy efficiency possible, and we can expect that this will greatly reduce the energy consumption of those countries.

### Japan's Role and the Role of People of Religion in Global-Warming Countermeasures

A topic of debate in Japan is when the "point of no return" for climate change might occur. The point of no return is approximately ten years prior to when it is estimated that the atmospheric temperature on earth will rise past a certain threshold. According to weather simulations computed in Japan, if a high degree of economic growth such as we are seeing today continues, a 1.5 degree Celsius (2.7 degree Fahrenheit) rise in temperature, compared with the average temperature during the thirty years from 1861 to 1890 before industrialization, that would imperil the preservation of living organisms other than humans will occur around 2016, and a 2 degree Celsius (3.6 degree Fahrenheit) rise, greatly increasing the part of the human population whose survival would be in grave peril, will occur around 2028. According to this, the 1.5 degree point of no return was reached in 2006; that is to say, we are already beyond the point of no return.

Japan recognizes that we have arrived at the point of no return. Japan has had past experience in conquering air pollution from exhaust gas and also has the technologies needed to counteract global warming. It would be perfectly natural for Japan to take a leading role in promoting global-warming countermeasures.

Finally, I believe that there are two important roles that people of religion can play with respect to countermeasures for global warming, a problem that confronts the entire planet. These may already be happening, but permit me to state them anyway. One is for the religious people of the world to act together and inform the governments of every country that they must aggressively undertake global-warming countermeasures. The other is to guide people so that each and every one of them can cooperate in the careful use of fossil fuels and foods, which are such limited resources on the planet. □

*Yokkaichi City in October 1992. Air quality improved after many countermeasures to pollution were implemented.*

# The Greening of Buddhist Practice

by Kenneth Kraft

*With increased communication and cooperation among Buddhists around the globe, Buddhist-inspired environmentalism is also becoming manifest in national and international arenas.*

On January 5, 1993, a Japanese ship, the *Akatsuki Maru*, returned to port with about one-and-a-half metric tons of plutonium. Its 134-day voyage was the first step in a Japanese plan to send spent nuclear fuel to Europe to be reprocessed as plutonium, which would then be reused as fuel in nuclear reactors. However, the ship's twenty-thousand-mile round trip caused concern in more than forty countries, including public demonstrations in France and Japan. Experts charged that such voyages could not be adequately shielded from the risks of a nuclear accident or a terrorist attack. Many questioned Japan's commitment to its own nonnuclear principles (reactor-grade plutonium can also be used to make nuclear weapons). Pointing to the nuclear aspirations of North Korea and other countries, some observers called for a worldwide halt in the recovery of plutonium from spent fuel.

Plutonium is one of the deadliest substances known. A single speck ingested through the lungs or stomach is fatal. Plutonium-239 has a half-life of 24,400 years, but it continues to be dangerous for 250,000 years. If we think in terms of human generations, about twenty-five years, we are speaking of ten thousand generations that will be vulnerable unless the radioactivity is safely contained. In Buddhism, the number ten thousand is a concrete way of indicating something infinite. That may also be the unpleasant truth about plutonium: it is going to be with us forever.

The American scholar-activist Joanna Macy has suggested that our most enduring legacy to future generations may be the decisions we make about the production and disposal of radioactive materials. We will be held accountable for what we do with the toxic substances (nuclear and nonnuclear) that we continue to generate in such great quantities. Buddhists have long believed that the present, the past, and the future are inextricably linked and ultimately inseparable. "Just consider whether or not there are any conceivable beings or any conceivable worlds which are not included in this present time," a thirteenth-century master asserted.<sup>1</sup> Although the threat of nuclear holocaust appears to have abated, we see that the ongoing degradation of the environment poses a threat of comparable danger.

In response to this threat, Buddhists around the world have begun to immerse themselves in environmental issues, attempting to approach urgent problems from the inside as well as the outside. An increasing number of them believe that the only way to prevent ecological disaster is to deepen our relationship with the planet and all life upon it. In this essay I will focus principally on North American Buddhists, who seem to be taking the lead in the "greening" of Buddhism. Of course, what we need most are human responses to the environmental crisis rather than Buddhist ones, so when the Buddhist label is used here, it is almost always used in that spirit.

## Individual Practices Related to the Environment

A list of individual practices must begin with traditional forms of Buddhist meditation (and related practices, such as chanting). Meditation is supposed to reduce egoism, deepen appreciation of one's surroundings, foster empathy with other beings, clarify intention, prevent what is now called burnout, and ultimately lead to a profound sense of oneness with the entire universe. "I came to realize clearly," said a Japanese Zen master upon attaining enlightenment, "that Mind is not other than mountains and rivers and the great wide earth, the sun and the moon and the stars."<sup>2</sup>

For some Buddhists, meditation alone is regarded as a

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sufficient expression of ecological awareness. Others supplement time-honored forms of meditation with new meditative practices that incorporate nature imagery or environmental themes. For example, the following verse by the Vietnamese Zen teacher Thich Nhat Hanh is widely used by his American students, who recite it mentally in seated meditation:

Breathing in, I know that I am breathing in.  
Breathing out, I know that I am breathing out.  
Breathing in, I see myself as a flower.  
Breathing out, I feel fresh.  
Breathing in, I see myself as a mountain.  
Breathing out, I feel solid.  
Breathing in, I see myself as still water.  
Breathing out, I reflect things as they are.  
Breathing in, I see myself as space.  
Breathing out, I feel free.<sup>3</sup>

Thich Nhat Hanh has helped to popularize many mindfulness verses that function as reminders of our interconnectedness with the earth. The verses may be memorized or posted in appropriate locations. For example, the following verse, meant to be used when getting into a car, evokes a two-fold mindfulness—for the moment and for interrelatedness:

Entering this powerful car,  
I buckle my seatbelt  
and vow to protect all beings.<sup>4</sup>

The cultivation of intimacy with nature is a central aim for many Buddhist environmentalists. Buddhist activist Stephanie Kaza, who has written about her “conversations” with trees, suggests other ways to develop empathy with the natural environment:

One may engage in relationship with the moon, observing its . . . effect on one’s moods and energy. One may cultivate relationships with migrating shorebirds, hatching dragonflies, or ancient redwoods. . . . These relations are not one-time encounters; rather they are ongoing friendships.<sup>5</sup>

### Group Practices

Group practices related to the environment are being created at a rapid rate. For American Buddhists, the family has become fertile ground for spiritual practice in daily life, and environmental concerns are often addressed in this setting. One parent from Colorado treats recycling as a “family ecological ritual,” using it to teach interconnection.<sup>6</sup> At most American Buddhist centers, conservation of resources and reduction of waste is a conscious part of communal practice.

The Zen Center of Rochester, New York, conducts an earth-relief ceremony. Buddhist rituals traditionally end with a chant that transfers the merit of the event to a designated recipient; here is how the earth-relief ceremony ends:

Whatever merit comes to us from these offerings  
We now return to the earth, sea, and sky.  
May our air be left pure!  
May our waters be clean!  
May our earth be restored!  
May all beings attain Buddhahood!<sup>7</sup>

The Rochester Zen Center also sponsors rites specifically on behalf of animals. Ducks and other animals are purchased from pet stores or breeders and released in their natural habitats, and relief ceremonies for endangered species are also held.

In northern California the Ring of Bone Zendo has found ways to integrate backpacking, pilgrimage, and *sesshin*, the intensive meditation retreat that undergirds formal Zen training. First conceived by poet and Zen pioneer Gary Snyder in the 1970s, this “mountains and rivers *sesshin*” emphasizes long hours of silent, concentrated walking in the foothills of the Sierra Mountains. “The wilderness pilgrim’s step-by-step, breath-by-breath walk up a trail,” writes Snyder, “is so ancient a set of gestures as to bring a profound sense of body-mind joy.”<sup>8</sup> The daily schedule also includes morning and evening periods of seated meditation and a morning lecture by the teacher, who expounds on the “Mountains and Rivers Sutra” chapter of *The Treasury of the True Dharma Eye*, by Zen master Dogen. This text includes the following passage:

It is not just that there is water in the world; there are worlds in the realm of water. And . . . there are worlds of sentient beings in earth. . . . Wherever there are worlds of sentient beings, there must be the world of Buddhas and Zen adepts.<sup>9</sup>

The Ring of Bone Zendo conducts weeklong backpacking *sesshin* sessions twice a year, and the practice has spread to other U.S. West Coast Zen groups.

In March 1991, Thich Nhat Hanh inaugurated another kind of group practice in a six-day meditation retreat specifically for environmentalists. Of the two hundred people who attended, some were practicing Buddhists; others had little previous exposure to Buddhism or meditation. The retreat interposed periods of meditation with lectures by Nhat Hanh, silent walks through the hills, and gentle singing. In his talks, Nhat Hanh stressed the value of “deep, inner peace” for environmental activists: “The best way to take care of the environment is to take care of the environmentalist.”<sup>10</sup>

One of the sites administered by the San Francisco Zen Center is Green Gulch Farm, which functions as a semirural Zen center. Green Gulch is best known for its extensive organic garden, which has been lovingly cultivated for decades. On April 22, 1990 (Earth Day), more than a hundred friends of Green Gulch participated in special celebratory rituals

that concluded with a dedication to the animals and plants that had died in the garden. The text read in part:

Plants and animals in the garden, we welcome you—we invite you in—we ask your forgiveness and your understanding. Listen as we invoke your names, as we also listen for you: Little sparrows, quails, robins, and house finches who have died in our strawberry nets; young Cooper's hawk who flew into our sweet pea trellis and broke your neck. . . . We call up plants we have removed by dividing you and separating you, and by deciding you no longer grow well here. We invoke you and thank you and continue to learn from you. We dedicate this ceremony to you. We will continue to practice with you and for you.<sup>11</sup>

This dedication follows ritual conventions that are found in several traditions. It directly addresses unseen spirits, invites them into a sacred space, expresses sentiments ranging from grief to gratitude, and concludes with a pledge of continued spiritual striving. The admission that many animals and plants had to be sacrificed for the garden to flourish acknowledges the mystery of life and death, and it affirms—realistically, amid complexity—the cardinal precept not to kill.

Another consciously created group ritual that illustrates the greening of Buddhist practice is called the Council of All Beings. It began in 1985 as a collaboration between Joanna Macy and John Seed, an Australian who is a passionate advocate of rain forest preservation. According to Seed, the Council of All Beings helps people to move “from having ecological ideas to having ecological identity.”<sup>12</sup> The council is usually presented as a daylong workshop or longer retreat in a setting with access to the outdoors; participants vary from a dozen to a hundred.

The ritual begins with shared mourning. Participants are encouraged to express their sense of grief and loss in response to the degradation of the earth. In the second phase of a council, called “remembering,” participants are led through exercises that reinforce their sense of connectedness with the earth. Methods include guided meditations, visualizations, and imitating the voices of animals or other natural sounds. Macy once demonstrated part of a remembering exercise for the Dalai Lama. Taking his hand in hers, she said:

Each atom in each cell in this hand goes back to the beginning of time, to the first explosion of light and energy. . . . We have met and been together many times.

“Yes, of course,” said the Dalai Lama. “Very good.”<sup>13</sup>

For the culmination of the ritual, each participant chooses a nonhuman life form, imaginatively identifies with it, and then speaks on its behalf before the group. Gathering to form the Council of All Beings, the re-created life forms describe their plight, how they have been affected by humans, and

their chances of survival. Each of the life forms is then asked what strengths it has to offer human beings in this time of planetary crisis. For example:

I, lichen, work slowly, very slowly. Time is my friend. This is what I give you: patience for the long haul and perseverance.

I, lion, give you my roar, the voice to speak out and be heard.<sup>14</sup>

The Council of All Beings expresses in modern terms the trans-species compassion that has long been a Buddhist ideal. Council participants not only mourn the loss of animals and plants (as at Green Gulch) but also strive to listen to other beings. In a ritual context, this crossing of human/nonhuman boundaries is not meant to answer complex questions about the relative value of species; its thrust is to enable participants to reconnect with an ecocentric (nonanthropocentric) world. The council offers a foretaste of what Gary Snyder once called an “ultimate democracy,” in which “plants and animals . . . are given a place and a voice in the political discussions of the humans.”<sup>15</sup>

### Green Buddhism's Global Reach

With increased communication and cooperation among Buddhists around the globe, Buddhist-inspired environmentalism is also becoming manifest in national and international arenas. Thailand, for example, has been the source of several influential projects. The Buddhist Perception of Nature Project, founded in 1985, uses traditional Buddhist doctrines and practices to teach environmental principles to ordinary villagers and city dwellers. The International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), established in 1989 by Nobel Peace Prize nominee Sulak Sivaraksa, puts environmental concerns high on its agenda, with special emphasis on Third World issues. In rural Thailand, environmentally conscious monks have helped protect endangered forests and watersheds by “ordaining” trees; villagers are loath to chop down trees that have been symbolically accepted into the Buddhist monastic order.

