

Everyone Is Wonderful

by Nichiko Niwano



When I hear the phrase “everyone is wonderful,” I am reminded of the following passage in a book by the author of children’s literature Hatoju Muku (1905–87): “A wonderful power is given to all things and every living thing on earth. Nothing is born without being given this wonderful power. . . . You, too. You, too. And you, too. There’s something we don’t know. And we don’t know what it is, but everyone has that wonderful power, each and every one has it.”

This passage, from a book of children’s stories, shows that Muku believed in and praised individual personality and potential. It also has something in common with the basis of the Buddha’s teachings.

On the other hand, some people may doubt that the idea that “everyone is wonderful” applies to criminals. However, everything that happens is due to the coming together of causes and conditions, and therefore, if the conditions were even slightly different, instead of “that criminal,” it might have been me or you who committed a crime. When we think in this way, we realize that everyone is capable of committing a crime. But as Muku tells us, it is also true that everyone’s existence has a wonderful power.

Everything in this world and in the universe is an expression of the truth of the Three Seals of the Dharma: all things are impermanent, all things are devoid of self, and nirvana is tranquil. Of course, we human beings are sustained by the Truth, as are animals, plants, and minerals. Everything is an expression

of one great life, that is, of the source of all life. In other words, everything is equally the buddha-nature. Only human beings, however, are capable of understanding that everything is sustained by the Truth.

For this reason, we should truly be grateful to be born human, which we can only say is wonderful. Then what matters most is that we gain self-awareness and become aware of our wonderful power and its radiance in every person.

Emulating the Spirit of the Bodhisattva Never Despise

In recent years, there has been a growing number of people who lack self-confidence and are falling into self-negation. By nature everyone is wonderful, yet many people are unable to realize their potential and radiance. Regarding this situation, one of the points that can help everyone revere themselves and see the people around them from the same perspective is the Lotus Sutra teaching that praises all things—especially the spirit and attitude of putting the palms together reverently shown by the Bodhisattva Never Despise in chapter 20.

The Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh says that we need to have faith in the actions of the Bodhisattva Never Despise, and that by doing so, we can help people overcome their negative self-image. The reason, of course, is that Never Despise was a bodhisattva who said to everyone he met, “You will become a buddha.” He demonstrated

Nichiko Niwano is president of Rissho Kosei-kai and a president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace. He also serves as special advisor to Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan).

that both his own and other people’s existence is worthy of respect by continuing the practice of putting his palms together reverently before others.

In the present age, I truly think it is extremely important that we follow the example of the Bodhisattva Never Despise and show everyone we happen to meet the spirit and attitude of putting our palms together reverently before them—that is, that they are wonderful. This is one and the same as the Buddha’s Original Vow, and I cannot help but hope that for the people we meet, our encounters will become catalysts for their realizing the dignity of life and that they themselves and other people are equally worthy of respect, and that they can return to a self-affirming lifestyle.

Similarly, just as the chapter “Skillful Means” in the Lotus Sutra says, “Only a buddha together with a buddha can completely fathom the reality of all things,” and only a buddha and another buddha can truly respect each other. Therefore it is important that every one of us also reaffirms the Truth and embraces the compassion and wisdom of the Buddha. Then, there is no denying that “everyone is wonderful” means that everyone is being liberated from suffering. □

DHARMA WORLD

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

OCT.–DEC. 2013 VOL. 40

FEATURES: Nuclear Power and Contemporary Religion

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

Publisher: Moriyasu Okabe

Executive Director:

Jun'ichi Nakazawa

Director: Kazumasa Murase

Editor: Kazumasa Osaka

Editorial Advisors:

Miriam Levering, Gene Reeves,

Yoshiaki Sanada,

Michio T. Shinozaki

Copy Editors:

William Feuillan, Gary Hoiby,

DeAnna Satre, Catherine Szolga

Editorial Staff:

Katsuyuki Kikuchi, Ryuichi Kaneko,

Satoe Izawa

Subscription Staff: Kazuyo Okazaki

Layout and Design: Abinitio Design

Cover photo: Shutterstock

Photoshop work by Abinitio Design

1 Everyone Is Wonderful

by *Nichiko Niwano*

.....

3 Nuclear Power Tests

Our Humanity

by *Yoshiaki Sanada*

5 Toward a Truly Prosperous Society—Beyond Nuclear Power

6 The Three Nuclear Poisons

by *David R. Loy*

10 Nuclear Power and Contemporary Religion: A Catholic Viewpoint

by *Theodore Mascalrenhas*

14 Japan and the Four Noble Truths of Nuclear Energy: A Buddhist Response to Social Injustice

by *Jonathan S. Watts*

18 The TEPCO Nuclear Disaster and the Responsibilities of Religions

by *Martin Repp*

22 Our Sins and Responsibilities: What the Fukushima Accident Has Revealed

by *Tetsuya Takahashi*

24 Nuclear Energy and Ethics: The Lessons of Fukushima

by *Yukio Yamaguchi*

27 Heeding the Voices of Foxes and Brown Dippers

by *Sarah M. Strong*

.....

31 The Prism of the Lotus Sutra (2) by *Atsushi Kanazawa*

32 A Catholic Appreciation of Buddhists and Buddhism: A Personal Journey

by *Leo D. Lefebure*

37 Designation of the Second President

by *Nikko Niwano*

THE THREEFOLD LOTUS SUTRA: A MODERN COMMENTARY

42 The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law Chapter 21: The Divine Power of the Tathagata (2)

Nuclear Power Tests Our Humanity

by Yoshiaki Sanada

The Fukushima nuclear disaster demands that we answer fundamental questions about what it means to be human, what it means to live, what happiness is, what society and the state are, and what civilization is.

Yoshiaki Sanada is director of the Peace Research Institute of Religions for Peace Japan. He is a professor emeritus of Chuo University in Tokyo, where he was a professor of law until 2007. He has also been a visiting professor at the Institute of Comparative Law of the China University of Politics and Law in Beijing.

The earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, caused unprecedented damage. Many precious lives were lost, and the natural, social, and human environments were ravaged. More than two years have already passed, yet the tragic wounds of that day still remain in many places. The people of Fukushima Prefecture in particular have suffered fourfold, both physically and mentally: from the earthquake, the tsunami, the nuclear disaster, and the damage caused by rumor. Their difficult lives have been constrained politically, economically, and socially as well. Despite their continued hardships, they appear to have been abandoned by Japan and the Japanese as the passing of time wears away memory. Thus they now have to contend with a fivefold affliction and live anxious lives with no future prospects, asking themselves when they will be able to return to living as normal human beings.

Immediately after the earthquake and tsunami, Religions for Peace Japan set up a task force to aid reconstruction in northeastern Japan, establishing an aid center in the disaster areas and sending permanent staff to operate them. At the same time, it decided on a course of action for aiding recovery, making clear the tasks that should be undertaken. A

performance target was set with three aims: (1) mourning the dead, (2) building solidarity with the living, and (3) taking responsibility for future generations. It joined hands with people of all religions and sects in the disaster areas and with medical and welfare workers and others active in various nonprofit organizations aiding reconstruction, sharing relevant information, and making the most of resources to