The best-known international spokesperson for Buddhism, the Dalai Lama, has made many statements in support of environmental responsibility on a global scale. Strictly speaking, the Dalai Lama's teachings may not qualify as environmental “activism,” but his ideas and his example are important sources of inspiration for socially engaged Buddhists. With his usual directness, he says, “The Earth, our Mother, is telling us to behave.”<sup>16</sup> The Dalai Lama has proposed a five-point peace plan for Tibet that extends the notion of peace to the entire Tibetan ecosystem: “It is my dream that the entire Tibetan plateau should become a free refuge where humanity and nature can live in peace and in harmonious balance.” He rejects any use of nuclear energy

*The Akatsuki Maru bound for Japan, carrying one-and-a-half metric tons of plutonium. Photographed on December 30, 1992.*

in Tibet, not to mention “the manufacture, testing, and stockpiling of nuclear weapons.”<sup>17</sup>

Even if the Dalai Lama’s ambitious plan seems unrealistic by the standards of realpolitik, his proposal has exposed a worldwide audience to a Buddhist vision of a desirable society. Central to that vision is the attempt to extend the ideal of nonviolence (*ahimsa*) to all forms of life.

An imaginative example of Buddhist-inspired environmental activity is called the Nuclear Guardianship Project (NGP). Its targeted problem is radioactive waste, which brings us back to the *Akatsuki Maru*. The premise of nuclear guardianship, advocated most forcefully by Joanna Macy, is that current technological expertise does not offer a certifiably safe method for the disposal of nuclear waste: plans to bury the waste underground overlook known risks; transmutation and glassification schemes have not yet been perfected; and

other proposals (such as shooting the waste into space) are even less realistic. Macy and other project participants therefore argue that nuclear waste should be stored in an accessible manner using the best available technology, monitored with great care, and recontained in new ways as technology advances—if we are to succeed in protecting future generations from lethal radioactivity.

For Macy, one possible way to foster new attitudes would be to turn each nuclear site into a center of activity related to guardianship. The idea arose when she “visited the peace camps that had spontaneously arisen around nuclear bases.” She suddenly realized: “This is how the radioactive remains are going to be guarded for the sake of future beings.”<sup>18</sup>

Because such sites would require unwavering vigilance, they would entail a social version of the mindfulness practice that is so central to Buddhism. “We can contain the radioactivity if we pay attention to it,” writes Macy. “That act of attention may be the last thing we want to do, but it is the one act that is required.”<sup>19</sup> She goes on to suggest that surveillance communities built around today’s nuclear facilities could also become centers for various activities beyond the technical process of containment: pilgrimage, meditation retreats, rituals of acceptance and forgiveness, even a kind of monastic training.

Not content merely to outline the possibilities, Macy and others are experimenting with ritual forms to be used in study groups and public workshops.

An NGP event often begins with an invocation to beings of the past, present, and future, welcoming them as companions and allies in a time of need. Future beings are summoned with these words:

All you who will come after us on this Earth, be with us now. . . . It is for your sakes too that we work to heal our world.<sup>20</sup>

During one three-day NGP retreat, seventy-five participants enacted a future pilgrimage to a guardian site, half of them playing the role of pilgrims, the rest posing as resident guardians. Some of the texts that are used in these NGP exercises look back at the present from an imagined future. One passage reads in part:

We are gathered here . . . a brief two hundred years since the turning from the Times of Nuclear Peril. . . . We are engaged in the essential practice of Remembering. We must remember, because we cannot uninvent the nuclear technology that almost killed our planet. . . . Oh, what power it unleashed! Yes, the poison fire was first used for weapons. . . . And then our ancestors of that time . . . took that poison fire to make electricity. . . . And the signs of sickening grew. . . . And the Governments tried to bury it . . . as if the Earth were not alive. . . . Yet among our ancestors . . . [some] looked into their hearts and thought: “We can guard the poison fire. . . . Only in that

way can the beings of the future be protected." They remembered us!<sup>21</sup>

Chapters of the Nuclear Guardianship Project have been formed in Germany, Switzerland, and Russia. The NGP has also been introduced to Japan, where one cannot help but note that major reactors have already been given religious names that would fit a guardian site perfectly: "Monju," bodhisattva of wisdom; "Fugen," bodhisattva of compassionate action; and "Joyo," eternal light.

The NGP is difficult to assess. To some observers it seems wildly fanciful, because it expects to transform deep-seated psychological responses to nuclear waste: denial of responsibility ("not in my backyard") and denial of danger ("it's not making us sick"). However, the greatest source of resistance may be our apparent unwillingness to reduce our material standard of living voluntarily. It is one thing to recognize the risks of nuclear energy but quite another to change the systems and personal habits that currently demand it.

By directing attention to the distant future, Macy invites us to "reinhabit" a deep, mythological sense of time. Her vision calls for a dramatic extension of our sense of ethical responsibility. The notion of guardianship begins with plutonium but goes on to embrace numberless unborn beings and the planet as a whole.

### Points of Departure from Buddhism's Past

The continuities between traditional Buddhism and ecological Buddhism can be demonstrated textually, doctrinally, historically, and by other means. At the same time, today's green Buddhism departs from Buddhism's past. Many of the activities surveyed here are not only innovative on the level of practice but also embody shifts in Buddhists' perceptions of nature and society.

In several contexts we have seen eco-Buddhists thinking and acting globally—that very breadth distinguishes them from most of their Buddhist predecessors. For centuries, classic Buddhist texts have depicted the universe as one interdependent whole, and elegant doctrines have laid the conceptual foundation for a "cosmic ecology."<sup>22</sup> Contemporary Buddhist environmentalists are actualizing that vision with new concreteness.

The increased awareness of the sociopolitical implications of spiritual practice also qualifies as a departure from earlier forms of Buddhism. There is a well-known Zen story in which a master rebukes a monk for discarding a single chopstick. The original point is that even if the chopstick's mate is lost, it still has intrinsic value and can be put to use in some other way. In green Buddhism, the theme of disposed/disposable chopsticks has additional, ecological meanings that must not be overlooked. The importance of women and women's perspectives is another distinguishing feature. Women, no less than men, are the leaders, creative thinkers, and grass-roots activists of Buddhist environmentalism. The influence of women also manifests itself in an aversion to hierarchy, an appreciation of the full range of experience,

*Monju Nuclear Power Plant seen from a beach where local people make their living from the available marine life. Japan's only fast breeder reactor, it was built on the coast of Tsuruga Bay in Fukui Prefecture, but closed in 1995 following a serious sodium coolant leak and fire. It is expected to reopen in October.*

and an emphasis on the richness of relationships (human and nonhuman).

Shifting perceptions of nature denote another area in which past and present diverge. Buddhists have long been sensitive to the transience of phenomena. In Japan, for example, generations of poets have "grieved" over the falling of cherry blossoms. Yet according to the premodern Buddhist view, nature's impermanence is also natural, part of the way things are. The grief of Buddhist environmentalists is prompted not by falling cherry blossoms but by the actual loss of entire species of living beings and by the continuing devastation of the planet. A new dimension of meaning has been added to the time-honored Buddhist notion of impermanence. Gary Snyder writes:

The extinction of a species, each one a pilgrim of four billion years of evolution, is an irreversible loss. The ending of so many lines of creatures with whom we have traveled this far is an occasion for profound sorrow and grief. . . . Some quote a Buddhist teaching back at us: "all is impermanent." Indeed. All the more reason to move gently and cause less harm.<sup>23</sup>

Perennial assumptions about nature's power to harm human beings have been augmented by a fresh appreciation of humans' power to harm nature. In an early text, the Buddha gives his monks a prayer that reads in part:

All sentient beings, all breathing things, creatures without exception, let them all see good things, may no evil befall them.<sup>24</sup>

This passage expresses generous concern for other beings, yet it also serves as a protective charm against dangerous animals (especially poisonous snakes)—if I don't harm them, they won't harm me. In contrast, the ceremonial texts from Green Gulch Farm or the Nuclear Guardianship Project are most concerned about human threats to nature. Religious power is invoked in each case, but in the new texts that power is summoned to protect the environment from us and to atone for our depredations.

In many Buddhist cultures, nature has functioned as the ideal setting in which to seek salvation. Traditionally, movement toward nature was regarded as a type of withdrawal. But for contemporary Buddhists, a deepening relation with nature is usually associated with a spirit of engagement. Even if the experience of heightened intimacy with nature is private and contemplative, that experience is commonly interpreted as a call to action. Preservation of the environment doubles as a spiritual path to personal and planetary salvation.

## Conclusion

Critics and supporters of contemporary Buddhist environmentalism have already raised a number of questions. Seasoned Buddhist practitioners suspect that the comparisons between ecological awakening and enlightenment are too facile. Buddhist scholars in North America and Japan ask if there is a point at which the distance from traditional Buddhism becomes so great that the Buddhist label is no longer appropriate. In daily life, how can traditional Buddhist practices and new ecologically oriented practices be meaningfully integrated? To what degree can a modern environmental ethic be extrapolated from these individual and group practices? What is the relation of green Buddhism to other forms of environmentalism, including deep ecology? Such questions will continue to generate discussion and reflection as the various forms of socially engaged Buddhism evolve and mature.

From certain perspectives, it may seem that Buddhist environmentalism is marginal. Even within American Buddhist communities, not everyone is interested in environmental issues or their relation to practice. If there is a way to communicate the key ideas and basic practices of green Buddhism to a wider public, it has not yet been found. Granted, Buddhists may have affected the outcome in a number of local campaigns, such as saving an old-growth forest in Oregon, protecting a watershed in northern California, or blocking a proposed nuclear dump in a California desert. In such cases, however, it is hard to isolate distinctively Buddhist influences.

The potential significance of green Buddhism can also be considered from a religious standpoint. Even if there is little visible evidence of impact, Buddhism may nonetheless be

contributing to a shift in the lives of individuals or the conduct of certain groups. Some would argue that if only one person's life is changed through an ecological awakening, the repercussions of that transformation have important and continuing effects in numerous realms both seen and unseen. Faith in the interconnectedness of all existence provides many individual activists with the energy and focus that enable them to stay the course. Simply to return to a unitive experience is often enough: "We don't need to call it Buddhism. . . . We need only to be still and open our senses to the world that presents itself to us moment to moment to moment."<sup>25</sup> □

Abridged from *CrossCurrents*, summer 1994, vol. 44:2; [www.crosscurrents.org/greening.htm](http://www.crosscurrents.org/greening.htm).

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# Being Grateful for Our Meals

by Nichiko Niwano

*Many activities are being launched to teach children how precious our food is and why we should be thankful for it.*

These days, when food of all kinds is plentiful and many people seem guilty of gluttony, our attitudes toward eating need to be reexamined. Reflecting this, activities have been launched in many parts of Japan to pass on to future generations the true importance of food in our lives. The purpose of these events, which are being implemented especially in elementary and middle schools, is to teach through actual experience how precious our meals are and why we should be thankful for them.

For example, in some middle schools the pupils themselves reduce waste by choosing the size of their own lunch portions, thus not leaving large quantities of food uneaten. This type of experience can provide the impetus for changing from the idea of taking for granted that our meals are part of a life of convenience and comfort to a feeling of gratitude for having been caused to live thanks to the things we eat. Furthermore, although we may also think of the air around us as something to be taken for granted, breathing is essential for life. The body's absorption of oxygen is indispensable, so it is important that we be grateful for the air we breathe just as we are for the water and food on which our lives depend.

A recent article in a leading Japanese newspaper noted that "the old saying 'Even a single grain of rice comes from the heart of the farmer who grew it' has disappeared." By learning the importance of the things we take for granted, we can be prudent in making use of those things and recognize their true value in our lives.

## In Order to Attain Enlightenment

The last of the "Five Verses on Taking Meals" in Zen Buddhism, which expresses the Buddhist attitude to eating, is "I receive this meal for the sake of attaining enlightenment," meaning that the ultimate purpose of eating is to attain enlightenment, that meals are taken in order to attain com-

*President Niwano delivering an address before a statue of the Eternal Buddha, following its enshrinement at the Rissho Kosei-kai chapter in Kathmandu, Nepal, on December 2, 2007.*

pletion of the True Way, not merely for satisfying our appetite.

The image of Shakyamuni, who always depended on a mendicant's bowl for his meals when he was disseminating the Way day and night, teaches what taking meals should mean for Buddhists, while also making us think deeply about the basic concept of the food sustaining our lives.

Nursery school director Takeshi Yoro, a professor emeritus at the University of Tokyo, was recently quoted in a newspaper as saying, "Children should be allowed to play until their stomachs feel empty. Then they can settle down and eat as if they are really enjoying their food. Most important is that they can experience the basic value of a meal, and thus refine the sensations related to eating, such as taste and hunger." Improving those sensations can help children mentally process new information.

We should say this grace before meals every day: "For what we are about to eat and drink, we are grateful to the Buddha, to nature, and to many people." We should always maintain feelings of gratitude for the meals that sustain us. □

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# Environmental Issues and Buddhism's Potential

by Mamiko Okada

*Environmental problems are serious because there is no external enemy for us to rally together and fight. We ourselves have been the number-one offenders in bringing about these awful problems.*

**H**ow can Buddhism be of use in helping solve our present era's environmental problems? This question has been on my mind for several years.

Whenever religion and society come into contact, the first question is always, "What does the word of God or the teaching of the Buddha have to say about such-and-such issue?" Gautama Buddha in particular was known for giving problem-solving sermons, like a physician prescribing medicine that suits the illness, that were no doubt peppered with such questions by lay believers every day as he made his rounds begging for alms. Now Buddhists also need to gather their courage and use their heads to deal with the problems that beset us in our present era. The weightiest and most serious of these problems are environmental issues. The major environmental changes that have been occurring on a global scale since the middle of the twentieth century are posing a potentially mortal threat to the ability of the earth's environment to support humankind. Issues of energy and resources; food availability; pollution of the air, water, and soil; and population growth have acquired a scale that our ancestors never had to deal with.

Environmental problems are also serious because there is no external enemy for us to rally together and fight. The main cause of environmental change has been changes in

human behavior—we ourselves have been the number-one offenders in bringing about these awful problems. Just as it is impossible to see your own face without a mirror, or to hear your own voice as it is heard by others, it is extremely difficult to correctly perceive your own actions. However, if we just ignore these problems because we find it hard to deal with them, they will simply get a lot worse. If we think about it, we can see that because we are the ones who created the problems, we should be able to overcome these difficulties, reflect on our actions, and reform them in such a way as to resolve the problems. There is plenty of room in this process for Buddhism to make a contribution.

Do not what is evil. Do what is good. Keep your mind pure. This is the teaching of Buddha. (*The Dhammapada*, 183)

The teaching above is the essence of Buddhism. What are we doing now that is "evil" or "good" for the environment, and how can we purify our hearts? The time has come for every person to think about this and take action. Without action based on sincere self-reflection, it will not matter how advanced environmental technologies become, or what environmental policies are adopted, because such things cannot bring about a fundamental solution to environmental problems.

For example, even though we may produce automobiles that conserve energy and place a smaller burden on the environment, if this means that people will feel more comfortable about driving even very short distances and end up traveling by car more often, this will result in a net increase in the amount of energy consumed. Filling a single tank with gasoline cancels out the same amount of oil saved by ten people making the effort to bring their own bags to the supermarket and refusing plastic grocery bags for an entire year. (According to the Japanese Consumers' Co-operative Union, producing one plastic grocery bag uses 20.6 milliliters of crude oil, and Japanese people annually use an average of 250 plastic grocery bags per capita, meaning that they would save five liters a year by refusing every single bag. Automobile

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gas tanks take about fifty liters.) Unless every person makes an effort to refrain from unnecessary driving, energy consumption will not decrease. We all need to take a good look at how we live and make the necessary changes in how we do things.

### Altruism as a Guide to Environmental Action

Now let us take a look at what we need to do to achieve these improvements. Yukihiro Okada has already argued in his essay "The Validity of Buddhist Thought as a Way of Dealing with Environmental Issues" (2000) that "the Buddha's teaching about being satisfied with little" and "the altruistic behavior of a bodhisattva" can serve as effective guides to action that will contribute to solving environmental problems. He considers "being satisfied with little" as the proper basis for individual lifestyles, and altruistic, bodhisattva-like behavior as the basis for action aimed at protecting the environment. In other words, we should of our own accord try to reduce the burden we place on the environment, and share with others the benefits we do receive.

This is doing good for the environment as defined by Buddhism. In the example involving automobiles noted above, to consciously refrain from receiving the benefits of convenience and ease accorded by using an automobile is to act out bodhisattva-like altruism by reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and leaving more energy resources for others to use. I have no doubt that this kind of bodhisattva-like altruism, even when individual efforts are in themselves insignificant, will contribute to solving many of our environmental problems. Looking at it from the opposite perspective, the environmental situation will in fact only begin to improve by virtue of this kind of altruistic behavior by individuals.

Before proceeding further, we need to examine the possible range of altruistic behavior; altruism in Japanese is written with two characters that, taken separately, mean "benefit" and "others." In this context, what is meant by "others"? Okada emphasizes that the meaning of "others" must include the natural world and not be confined to other human beings. I think that this is a very important point of instruction for Buddhists trying to deal with environmental issues, because confining altruistic behavior to other people introduces the threat of possibly bringing further pressure to bear on the natural environment. Knowledge of Japan's Buddhist heritage and its historical religious sensibility clearly reveals the potential for putting the natural environment on the same level as other people as an object of altruistic endeavor.

How we think of "others" in the context of altruism leads us in turn to the question of how we view the existence of the natural world. Our original manner of perceiving our environment (our worldview) is of fundamental importance to every other consideration. The nature of our worldview can cause our efforts to change in a certain direction to backfire and have the opposite result. For example, people in Japan are now seriously worried about the country's decreasing birthrate, but viewed from a global perspective,

the doubling of the world's population during the second half of the twentieth century was an abnormal phenomenon. Rapidly increasing human population and rising population pressure are straining the environment and threaten to exacerbate problems of climate change and food scarcity.

It will not suffice in this case to simply attempt to increase food production; rather, we will have to accept a decrease in the human population and attempt to lower population pressure. A declining population—particularly in the industrialized countries that consume huge amounts of energy and place an enormous burden on the environment—is something to welcome with open arms as a great boon to humankind. (However, if human population decrease in the industrialized countries is a result of male reproductive dysfunction owing to endocrine disrupters in the environment, this in itself is an environmental problem that requires attention.)

The point is that even a problem such as a decreasing birthrate appears as a completely different phenomenon depending on whether it is viewed from a political/economic or an environmental/religious perspective.

Thus, I would like to take a look at what Buddhism has taught regarding the natural environment and, while referring also to modern scientific knowledge, try to clarify the worldview of the Buddhism with which we are familiar.

### The Irreplaceability of Life

In attempting to address how Japanese Buddhism perceives the environment, what aspects of the natural world can serve as the objects of altruistic behavior, and how this can lead Buddhism to protect the environment, I will start by examining how Buddhism treats the subject of life. The environmental sciences consider the environment to be that which surrounds and supports living things, and so our definition of living things will have a significant effect on our environmental worldview. How we define the life process and what constitutes a living thing will form the foundation of how we think about the environment.

#### *Irreplaceable Life and Mutual Coexistence*

When you are hungry but cannot leave what you are doing, nobody else can eat your meal for you. The same is true when you have to go to the toilet. In our daily routine, the most everyday acts are nonetheless essential for maintaining life and cannot be performed by another. All types of behavior that constitute our life processes, including things that we must do for ourselves, have an impact on the natural world, and we bear the responsibility for the results of those impacts brought about by our actions. This can be seen as an explanation derived from the environmental sciences of the Buddhist teaching that one creates one's own karma and one's own benefits. This is a vital concept for exploring the phenomenon of our own lives as they relate to the natural world.

Precisely because one creates one's own karma and one's own benefits, every life is precious and irreplaceable. If the

actions that allow us to live could be performed by another, and if we did not have to bear the responsibility of the results of what we do, this would make us replaceable.

Although being alive makes us unique and irreplaceable, when the phenomenon of life is withdrawn, our bodies lose their coherence and return to the soil to be broken down into elements that will go into making up other living things. This is obvious because all living bodies consist of more than 99.9 percent oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen, as does the planet Earth itself. Because our bodies are composed of the same materials as the other beings in the natural world, when living things die, more than 99.9 percent of the material that composed their bodies consists of elements that go into creating the bodies of other living things.

Before modern chemistry and biology existed, these concepts were present in the form of the Buddhist doctrine “the five aggregates have no self.” The five aggregates consist of psychophysical elements: form (*rupa*), feeling (*vedana*), perception (*samjna*), mental constituents (*samskara*), and consciousness (*vinjana*). These terms existed to teach us that we are not composed of special, unique matter and that there is no such thing as a fixed, unchanging *me* with singular characteristics. Thus, while our existence in the world is a one-time-only phenomenon and our actions during our lives cannot be replaced, the elements that go into our existence are shared in common with the diversity of other living things. All beings in this world are totally interrelated in coexisting relationships.

When we fail to comprehend the cycle of existence described by the concept of “the five aggregates have no self” and instead get stuck in pursuing only our own survival, we damage our relationship of coexistence with the natural environment, which in turn works to threaten our own survival. That is, acts of selfishness and egoism are “doing what is evil” to the environment and serve to destroy our own lives.

On the chemical level described above, all living things are basically the same; recent research in the biological sciences shows that not only the millions of species of living things existing on Earth today but every form of life that has existed throughout the entire history of the planet originated from a single, initial living cell. Space scientists also now believe that the most abundant elements in the universe are the same four—oxygen, carbon, hydrogen, and nitrogen—of which we and all living things are made. The origins not only of our own species and every single other living thing on Earth but also of rocks and stars can all be traced back to the gases and dust that went into forming the universe. This seems to me to be the same as what Seng-chao (384–414) said in *Chao-lun* (Chao’s Analects): “The heavens, earth, and men all spring from the same root; we are one with everything in the world.”

### Tradition of the View on Life

Though time scales may vary, everything existing in the world follows the same kind of natural life cycle—birth, old

age, decay, and death. Chan-jan (711–782), sixth patriarch of the Chinese T’ien-t’ai school, wrote: “Grasses and trees sprout up and die back. When an eon has passed, even dust and stones will disappear” (*The Adamantine Lance*, Taisho 46, 784b). This kind of thought was made possible by the philosophical foundations already existing in China that taught “all things are equal” (the idea that, in light of the original source of truth, the Tao, everything that discernibly exists, including human beings, is equal and of uniform status) (Fukunaga 1981). Chuang-tzu, a Chinese sage of the fourth century BCE, is said to have held that the Tao is found in things like worms, millet, grasses and trees, roof tiles, flagstones, stones, and dirt.

The traditional Chinese T’ien-t’ai concept that trees and other plants possess the buddha-nature is thought to have been inherited and expressed by the Japanese Tendai sect, which holds that “grasses and trees, countries and lands, all attain buddhahood” or, more recently, that “mountains and rivers, grasses and trees, all possess the buddha-nature.” I have discussed the issue of how these two passages came into being in detail elsewhere (Okada 2002) and do not intend to delve into this issue here.

However, I would like to point out that neither passage appears in Buddhist scriptures; both originated in Japan. It is clear that the former became popularly known in the latter half of the ninth century (Sueki 1995), while it has only been confirmed that the latter appears to have come into use in the second half of the twentieth century. However, I do not intend to enter into a difficult doctrinal discussion of the terms *attain buddhahood* and *possess the buddha-nature*. I mention the phrases “grasses and trees, countries and lands” and “mountains and rivers, grasses and trees” to call attention to the fact that not only humans and animals but plants and inorganic things are being discussed as equally existing parts of the natural world. The important point here is that Japanese Buddhism has traditionally taken the view that life in the natural world includes all of these things equally.

The view of Chan-jan regarding the attainment of buddhahood by plant life and the view of Japanese Buddhism regarding the attainment of buddhahood by grasses, trees, countries, and lands are the antithesis of the vegetarianism of Indian Mahayana Buddhism. The Mahayana Buddhism of India banned eating meat, in sympathy with the overall religious practices of the society at that time, which also prohibited eating meat. However, if your reason for not eating meat is compassion for animals, the next question is, What about plants? Are they not living things? Recent Buddhist scholarship (Schmithausen 1991) has suggested that this line of thought may have led to placing plant life in the same category as inorganic matter.

I have searched all extant Mahayana Buddhist scriptures and found only two exceptions to the placement of plant life together with tiles, stones, and so on as unconscious or insentient beings or their classification as not-living things (Okada 1999). The two exceptions are found in the Lotus

Sutra and in the Shurangama Sutra. “The Parable of the Herbs” in chapter 5 of the Lotus Sutra compares the way large-, medium-, and small-sized plants are all watered by the same rainfall and as a result grow, flower, and bear fruit to the way the great diversity of all living things derive benefit from the same Buddhist Law.

The Shurangama Sutra teaches, “All manner of plants are the same as sentient beings (creatures with senses) and are no different from human beings. Plants are reborn as humans, and when humans die they also become all manner of plants and trees.” With the passage of time, the parable of the herbs in the Lotus Sutra had an important impact on T’ien-t’ai doctrines in China and Tendai doctrines in Japan during the late-tenth to early-seventeenth centuries; this seems natural enough in view of how living things are viewed in China and Japan. After all, plants do sprout, grow, and die.

*The Lives of Things: The Custom of Holding a “Send-off to the Other World”*

We can naturally assume that native Japanese traditional concepts similar to the Chinese idea that “all things are one” were behind Japan’s acceptance and inheritance of T’ien-t’ai doctrines on plant life’s attaining buddhahood. These traditional concepts include the idea of *yaoyorozu no kami*, literally, “eight million deities,” the belief that the divine essence

dwells in everything. Looking even further back in time we find what was probably the original, underlying concept—a view on life expressed by customs present in Japan since the prehistoric Jomon period of *ano yo okuri*, literally, “send-off to the other world.” In the same locations where people made graves for other people, they also made graves for shells (shell middens), graves for animals (animal bone burials), and graves for earthenware (as seen at the Sakiyama shell midden, the Sannai Maruyama archaeological excavation site, and elsewhere), and it is supposed that they also performed “send-off to the other world” ceremonies.

The custom of holding a send-off to the other world persists to this day in Japan in the form of memorial services for objects and animals. Traditionally, memorial services are held for needles, writing brushes, and other objects, and in more recent times new types of memorial services have emerged one after the other, for example, for scissors (sponsored by beauty salon chains, these take place at Zojoji Temple, Tokyo, on August 3, as the syllables for this date are similar to the Japanese word for scissors), for pachinko machines (at Sensoji Temple, Tokyo, on August 8, another pun-type date choice), for false teeth (at Myokoji Temple, Okayama Prefecture, on October 8), and for personal computers.

All of these memorial services for objects serve to promote

*One side of a sutra box decorated with a painting depicting the one cloud and many plants (ca. 11th century). The image derives from the depiction in “The Parable of the Herbs,” in chapter 5 of the Lotus Sutra. Fujita Museum of Art, National Treasure.*

recycling of valuable resources. Some people say that these events are held because they are the only way to collect and recycle these end-of-life articles and that they are merely a convenience for the benefit of the people involved. However, is holding a memorial service for used possessions really the same as recovering them for recycling? No, it is not the same thing at all, because these memorial services grew out of feelings of gratitude toward the possessions that have served us; they are a fond farewell to things that have come to the end of their useful lives because we have used them. Also involved is the consciousness that they are being sent off to be reborn anew.

Thus, these memorial services indicate that people feel that such items have “life,” and feel respect for them. This respect for the physical existence of things (their corpus) can be understood as an environmental sensibility present in Japan since the Jomon period. It is also the answer to the question posed earlier about whether we can place the natural world on the same level as other humans as appropriate objects of altruistic action. Because this worldview regards as equal the lives of humans, animals, plants, and objects, the natural world (grasses and trees, countries and lands) is, in fact, an appropriate object of altruistic behavior.

Indian Buddhism, at least, lacked this view of life, and we can assume that this is why only the lives of animals were placed on the same level as humans’ in Indian Buddhism. In the Jataka tales, a collection of stories of the former lives of Shakyamuni Buddha, we find many examples of bodhisattva practice in which the lives of birds and beasts are saved, such as the story of King Sivi, in which a bodhisattva rescues a dove, and the tale of Prince Mahasattva, who sacrifices his own life to help a starving tigress and her seven cubs. These stories show that in his former lives, the Buddha acted altruistically toward creatures other than humans. However, there are no stories in this collection of compassion being shown to plants or objects. I would like to emphasize that, by contrast, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism extended the range of altruistic action to include plants and inanimate objects, creating for the first time the potential for expanding altruism to embrace the entire natural world. □

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# Buddhism Shares Concepts with the Environmental Protection Movement

by Margaret Suzuki

*The biggest, and in recent years most symbolic, example of our interconnectedness with the planet is climate change.*

We must judge with more reverence the infinite power of nature, and with more consideration of our ignorance and weakness.

M. E. de Montaigne (1533–92)

Though I am not a scholar in either field, I believe that the environmental protection movement and Buddhism share several deep-rooted, wide-ranging concepts, the most important being reverence for life. The difficulties posed by excessive desire, the interconnectedness of all things, the virtue of humility, and the practice of mindfulness also have relevance for both. Most of the Japanese environmental protection advocates I have met during more than twenty years of volunteering for Japanese environmental protection groups do not consciously associate their commitment with their religion, but I may be wrong—people do not often speak of such things and may not even be aware of unconscious associations, which can have a powerful effect on life choices.

## Reverence for Life

Reverence for life is sometimes said to be the most basic ethic taught in Buddhism. Most environmental protection movements are also founded on the passion of people who have deep experiences of the sense of wonder called forth by nature. For such people, in Japan and around the world, the joy of beholding the wild world translates into a life-altering commitment to protect wild creatures and their habitats from human-engendered destruction.

The worst thing that can happen to any creature is arguably the extinction of its species. The environmental protection movement is aimed at slowing down the major global extinction event now going on. Extinction events, in which a significant percent of species disappear over a relatively short time, have happened before, but the present one is the fastest in Earth's 4.5 billion-year history. Most biologists agree that all the reasons for this accelerated extinction rate are anthropogenic—caused by humans. The recent rapid increase in human population is only part of the story—rapid increases

in our destructiveness and in our ability to consume and waste resources also play a large part.

Is the sense of wonder called forth by the natural world something completely different from the discovery of buddha-nature permeating the world? Should we confine our compassion to other people, or should we include nonhuman beings? The idea that nonhuman species deserve at least to survive is gaining adherents worldwide, but many people still assume that humans are overwhelmingly superior and that the sacrifice not only of individuals but of species and entire ecosystems to human demands is justifiable as a matter of course. Even Buddhism places humans closer to the Buddha than nonhumans.

However, how are we to judge the merit of one species against another? Are humans better because we can “consciously” adapt our behavior with unprecedented alacrity? In the long run, will this new type of adaptation work as well as the more conventional, trial-and-error methods of natural and sexual mutation, adaptation, and selection, which have produced countless marvelous creatures?

Let us look at the crocodile, a brutal predator with little cognitive ability—on the surface, perhaps, a distinctly less

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celestial being than humans. However, crocodiles do not completely wipe out their prey resources—they cannot do so because predator and prey have coevolved over long periods of time. The ancestors of modern crocodiles are said to have lived from 95 to 98 million years ago, when dinosaurs still roamed the earth. Distinctively human traits are said to have started evolving in our primate ancestors only about five million years ago. Cave art dates from about one hundred thousand years ago, farming from about ten thousand years ago. Do you think we humans will be able to beat out the crocodiles and keep ourselves from completely using up our resources for another 90 million years?

More troubling is the question of whether any other single species has ever caused the extinction—not death, not suffering, but total annihilation—of so many other species. Some scientists believe that the present extinction event is happening more quickly than the one caused by the major meteor strike that helped wipe out the dinosaurs. Still, we do not even consider causing the extinction of an entire species a crime and treat it more lightly than, for example, stealing possessions from one another. We will spend millions of dollars to buy a famous painting but allow fellow species to be permanently snuffed out because of lack of funds for their protection. Can we really be so confident about our superiority? The least we can do is treat other species with more respect.

### The Problem of Excessive Desire and Self-Delusion

Buddhism and other Oriental religions have always seemed to me to be particularly harsh in their condemnation of desire. Desire is the wellspring of life. The desire to live causes the tadpole to struggle out of the egg, the sunflower to face the sky, the migratory crane to surmount the Himalayas. Our world exists precisely because all creatures pursue their desire to live. So is desire bad? Or is life good? I put this question to the head of the temple to which my Japanese family belongs. “It’s a matter of degree,” he said. “Up to a certain extent, desire is good, but excessive desire is bad.” “That,” I objected, “does not sound like philosophy.” “Buddhism is not a philosophy,” he answered, “it is a religion.” My interpretation of this answer is that we may need more than just knowing in our heads that we need to get a grip, if not on all of our desires, at least on our wastefulness. Humans, of all creatures, may need enlightenment to accomplish this.

Humans have in the last few millennia learned to avoid the checks and balances nature places on excessive desire. Greed, shortsightedness, anger, stupidity, excessive desire, and self-delusion in humans—especially in humans with bulldozers and firearms—have acquired a scale of destructiveness that few other creatures can stand up to. We are the tyrannosaurs of unbridled desire—we will eat every fish in the sea, burn every drop of oil, and cut down every tree without looking back or forward.

However, our tendency to unrepentantly and efficiently pursue our excessive desires has probably not changed much

since Shakyamuni Buddha very clearly identified the pitfalls attending excessive human desire. Environmental damage that is potentially able to degrade human civilization on a world scale results at least partly from excessive desire run wild in a system of bad management. I think our age can now perceive the teaching of the Buddha about eschewing excessive desire not so much as a moral injunction but as practical advice for securing the survival of our world and our own species.

### The Interconnectedness of All Beings

The idea that all things are interconnected is also said to be one of the foundations of Buddhist teaching. Scientific discoveries over the last few centuries have confirmed our interconnectedness with all creatures and with the physical earth through space and time. We are all connected, not only genetically through evolution from shared ancestors millions of years ago, but also as members of our local ecosystems and the global ecosystem. Shakyamuni Buddha may not have consciously perceived these facts in 450 BCE, but they are, I believe, thoroughly encompassed in his teaching about the interconnected nature of all beings.

Interconnectedness also means that seemingly insignificant alterations to ecosystems can cause imbalances that lead to impoverishment of the entire web of life. One of the first environmental issues that caught my attention was that of tropical rain forest destruction. I knew nothing about ecosystems, and reading about these staggeringly diverse forests and the interconnections among their physical and biological components amazed me and changed the way I looked at nature. It could no longer be just scenery to me.

The more I learned, the more I realized that we can make very few assumptions about what we see around us. The natural world is interconnected in complex, technical ways that require careful study to understand. Most environmental protection advocates realize this on something beyond a cerebral level. I feel a kind of unreasoning panic when those with the power to irreversibly alter these balances have no true comprehension of the fundamental importance of interconnectedness. I remember joining citizen-group colleagues in a meeting with government bureaucrats in order to beg them to sincerely assess the environmental impact of a planned development and being asked, “Well, which species do you want to protect?” It was difficult to make them understand that all species are part of an interconnected whole that they would have to take a great deal of time and trouble to comprehend.

In 1985 the Wild Bird Society of Japan adopted the slogan, “Birds, Then Men.” The meaning of this somewhat cryptic phrase is that a world where birds are swiftly becoming extinct will be a world from which humans will also disappear in the not-too-distant future. Therefore, to protect birds now means to protect, if not yourself, at least your children and grandchildren.

The biggest, and in recent years most symbolic, example of

our interconnectedness with the planet is climate change. The amalgamated and unintended consequences of our present way of life—from our dependence on the internal combustion engine to our growing preference for meat provided by methane-emitting cattle—now threaten us with the incalculably fearsome powers of climate and weather. I think there will probably be some completely unpredictable outcomes in the course of these ongoing changes. A Buddhist awareness and readiness to accept constantly and sometimes abruptly changing realities could be a valuable asset in the coming decades.

### The Value of Humility

Another confusing aspect of Oriental religions is the value they place on losing one's ego. Like desire, we need our ego, weak and flawed as it may be, to survive and enjoy the good things in life. However, it is very refreshing to forget yourself sometimes, and losing yourself in nature is an excellent way to do this. Losing yourself often enough can potentially teach you to put yourself aside and practice humility when the need arises. It also helps you learn how much you still do not know, and this can make you feel a bit more relaxed about not getting your own way.

As difficult as this can be for some people, it appears to be nearly insurmountable for institutions. In the context of the environmental movement, the concept of humility is partly expressed by the practice of carrying out an environmental impact assessment before starting a development. Such assessments are legally required in most countries, including

Japan, although there are many flaws and loopholes in the relevant laws. Trying to determine a development's impact on the environment through field surveys, scientific analysis, and public review requires thinking very carefully about people and other living things that are not involved in the planning and will not directly benefit from the economic returns of the development. Thus, I think that this is an inherently humble process. However, because many of the most destructive developments in Japan are carried out by the government, and because, under Japanese law, the government is the final arbiter of whether an environmental impact assessment is accurate or not, Japanese environmental protection advocates spend a lot of time trying to ensure that scientific honesty and humility prevail over power and influence in this process. Some Buddhists in East Asia are also publicly expressing their faith as a commitment to respecting others that extends to protecting habitats threatened by government development projects.

Isahaya Bay was a two-thousand-hectare area of rich tidal flats in southern Japan; tidal flats nurture explosively diverse ecosystems that support migratory birds that every year travel unbelievable distances, for example, from Australia to Siberia and back. Isahaya's tidal flats were cut off from the sea for a very badly planned land reclamation project in 1997, and many millions of nonhuman lives were snuffed out for no good reason. Local environmental protection groups joined sympathetic Buddhist priests to hold a funeral ceremony for these casualties. Visitors ring a yellow-painted temple bell set up next to the tidal flats to commemorate the wild lives

Photo courtesy of the Isahaya Bay Emergency Rescue Task Force

*A memorial service held in 2007 for wildlife that was killed by the Isahaya Bay land reclamation project.*

lost, and also in memory of the international award-winning leader of the Isahaya Bay protection movement, Hirofumi Yamashita, who joined Isahaya's creatures in death in 2000.

Partly in conscious imitation of the Isahaya project, the government of South Korea undertook a similar land reclamation project—though ten times as large—at Saemangeum. Nuns and priests from Christian, Buddhist, and other faiths joined the citizens' movement in opposition to this project, and in the spring of 2003 a small group of clerics undertook an arduous pilgrimage in which they performed *sambo ilbae*—three steps and one bow down to the ground—over the entire 300 kilometers (186 miles) from Saemangeum to Seoul, where they were joined by eight thousand protesters. These Korean clerics certainly made the link between their faith and the need to protect the ecosystems that sustain not only innocent wild creatures but our own societies as well. Unfortunately, the Saemangeum project is now nearing completion, and South Korea plans more landfills elsewhere. The Japanese government also remains unrepentant about the Isahaya project and ignores calls to restore its wetlands.

### Mindfulness and *Mottainai*

The Japanese language borrows many words from other languages, but one Japanese term currently making a bid to enter other languages in the field of environmental awareness is *mottainai*. The quick translation is “wasteful,” but *mottainai* embraces wider meaning and usage. It is of course *mottainai* to leave a light unnecessarily burning, to throw away good food, or to use resources for the luxury of a few when they are needed for the survival of many. It also is *mottainai* for people to be overqualified for their jobs. It is *mottainai* to grill a fish fresh enough to eat raw. It is even *mottainai* to love someone and not say so. *Mottainai* is a marker that brackets off the appropriate from the wastefully excessive on one hand and failed potential on the other.

Another quality of *mottainai* is that it is often and easily applied in everyday thought and conversation, typically as an exclamation. I believe that Buddhism teaches that enlightenment should lead us to be mindful of everything we say and do and to pay attention to how this is going to affect others. I think this can easily be extended to paying attention to how our daily lives affect the environment—what are we doing that is *mottainai*?

### Conclusion

Respect for all living things, awareness of the interconnect-edness of all things and of our own tendency toward excessive desire, humility, and mindfulness are all qualities that we will need both as individuals and as members of our species in order to stop the destruction of nature that has escalated so frighteningly during the past fifty years. They are also qualities that Buddhism encourages us to develop and practice. Why not connect the dots? In view of the scale of human-caused extinction, I believe that Buddhist teachers could give

*Korean clerics of several faiths performing a sambo ilbae (three steps and one bow) pilgrimage to protest destruction of Saemangeum tidal flat wetland by a national land reclamation project.*

more emphasis to the need to revere not only other people but all living things. I also think that many environmental protection advocates could derive courage and comfort from Buddhism as a way of giving shape to feelings they may already have about the divine nature of the world.

Respect for life, an ability to control excessive desire, recognition of the interconnectedness of all things, humility, and mindfulness based on a religious or ethical commitment can help us reach personal enlightenment. Extended to a level that encompasses our impact on the environment, these same qualities may lead enough of us to act in ways that end up ameliorating the suffering of others now and in the future, perhaps in unpredictable ways.

Of course, some eminent critics offer well-informed, deeply thought-out, and entirely plausible reasons why no social movement, including religion, will have enough effect on the present economic and social structures before human popu-

lation growth and per capita consumption cause the bottom to fall out of the ability of our planet to support civilization. The alternative to compassionate and reasonable change will be uncontrolled change driven by the degradation of environmental services and competition for the remainder. Someday our world will carry on without humans. The biosphere will recover from the present human onslaught, and new species will evolve. Perhaps the day when humanity truly accepts this future, whether it comes sooner or later, will be the day when our destructiveness finally starts to abate. □

The epigraph for this article was drawn from Donald M. Frame, ed. and trans., *Montaigne: Selections from the Essays* (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1948), p. 32. The quotation is from chapter 27 of the famous essays of the French philosopher Michel Eyquem de Montaigne, "It is Folly to Measure the True and False by Our Own Capacity."

*Huge levees falling down in Isahaya Bay in April 1997 as part of the Isahaya Bay land reclamation project, which cut off tidal flats from the sea.*

# Buddhist Environmentalism Today: A Focus on Japan

by Duncan Ryūken Williams

*Japanese Buddhists are beginning to make structural changes that have a direct impact upon the environment. "Conservative conservationism" seems to be one model for a hypercapitalist Japan.*

Environmental issues ranging from global climate change, air and water pollution, unsustainable forestry, and industrial practices have recently received increasing international attention as issues that transcend national boundaries. As part of this discussion, there has also been some recognition that environmental problems are not solvable simply through technological and/or policy fixes but are actually a matter of worldview (how nature is viewed) and ethical values (how human beings interact with the natural world). From the perspective of what some have termed deep ecology, scientific, economic, and political solutions must go hand in hand with a worldview that does not devalue the natural world as simply a resource to exploit but understands the earth's ecosystems and the need to protect them, which is essential to human existence.

The critique of an anthropocentric and unsustainable economic system has come not only from environmentalists but also from a surprising corner: Buddhists. Whether it be so-called engaged Buddhists in Southeast Asia, Buddhist "capitalists" in Japan, or Tibetan Buddhists in exile who want to

protect their homeland's wilderness, a growing number of contemporary Buddhists have found common ground in suggesting that Western (and Christian-rooted) anthropocentric worldviews that privilege humans (as "made in God's image") as the divinely sanctioned lords over all other creatures are inadequate for a new ecological vision of the world and perhaps the root cause of environmental problems that come from human overpopulation (encouraged by the dictum "be fruitful and multiply"). These Buddhists point to a more biocentric vision of the human-nature relationship found in Buddhist doctrines such as the "buddha-nature of all sentient beings" (as found in the Lotus Sutra) and the interconnectedness of all beings (the Avatamsaka Sutra). They also point to the ethic of nonviolence (*ahimsā*) as found in Buddhist precepts, whether for the monastic or the lay community (as found in the Buddhist Vinaya texts); the centrality of the practice of compassion (*karunā*) and loving-kindness (*mettā*) for the Buddhist project of alleviating suffering; and the Buddhist economic principle of a livelihood based on reducing greed and increasing mutual benefit (right livelihood) as a Buddhist-based or -inspired worldview and lifestyle more appropriate to an ecological age.

Today Japan is a leader in environmental technologies and "green products" ranging from energy-conscious refrigerators to hybrid cars. In this essay, I will outline some of the discussions and actions as found in contemporary Japan to reconsider the role that Buddhist doctrine and practice might play in offering an alternative to Western market-oriented economic systems that are seemingly incapable of preventing ecological destruction.

## Japanese Buddhist Environmentalism

Riding Tokyo's Den'en-toshi subway line due west, one emerges from the underground section of the train line just before Futako Tamagawa Station. Before reaching the station's platform, one can see a large temple on the hill to the left. During the mid-1990s, for a period of several years, one would also have noticed a series of massive signboards along

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the temple hillside that collectively read "To the Mitsui Real Estate Company: Plants and Trees Also Have the Buddha-Nature."

This prominently displayed message to one of Japan's largest real estate conglomerates had been put up by Shunnō Watanabe, the chief priest of the temple Gyōzenji. This Pure Land-sect temple had been established in the 1560s on this hilltop in Tokyo's Setagaya Ward, and in the centuries that followed it became well known for its view of the plains below. The priest had launched a campaign against the construction by Mitsui Real Estate Company of a massive apartment complex right next to the temple that would not only obstruct the view from the temple but would involve the cutting down of 130 of the 180 ancient trees.

Not only did Watanabe rally his temple members; over the course of several years, he also organized a major petition drive (eventually collecting more than twelve thousand signatures that he submitted to the ward office) opposing the destruction of one of Tokyo's few remaining wooded sanctuaries. Employing the slogan "Plants and Trees Also Have the Buddha-Nature," the Buddhist priest appealed to the conscience of the residents in the ward (Watanabe serving as the new head of the "Seta no Kankyō o Mamoru Kai," or the Association to Protect Seta's Environment), the ward officials, and Mitsui Real Estate Company. Declaring that his group was "not anticonstruction but simply for the

preservation of these trees," the campaign successfully pressured the company to build the apartment complex with minimal environmental impact.

Today most of the ancient trees next to Gyōzenji still stand, and the view from the temple over the region is still panoramic. This case highlights the increasing role of Buddhist priests, temples, and lay associations in environmental activism in Japan, which had historically been associated with local citizens' groups and environmental organizations that came out of the left and labor movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

Buddhist temples have often served as stewards for much of the natural landscape of Japan since the early medieval period. But explicitly linking Buddhist doctrine with environmental protection is relatively recent. Historically, the consumer rights movement and other environmental activism in Japan have been driven by local citizens' groups and environmental organizations that were born from the left and labor movements of the 1960s. However, beginning in the late 1970s, a number of Buddhist priests, temples, and lay associations dropped their traditional resistance to what had been perceived as a leftist cause, developing new forms of Buddhist environmentalism that resonated with a more conservative worldview. Buddhist priests spearheading a local environmental initiative represent a small portion of the many individuals who understand their commitment to Bud-

*A wooded sanctuary covers the hill on which the temple Gyōzenji stands in Setagaya Ward, Tokyo.*

dhism and the traditions of temple life as requiring engagement in environmental issues. This short article provides an overview of this type of “Buddhist environmentalism” in Japan and offer some preliminary ideas on how the Japanese case can be understood primarily as a type of “conservative conservationism.”

### Establishment Buddhism and Sect-wide Environmentalism: The Case of the Sōtō Zen Green Plan

Since 1995 the Sōtō Zen sect has maintained a nationwide campaign for the environment, taking up key issues of energy use and consumer waste. The earliest of Japanese Buddhist sects to promote environmentalism on a sect-wide basis, they developed the comprehensive Green Plan and promoted it among the more than fifteen thousand temples of Sōtō Zen Buddhism.

The Green Plan has long been part of the official Sōtō Zen strategy to engage pressing contemporary issues. Through pamphlets, books, and symposiums, the sect has encouraged both individual priests and temples and sect organizations (such as regional district, women’s, and youth associations) to take up the environmental cause as a part of one’s affilia-

tion with the Sōtō Zen sect. The promotional materials emphasize the teachings of Dōgen and Keizan, which promote sensitivity to the natural world (such as Dōgen’s view that grasses, trees, and forests are manifestations of buddha-nature). They also point to conservation measures (such as monastic rules on not wasting water and food).

Green Plan pamphlets for sect households and temples also include items such as checklists to monitor the use of televisions and other electrical appliances (to meet a sect-wide goal of reducing energy use by 1 percent), information on purchasing “ecoproducts,” warnings on genetically modified foods, and detailed guides on how to properly separate materials to be recycled from general refuse. To chart progress on these initiatives, the sect established a fund, the Sōtō-Sect Green Plan Foundation, to raise money for nonprofit environmental groups in Japan. To measure carbon emission output, the sect headquarters distributed a chart to calculate the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> each household produces per year. Based on the Buddhist teachings of using less (*chisoku*) and donating (*fuse*), the fund has been a way to link Buddhist practice, environmental awareness and action, and fund-raising.

Individual temples have also been sites of Buddhist environmental practices. Whether it be the establishment of a green corridor and biotope at Kōzen’in Temple (Saitama Prefecture), collaboration with forest ecologists in the large-scale reforestation campaign at the head temple Sōjiji as part of the “Sennen no mori” (Thousand-Year Forest), or the installation of a nationwide acid-rain monitoring system at 650 Sōtō Zen temples, the Buddhist temple as a site for environmental practice has become increasingly accepted.

### Japanese Engaged Buddhism and the Search for an Alternative Paradigm: The Case of Jukō’in Temple

In contrast to the sect-wide activities of established Buddhist organizations, a number of individual priests and their temples have developed alternatives outside the sectarian establishment and the mainstream economic system. A good example is Hidehito Ōkōchi, a Pure Land-sect priest and a leading figure in the Japanese “engaged Buddhism” movement. As abbot of Jukō’in Temple, founded in 1617 and having a current parish membership of 250 families, he could easily have settled for the life of a typical parish priest—performing funerary rites and organizing annual services around the temple calendar. But over the years, he has served in all kinds of social- and environmental-justice movements and has written a number of books on small-scale development. Though some of the groups are Buddhist inspired, many are secular, nongovernmental organizations working on social welfare issues in Japan and around the world.

The key to Ōkōchi’s engaged Buddhism is his interpretation of the Buddhist teaching of “suffering.” He interprets suffering as existing not only on a personal level but also at a deep structural level in the modern socioeconomic system. This brings him in line with the analysis of many engaged Buddhists. For Ōkōchi, Buddhism is not simply a religion

*Hidehito Ōkōchi, abbot of Jukō’in Temple in Tokyo, standing beside large solar panels on the roof of his temple.*

for transforming oneself but a religion for transforming society.

Ōkōchi combines this emphasis on a return to the original teachings of the Buddha with Pure Land Buddhist rhetoric about making *this* world the Pure Land. Many in the Pure Land and True Pure Land traditions interpret Amida's Pure Land to be a heavenly land to which believers go after death. In contrast, Ōkōchi believes that heavens and hells are manifest in this world and that this world is itself the locus for the development of the Pure Land. This notion is, of course, not original, but it is nevertheless a minority tradition within the Pure Land sects.

In his environmental work, Ōkōchi linked this concept of building a Pure Land on Earth with his critique of the structures of modern Japan. As an increasing number of Japanese became aware of global-warming issues through the 1997 Kyoto conference, Ōkōchi was mobilizing citizens in his locality in Tokyo. He helped establish a local group to document the destruction of the rain forest by Japanese multinationals and successfully pressured the local council not to use wood from tropical rain forests. By far their most ambitious project was to establish an alternative-energy power plant in the ward to end their neighborhood's dependence on Japanese fossil-fuel and nuclear energy. In 1999 the Edogawa People's Power Plant No. 1 was constructed as a citizens' effort to withdraw from the energy companies and the financial institutions that funded them. The power plant was located on the roof of Jukō'in Temple.

The temple name, consisting of the Chinese characters *ju* (life) and *kō* (light), reflected the Pure Land tradition's teachings that existence is the unlimited life and light of the Buddha. The four-hundred-year-old temple faced a radical rebuilding in terms of temple architecture. After obtaining the cooperation of his parishioners, the temple was completely modernized using ecofriendly concrete and wooden building materials. The traditional roof tiles were replaced with two sets of fifteen large solar panels that would generate six thousand kilowatts per hour. This was enough to receive official recognition from the local government as the first of several planned People's Power Plants in Edogawa Ward.

The funding for this project—six million yen—came from local environmental groups, individual donors, and loans from an independent bank that the group established—the Mirai (or "Future") Bank. Ōkōchi adapted a temple fundraising strategy from the premodern period when donors bought roof tiles for a new temple's construction over and above the actual cost. He asked locals to buy solar panels as a gift to the temple power plant. The *taiyō kawara* or "sun tiles," were sold at five thousand yen (US\$50) per panel, and the funds were deposited in the new bank.

Ōkōchi's approach has been very practical and reflects his Pure Land background in his belief that ordinary Japanese citizens can participate in this type of engaged Buddhism without engaging in asceticism or sacrificing comfort. His

ideal of "engaged citizenship," or the spirit of volunteerism in society, is active social reform. Aligning itself with ordinary citizens, disdaining what some might consider elitist asceticism, his approach differs from the Sōtō Zen establishment Buddhism because it is based on a critique of the current sociopolitical and capitalist system. With much of mainstream Buddhism aligned politically with the right and big business, Ōkōchi's leftist rhetoric of siding with the poor and the oppressed offers an important but marginal voice in the contemporary Japanese Buddhist landscape.

### Conservative Japanese Buddhist Environmentalism in Local and Global Contexts

In contrast to the type of progressive politics of Ōkōchi, Japanese Buddhist environmentalism is by and large conservative. While it is undoubtedly true that socially engaged Buddhism is generally characterized by forms of progressive politics, many Japanese Buddhists involved with environmental issues come out of a strain of conservatism that celebrates local tradition and involves Japanese nationalism on the international stage.

A good example of an environmentalism based on the rhetoric of "conservation" is that of Shinchō Tanaka, the Shingon-sect abbot of Shimyō'in Temple in Kyoto. Located at the very source of the Kamo River, which runs through the old capital, the temple has served as the protector of this important watershed since the medieval period. Taking pride in the temple's role over the centuries, the temple abbot has viewed it as a calling to help maintain the cleanliness of the water source and protect a site that in times past was considered a sacred area into which only the initiated and purified mountain ascetics could enter. Indeed, over the years, Tanaka himself has noted that many Kyotoites would say that "the abbot of Shimyō'in is picky" because of his strict rules about banning visitors from eating and drinking or bringing in bags of any kind into the temple area. He says he did this to correct the bad manners of visitors and tourists, whose numbers probably went down because of the rules, to keep the watershed pure and free of trash as "the river is born from the mountain."

The environmental activism of this priest began in the spring of 1988, when a proposal was made to build a major dam on the Kamo River between Kamigamo (Upper Kamo) Shrine and Shimyō'in Temple. Knowing that both the river that defined the character of Kyoto and the mountain on which his temple stood would be destroyed, he became determined to fight the dam project. It was a noble thought, but in the postwar history of dam building in Japan, once a decision to build a dam had been made, even with protests and petitions, not a single project had been halted. For this seemingly impossible task, Tanaka put his faith in the protective divinity of Shimyō'in Temple, Fudō Myōō, a wrathful divinity in the esoteric Buddhist pantheon. Drawing on the esoteric Buddhist tradition's emphasis on the nonduality of body and mind, form and formlessness, Tanaka claims

*Shinchō Tanaka (right), the abbot of Shimyō'in Temple, explains to visitors about the historical connection between the temple and Kamo River in August 2002.*

that “unlike other sects, which focus on the other world, esoteric Buddhism focuses on *this* world,” which is composed of the six great elements (earth, water, fire, wind, space, and mind) that manifest the enduring truth of Dainichi Nyorai (Mahā-Vairocana, the Cosmic Buddha). With esoteric Buddhism as his philosophical ground and Fudō Myōō as his protective divinity, Tanaka decided that “the antidam movement would start from our mountain temple.”

The group, with Tanaka as its spokesman, began attracting supporters among civic groups, artists, and scholars, raising enough money to initially hire a consultant company to assess environmental damage. Raising its profile through such events as sponsoring antidam classical music concerts in the mountain temple or large demonstrations in Kyoto City, the movement drew the attention of the media. By June 1989 the movement had joined forces with other groups concerned with protecting Kyoto's water and greenery and began to exert political pressure on the governor and assembly. With opposition to the dam across the political spectrum, the campaign to “conserve” traditional Kyoto (its temples, the Kamo River, and its greenery) managed to stop the project

and become the first of several major campaigns to block the damming of Japanese rivers.

What is of interest here is the preponderance of politically conservative Buddhist environmentalists. While engaged Buddhism, particularly in the West, tends to draw from the progressive end of the political spectrum (as with convert Buddhists in general), Japanese engaged Buddhism is far more complex. The leading Buddhist economist in the post-war period, Shin'ichi Inoue, is another case in point. Although his work on developing “a Buddhist economics to save the earth”—the title of one of his books—can be understood as part of a Schumacherian tradition of a “small is beautiful” economics and a critique of American economics, Inoue was a well-known nationalist and former member of the kamikaze corps during World War II. As a leading banker (Bank of Japan and Miyazaki Bank) and a board member of several major lay Buddhist organizations, he had deep connections to powerful members of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party. His model for a uniquely Japanese form of capitalism—to be a counterbalance to what he thought was an immoral American model (he had respect for the German model and Tony Blair's British model)—was an attempt to recast capitalism in a kinder, gentler Japanese mode based on the morality of Buddhism. Rather than developing a new theory of economics, Inoue was a firm believer in capitalism and a critic of leftist movements like labor unions. Inoue represents another important strand of Buddhist conservatism that is truly conservative.

## Conclusion

Rather than an environmentalism that would be a radical departure from social and political norms, the Buddhist institution in Japan represents a conservative bastion from which it is not easy to move forward on environmental issues. Institutional Buddhism in Japan not only tends to support the establishment but is perhaps the most conservative pillar in contemporary Japanese society. The result has been that despite the exception of the Sōtō Zen Green Plan, most Buddhist environmentalism in Japan has had to remain small-scale, localized, conservative, and organized primarily on the initiative of an individual or small group.

At the same time, whether it be creating energy off the grid through solar roof panels (Jukō'in) or making use of sect-wide organizations to promote “green Buddhism” (the Sōtō Zen Green Plan), Japanese Buddhists are beginning to make structural changes that have a direct impact upon the environment. Precisely because establishment Buddhism is a pillar of mainstream Japanese society, even small changes at the more than one hundred thousand temples have the potential to make dramatic changes not only at local temples but also in the environmental patterns of the millions of lay Buddhist members of those temples. In this way, “conservative conservationism” seems to be one model for a hypercapitalist Japan and a generally conservative Buddhist establishment. □

# Ridding Ourselves of Greed

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.*

**T**he sufferings of individuals, as well as the ills of society and nations, are all rooted in desire and derive from greed, as the Lotus Sutra so rightly declares. At the present time in particular, we must all think seriously about this fact, as if to engrave it deeply on our consciousness.

The United Nations was established, along with a large number of other organizations, to help ensure world peace through international meetings and activities. People are expressing a fundamental wish to resolve their troubles, in which a number of countries are involved, in a way that seeks to achieve solutions through dialogue. This is testimony that human beings have made at least some strides in terms of moral progress. Nevertheless, since such dialogue remains rooted in national greed, much of it can be said to have the form but not the spirit of real progress, and the world actually displays little improvement. It would seem clear, therefore, that if we do not remove the cause of this illness of greed, the human suffering caused by conflict will never be exhausted. Some urgent measures are needed, but as long as the root cause continues to exist, any relief can only be temporary.

Buddhism strictly cautions us against becoming attached

to things, and its objective, put simply, is to remove the cause of suffering and lead people to happiness and contentment. This expression, "remove the cause of suffering," is of particular interest. If we just prune the part of a weed that appears above ground but leave the roots where they are, the weed will grow again. We have to remove the roots in order to get rid of the weed permanently. In the same way, it is not enough to temporarily subdue the greed that is at the root of human suffering; we have to resolve to remove it completely.

The Buddha never denied the existence of desire itself. Desire is a basic instinct that arises before any objectification of good or evil. It works on people's minds and can thrust forward under its own impulse. He taught that only when desire is excessive does it become a source of pain and suffering and unhappiness. Such excess is described by terms such as greed and lust. Therefore Buddhism teaches that we should control and moderate our desires so that they do not become reckless and degenerate into greed or lust. There is no suggestion in this that we must deny instinctive desire. Buddhism is not a faith that teaches us to ignore what makes us human, but it does positively encourage us to preserve our original nature, our buddha-nature, as human beings. After all, it is because human beings have desires that they invent machines to make life easier and more pleasant and have made such remarkable progress in science. This is why we cannot simply generalize and say that all desire is in and of itself bad.

Desire itself cannot be a bad thing, since it is the dynamic force behind most of humanity's progress. It is only when it degenerates into greed and selfish attachment that it develops negative energy, which both causes individual suffering and hinders genuine social progress.

For example, consider the moisture in the air. When it settles on blades of grass or on leaves, it forms dew or frost. If the moisture had nowhere to settle, neither dew nor frost could form. Similarly, human suffering would not develop if desire did not too often settle onto greed. So if there were

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*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.*

no greed, it could not take the form of suffering. The roots of suffering fill our world and, like moisture in the atmosphere, are all-pervasive. But as long as we do not provide the roots with a place to settle and develop, they will not grow into suffering.

It is important that we control our appetites so that we can move our desires in a positive direction, turning from quantity to quality. All working people—those who produce goods, those who distribute and sell them, and those who are in service industries—should strive to change the direction of their wishes, trying not so much to do more as to work better. Even more basically, the desire to lead a good life is fine in itself, but we should think not only in terms of material wealth and physical comfort but more deeply in terms of spiritual wealth and happiness.

Perhaps this might lead to a decrease in the national wealth,

trolled, water might sometimes become scarce, causing hardship when it is needed, or at other times it might overflow, resulting in flooding that causes much suffering. Thus under the established rules of water control, powerful rivers have to be held back by dams in certain places, with the water held in storage ponds; or their flow needs to be regularized, so the volume of water is neither too small nor too great. How true it is that those who make channels for water control the waters.

But how do we control our desires? I think there are two possible ways. The first is to suppress and the second is to correct. Suppressing is to apply the brakes of good sense before our original desires grow out of hand to become lust and greed. When we apply the brakes while driving, we first encounter resistance and the heat of friction. Similarly, the instant we apply the brakes on our own actions, we initially

experience resistance from our growing desires, and we need perseverance to overcome it. Because weak people suffer distress when they experience this initial friction, they try to run away from it. In actuality, though, only momentary perseverance is needed: the joy that comes from overcoming the resistance is many times greater than any pain felt because of the friction. As we repeat this mental activity, we find that in due course we are no longer conscious of any resistance when we engage in self-regulation. People who reach this stage should be regarded as truly virtuous.

The second way, correction, is to regulate the flow of desires just as they exist, in keeping with common sense. In terms of water control, this is like channeling a river so that as much as possible it flows straight and deep, not like a meandering stream. This not only acts to protect against flooding but also gives rise to incalculable benefits in terms of the generation of hydroelectric power

and agricultural irrigation. I am reminded here of the Mahayana teaching that “delusions are inseparable from enlightenment.” It is a subtle principle of Buddhism that desire, when diverted to good causes, will have good results and thus provide a stimulus for the advancement of society.

When we allow our desires, or those of our group, to expand and proliferate into greed and lust, we will have unending difficulty in escaping from suffering. While this continues, neither the individual nor society, nor indeed the world as a whole, will be able to achieve true happiness. □

\**The Dhammapada*, Juan Mascaro, trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1973), 46.

*Founder Niwano addressing the third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament (SSD III) in New York on June 8, 1988.*

but it would represent genuine wealth in the truest sense for people. In addition, this type of wealth would not create suspicion or lack of trust among other countries. As the old Chinese proverb says, just as a blossoming peach or plum tree naturally attracts people without being aware of its own beauty, a virtuous person will naturally draw the admiration of others.

The Buddha taught, “Those who make channels for water control the waters; makers of arrows make the arrows straight; carpenters control their timber; and the wise control their own minds” (*The Dhammapada*, 80).<sup>\*</sup> Water tends to flow from a higher place to a lower; that is its nature. No matter how natural this might be, however, if left uncon-

# The Tale of a Modern Pilgrim

by Notto R. Thelle

*The search for treasure led him back  
to what he had left behind.*

Once upon a time, there lived a Jew in Krakow: Eisik, son of Jekel. He was told in a dream to search for a treasure under the bridge that led to the royal palace in Prague. Eisik left home and went all the way to Prague, but he did not dare to dig, for fear of the watchman on the bridge. But he stayed faithfully by the bridge day by day, until the captain of the guard noticed him and asked what he was looking for.

Eisik told him about the dream that had led him the long way from a distant country. The captain laughed at the naive Jew who had set out on his travels for the sake of a dream. He himself had once had a similar dream, he said: he was to search for a treasure under the oven in the house of a Jew in Krakow, called Eisik, son of Jekel.

"I can just see myself tearing down all the houses in a city where half of the Jews are called Eisik, and the other half Jekel!" said the captain, and laughed again.

Eisik bowed his farewell, returned to his home, excavated the treasure, and built a house of prayer called the School of Reb Eisik Reb Jekel.

Eisik's dream led him to a far distant country in search of a treasure. There he heard the dream of another person and discovered the treasure that lay hidden in his own living room. Perhaps most people bear a dream within themselves, and some actually leave home to find the treasure they have seen in their dreams. Hundreds of thousands of modern Westerners have searched for treasures in foreign religions. Many have set out on their travels to India, Nepal, Southeast Asia, or Japan to find a faith superior to the humdrum Christianity they knew from their childhood home. Some found treasures in the course of their journey and never returned home; some perished; others came back even poorer than when they had left. But some returned and found the treasure in their own living room.

I met Eisik in Kyoto—an American who had bidden farewell to his childhood home and all of its works and all of its ways. He had refused military service in Vietnam and had rejected violence and the consumer society. This necessarily entailed rejection of the religion that was consumed as part

of the American way of life. The clichés and cheap explanations he was offered undermined what was left of his Christian faith. He had to get away, if he was to save his soul.

His dream took him to Japan. He sensed that there were hidden treasures in Zen Buddhism, and he hoped to find the great enlightenment in meditation, a boundary-breaking experience of reality. Here he met a master who was willing to guide him. Morning and evening, he took part in *zazen*, meditation in a sitting posture. He sat through periods of meditation that lasted from early morning to late at night, interrupted only by small pauses and simple meals. The discipline was unyielding, and his body ached. But he was willing to sacrifice everything, if only he could find the treasure.

One day, as he sat in deep concentration in the meditation hall, he had the greatest shock of his life. Suddenly he knew with a certainty that vibrated in every fiber of his being: "I am a Christian!" The treasure for which he was looking lay hidden in the living room he had left behind. The Christianity that he had rejected became a new reality, something tremendously close to him. The treasure had been there all along, but he had had to go to a foreign country to discover it.

Eisik excavated the treasure and built a house of prayer. My friend, too, became a man of prayer, one who brought light to others. This was probably a reflection of the treasure he had found, but the journey itself had also given him light. His dreams and travels lived on in his life. The room to which he returned was not the closed world of his childhood home. His journey had left its mark on him, and he now lived in an open universe. His faith had been deepened by what he had seen. He continued to meditate, and he still listened to the wisdom of the Zen master. The more he penetrated Zen, the more clearly did he see the treasures of the Christian faith.

Like a true Christian, he discovered that "in Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Cor. 2:3). □

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# The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

## Chapter 13

### Exhortation to Hold Firm

#### (3)

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

TEXT Then the bodhisattvas all together unanimously raised their voices, speaking thus in verse:

“Be pleased to be without anxiety! / After the Buddha’s extinction, / In the [last] dreadful evil age, / We will proclaim abroad [this sutra]. / Though in their ignorance many / Will curse and abuse us / And beat us with swords and staves, / We will endure it all.

COMMENTARY *Though in their ignorance many.* This line refers to lay people of overweening pride (*adhimana*), who think that they know what they do not and that they are enlightened when they are not. Many of those around us irresponsibly malign the Lotus Sutra without ever having read a line of it, and persecute those who follow its teaching. The sutra commentaries rank such ignorant and prideful lay people as the first of “the three kinds of powerful foes” of the Lotus Sutra.

• *Abuse.* The Chinese for this word, *ma-li*, is made up of two characters, the first meaning “to abuse directly, face to face,” and the second meaning “to revile in a sarcastic manner, using innuendo and irony.” The latter action is far worse than the former.

TEXT Bhikshus in that evil age will be / Heretical, suspicious, warped, / Claiming to have attained when they have not, / And with minds full of arrogance.

COMMENTARY *Heretical.* The Chinese word translated as “heretical” has the meaning of evil, warped wisdom.

• *Claiming to have attained when they have not.* This line signifies having the illusion that they have attained enlightenment when in fact they have not.

• *Arrogance.* “Arrogance” here refers to the conceit of the small self. Arrogant bhikshus are called “people of religious pride,” the second of the three kinds of powerful foes of the Lotus Sutra. Though such bhikshus have entered the Buddha Way, they believe unworthy teachings, regarding them

as supreme, and treat the Lotus Sutra with contempt, trying to prevent its teaching from spreading.

TEXT Others in the *aranya* / Will wear patched garments in seclusion, / Pretending that they walk the true path / And scorning [other] people;

COMMENTARY Those spoken of in this passage and below are the third of the three kinds of powerful foes, “arrogant saints”—religious figures who pretend saintliness and look down on the ordinary run of people. They believe themselves to be holy, and are revered as such by society, but because they do nothing in terms of sincere religious action to bring others to salvation, they cannot be regarded as truly saintly. The sutra commentaries call such people saints in name only and deplore their overweening pride.

• *Aranya.* This Sanskrit word means “solitude” or “tranquil place.” It refers to a quiet place away from human habitation in mountains or forests suitable for religious practice.

• *Patched garments.* These are robes made of discarded rags sewn together. The surplice worn by Japanese Buddhist priests today retains traces of this ideal in the way it is made, though now it is often splendid and costly.

• *Pretending that they walk the true path.* The true path of a person of religion is universal salvation. It is not enough to attain personal enlightenment and peace of mind and live a pure life. It is far better to be soiled by the dust of the world if this means it is possible to save people and bring even a little happiness to society. That is what is meant by walking the true path. Unfortunately, people in the community tend not to look for this essential in people of religion, and people of religion themselves too often create a false impression of sanctity.

• *Scorning [other] people.* This is the greatest evil committed by those who are falsely regarded as saints. A truly religious person shares the joy and suffering of those around him or her and vows to act as a guide to lead them to salvation.

TEXT Greedily attached to gain, / They will preach the Law to laymen / And be revered by the world / As arhats of the six transcendent [powers];

COMMENTARY *Attached to gain.* The literal meaning of the Chinese phrase is “venerating profit,” but it should be interpreted more widely as “being secretly attracted to worldly desires, power, and fame.”

• *Laymen.* The literal meaning of the Chinese is “the white-robed.” Indians prefer to wear white, and generally all men other than the ordained do so. Thus the expression contrasts the lay and the ordained. Here, “laymen” refers in particular to those who are wealthy and of high status.

TEXT These men, cherishing evil minds, / Ever thinking of earthly things, / Assuming the name of *aranyas*, / Will love to calumniate us,

COMMENTARY Here is a scathing denunciation of those saintly figures who revile the Lotus Sutra.

• *Ever thinking of earthly things.* This means always mentally lusting after material things, power, and fame.

• *Assuming the name of aranyas, will love to calumniate us.* Those who have separated themselves from the world to lead a pure life criticize active people of religion who choose to remain among the people and to be contaminated by the dust of the world for their sake. Today there are many who, cloistered in their studies (the *aranya*), delight in criticizing the so-called new religions.

TEXT Saying such things of us as / ‘All these bhikshus, / From love of gain, / Preach heretical doctrine; / They have themselves composed this sutra / To delude the people of the world; / For the sake of acquiring fame, / They make a specialty of this sutra.’

COMMENTARY *Heretical doctrine.* This refers to teachings other than Buddhism and the teachings of saints and wise people other than the Buddha. The latter half of chapter 11, “Beholding the Precious Stupa,” teaches that all saintly and wise people are emanations of the Buddha. Thus it can be said that in the broadest sense all true teachings are the Buddha’s. Those whose vision is narrow, however, reject all teachings other than those issuing from the mouth of Shakyamuni himself as “heretical doctrine.” This attitude is mistaken and violates the spirit of Shakyamuni. Shakyamuni was not so small minded; he permitted a certain flexibility in the interpretation of his teaching and was highly tolerant of other doctrines, as I have already explained through many examples. The original message of the Buddha must not be distorted, but it is quite correct to elaborate on it or amplify it to suit the needs of different people and times. We must not forget that anything that can actually save people is in accord with the Buddha’s will. The words of the bodhisattvas in this chapter were as vibrant in the time of Nichi-

ren, in thirteenth-century Japan, as they are for us today, wherever we may be.

TEXT Always in the assemblies, / In order to ruin us, / To kings and ministers, / To Brahmins and citizens, / And to the other groups of bhikshus, / They will slanderously speak evil of us, / Saying: ‘These are men of false views, / Who proclaim heretical doctrines.’

COMMENTARY This passage illustrates well the arrogant attitude of critics of the so-called new religions.

• *Brahmins.* This refers to the priests of Brahmanism. In today’s terms, they are clerics and other representatives of established religion.

• *Citizens.* This refers to the Sanskrit *grihapati*, “householder.” In ancient India it meant a wealthy man whose business included commerce and industry. In China it referred to an eminent scholar who did not enter government service. In modern Japan it is applied to a male lay Buddhist. Thus it remains the custom in Japan to incorporate the Japanese equivalent, *koji*, in the “Dharma name” of a man who takes Buddhist orders and to the posthumous Buddhist name of a male believer.

TEXT But we, from reverence for the Buddha, / Will endure all these evils. / By these contemptuously addressed as / ‘All you buddhas!’— / Even such scorn and arrogance / We will patiently endure.

COMMENTARY Because we revere the Buddha deeply, we also revere the sutra that contains his greatest teaching. Thus we are able to endure all hardship and persecution to protect the sutra and spread its message, as well as any sarcasm about our own role.

• *By these contemptuously addressed as / ‘All you buddhas!’* Such derision causes far more pain and anger than straightforward abuse. Even this, however, we must patiently withstand.

TEXT In the evil age of the corrupt kalpa, / Abounding in fear and dread, / Devils will take possession of them / To curse, abuse, and insult us. / But we, revering and believing in the Buddha, / Will wear the armor of perseverance; / For the sake of preaching this sutra / We will endure all these hard things.

COMMENTARY *Corrupt kalpa.* This is a reference to “the evil ages of the five decays (see the May/June 1998 issue of DHARMA WORLD). The world is filled to overflowing with corruption; it is an age in which nothing can be done.

• *Will wear the armor of perseverance.* This fine phrase expresses dauntless determination to proclaim the Dharma in a nonconfrontational manner.

TEXT We will not love body and life, / But only care for the supreme Way.

A painting by Founder Niwano, titled "The First Rolling of the Dharma Wheel, at Deer Park," depicting Shakyamuni's first teaching of Buddhism.

COMMENTARY What a splendid verse this is. As long as a single person who has not been touched by the supreme teaching remains in the world, we cannot afford to relax our efforts. What value can our individual lives have in comparison? Such is the fervent mind-set of one who lives in compassion and in the true Dharma.

TEXT We will, throughout all ages to come, / Guard what the Buddha bequeaths. / World-honored One! Thou knowest that, / In the corrupt age, vicious bhikshus, / Knowing not the Law so tactfully preached / As opportunity served by the Buddha, / Will abuse and frown upon us; / Repeatedly shall we be driven out, / And exiled afar from the monasteries. / Such evils will be our ills / For remembering the Buddha's command, / But [we] will endure all these things.

COMMENTARY *Guard what the Buddha bequeaths.* The task the Buddha has entrusted to us is to bring the people of the world to salvation by spreading the true teaching.

• *Vicious bhikshus.* "Vicious" should be interpreted here as "inferior." The phrase refers to bhikshus who do not know the true teaching.

• *Knowing not the Law so tactfully preached as opportunity served by the Buddha.* This is a very important point. People who are preoccupied with the so-called provisional Mahayana cannot comprehend the truth of "the Law so tactfully preached," that is, the teachings of skillful means—methods suitable to person and circumstances—and revile such teachings as belonging to Hinayana. Again, those who are preoccupied with the teachings of skillful means cannot comprehend their underlying truth but, whatever the age, follow the literal meaning of the Buddha's teachings word for word, never understanding how to bring true salvation to all living beings. Because of this situation it was essential that the "true Mahayana" be preached in the Lotus Sutra,

showing the truth of all provisional, "tactful" teachings. We must here consider again the fact that the Lotus Sutra is the teaching that expresses the truth contained in the teachings of skillful means. By so doing we can gain a clear comprehension of the importance of the teachings of skillful means, themselves based on the truth.

The above verse passage expresses the bodhisattvas' vow to put into practice the first of the three rules of the robe, the throne, and the abode of the Tathagata, that of putting on the robe of the Tathagata. This is their response to the Buddha's command to teach the Dharma by donning the robe of forbearance.

TEXT Wherever in villages and cities / There be those who seek after the Law, / We will all go there and / Preach the Law bequeathed by the Buddha.

COMMENTARY Fearing neither hardship nor persecution, as long as there is even one person who seeks the Dharma we will go wherever we are needed, to large cities or small towns, regardless of whether we will be opposed by strong enemies, and will teach the Lotus Sutra entrusted to us by the Buddha.

This verse corresponds to "entering into the abode of the Tathagata," the vow of the bodhisattvas to teach the Dharma with great compassion. The positive action that is the bodhisattva practice of compassion is based upon the passive bravery of bearing up in the face of difficulty.

TEXT We are the World-honored One's apostles / And, amidst a multitude having nothing to fear, / Will rightly preach the Law. / Be pleased, O Buddha, to abide in peace.

COMMENTARY *We are the World-honored One's apostles.* These are modest yet confident words. Because we are the

messengers of the Buddha, we must have a firm understanding of the basic truth and preach the Dharma with unrestricted freedom based upon that understanding. This basic truth is the teaching that all phenomena are empty, that all forms of existence are temporary phenomena and are nonsubstantial. This is the doctrine of "emptiness as the supreme meaning" (*paramarthashunyata*; see the November/December 1997 issue). In chapter 10, "A Teacher of the Law," we find the words "the throne of the Tathagata is the emptiness of all laws. Established in these . . . he will preach this Law Flower Sutra." The passage beginning "We are the World-honored One's apostles" represents the bodhisattvas' vow to teach the Dharma widely according to the words of the Buddha.

**TEXT** In the presence of the World-honored One / And the buddhas come from all directions, / We thus make our vow, / And the Buddha knows our hearts."

**COMMENTARY** This is the conclusion of the bodhisattvas' vow. We should understand it as both the bodhisattvas' own pledge and an encouragement to practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in later times to be resolute and to strive to spread the sutra's teaching whatever difficulties this entails.

We have come across many references in this chapter to the three kinds of powerful foes. The description of the foes does not belong merely to the time in which the sutra was written but is every bit as apposite in today's world, for these foes are all around us. Let us therefore consider the three kinds of powerful foes in modern terms.

The first of the foes are lay people of overweening pride, who criticize, oppose, and attack without any real understanding of the issues. By lay people, the sutra means ordinary people, who are susceptible to power and are inclined to act according to mood. Such people are swayed by the ideas of their leaders. Furthermore, lacking any firm beliefs of their own, they judge things according to the prevailing mood and fashion. For example, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries in Japan, a time when Western culture was flooding into the country, many intellectuals deemed it fashionable to become Christian and attend church. This gave the general public the impression that Christianity was a superior religion, while Buddhism was antiquated and riddled with superstition.

If this had remained merely an impression, it would not have been so bad, but this false impression came to be regarded as the truth and was given expression in speech and action. For example, the Lotus Sutra was derided by those who did not even bother to read it and was judged a fanatical teaching. Certainly practitioners of the Lotus Sutra themselves have often been at fault in giving people that impression. In the past there were those who linked the Lotus Sutra with ultranationalism and militarism, and today some religious bodies pay most attention to using belief in the Lotus Sutra to gain material benefits for their members,

while others form political movements. In view of this, it may be inevitable that people on the whole have a false impression of the sutra.

If we want to take our critics to task, we who believe in and follow the Lotus Sutra must reflect first on our own attitude and behavior and then attempt to break down their opposition by bringing them to understand what the sutra actually teaches. We must grasp each opportunity and use whatever means we can to inform others about the fact that this sutra is the right and true teaching. We must also reveal to the world our gratitude and devotion to the Lotus Sutra. This will be evidenced by the truth of our words and actions and the way we lead our lives. We bear witness to the wonderful and meritorious teaching of the Lotus Sutra in all that we say and do. In the workplace we must be competent, and at home a useful member of the family. We must demonstrate in all our dealings the virtues of true affection and magnanimity, so that we are honored and loved by all. In particular, it is important that as members of groups we make a good impression on others by acting according to social ethics and obeying laws and regulations. Furthermore, we must continually strive to brighten the world around us by performing public service and helping those in trouble.

Our actions are the best sermon. Of course sermons in the ordinary sense of teaching, whether in writing, film, or broadcasting, are still important, but they are of secondary importance when it comes to spreading the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

The second of the three kinds of powerful foes are people of religious pride, or "arrogant bhikshus." Unlike the general public, these people have some knowledge of the Way. They are religious professionals, respected members of their sects. At a time when human reason had not developed very far, they would attack other religions and sects, contending that theirs alone was correct. The root of this illusion, more often than not, was the intolerance of people of religion, or, to be more direct, their animosity to other sects and beliefs. Animosity clouds judgment; in fact, it blocks the will to make correct judgments by preventing such a will from arising.

During the Sung dynasty in China (960–1279) there lived a man called Chang Shang-ying, chief minister to the emperor, who at the age of only eighteen had passed the state examinations brilliantly. Entering a Buddhist temple one day, he noticed the veritable mountain of sutra scrolls it possessed and cried out indignantly, "How dare they venerate those foreign teachings so!" He decided then and there to compose a work attacking Buddhism. Chang was convinced of the absolute superiority of the teachings of Confucius and made no attempt to learn about Buddhism before judging it. His initial reaction was animosity, not curiosity. Unfortunately there are a great number of such attacks, not only from religion but from the world of scholarship as well. For example, in Japan there have been occasions when graduates of national universities have ganged up to undermine the research of scholars from private universities. It is truly

a great pity that even eminent scholars can automatically oppose a new theory or view.

Chang eventually abandoned his campaign at the urging of his wife. Later, he happened to read the Vimalakirti-nir-desh-sutra and was so moved by it that he became a devout Buddhist. This episode speaks clearly of the importance of always studying something in depth before criticizing it or regarding it with enmity. If, after sufficient study, we discover mistakes and weaknesses in our subject, then is the time to declare our opposition.

Since this type of foe reacts according to animosity alone, he or she can be extremely dangerous. In the past, time and time again such people persecuted, exiled, and even killed members of other faiths. Often wars of religion broke out. From our present perspective, it is paradoxical that religion, whose purpose is the happiness of humankind, should permit people to be killed and wars to occur in its name. It bespeaks the narrowness of vision and stubbornness of heart of people of the past. This situation arose simply because they lacked wisdom, the broadmindedness to tolerate people of other faiths and to perceive the true nature of religion.

The majority of people in modern-day society, as well as people of religion, have a far broader vision than their predecessors and greater flexibility of mind. They are gradually approaching true wisdom. We see less dogmatism than before, fewer attempts to force the words of religious founders to apply literally to the present situation. As a result there is far less proscription of other beliefs. All the same, such thinking has not entirely disappeared. Some religious groups are moving against increasing tolerance, branding other religions, and even groups within their own faith, heretical. In extreme cases certain individuals even accuse members of the same sect of heresy and expel them. Such thinking derives not from the teachings themselves but from their accretions over time. Certain believers treat such accretions as jewels of truth, while others attach themselves to mere forms and regulations. The perspective of such people is very narrow, and their understanding is full of an animosity based on exclusivism and self-righteousness.

This is extremely dangerous. It is a small step from here to fascistic behavior, such as asserting that one's own belief should be the religion of the state. Religions of this type are the modern version of the template we are discussing, people of religious pride. We must pray that such people will be brought as quickly as possible to reflect upon their mistakes and returned to the true form of religion.

The third of the three kinds of powerful foes are "arrogant saints," religious figures who assume a saintly manner and set themselves apart from ordinary people. Such people, who usually stand high in the hierarchy of their religious organizations and are admired by society, are intoxicated by their accomplishments and, proud beyond measure, make light of the true teachings in order to protect their status. To have achieved high status, these people must have studied and trained hard in their youth. As they grow older and

attain higher and higher rank, however, they become complacent and lose all interest in studying or training further. Truly outstanding religious figures, on the other hand, believe that study continues to the day of death and seek continually to advance in religious knowledge and experience. Unfortunately most people, once they have attained a certain status, sink into a state of stubborn defense of what they have achieved.

Among such people, those with little breadth of character tend to find any burgeoning force a threat and are ill at ease when, for example, a more inspiring teaching spreads its influence in their direction. They are offended rather than pleased by new doctrinal explanations proposed by others within their sect or by younger priests and scholars, and hide behind their authority to scheme against the new thinking and influence of the younger generation. They are called "arrogant saints" because they consciously use for their own ends the respect and trust society has given them.

They are particularly dangerous because of the great influence their status and fame grant them. Arrogance (*adhimana*) in a young person blocks only his or her own development, and any ensuing fault is minor. In one who holds high position and is well known, however, arrogance so impedes the manifestation of truth and obstructs its propagation that the implications for society as a whole are severe and the sin is truly grave. Such people are all the more insidious because they are trusted by the populace.

It is obvious that "arrogant saints" are the worst of the three kinds of powerful foes. The Reverend Kosho Otani, recalling the late Zen teacher Daisetz Suzuki, said, "He combined harmoniously the feeling of gratitude of Shin [Pure Land] Buddhism with Zen acuteness and resolute spiritual strength." Suzuki was both a great scholar and a man of deep faith, blending the ideals of faith in one's own power, in the Zen tradition, and faith in the power of the Buddha, in the Shin tradition. His great capacity for tolerance, which spanned the thought of both East and West, was undoubtedly grounded in the power of his spirit. He continued to teach and write until he was ninety-five, but never succumbed to scholarly arrogance or false pride through the adulation of others.

This chapter of the Lotus Sutra has revealed to us the harm caused by arrogant people and the dedication and determination with which we must withstand them in order to protect and spread the true teaching. It warns us too that we must reflect upon our own actions and motivations so that we do not fall into the sin of arrogance. All in all, it is a deeply significant chapter.

*To be continued*

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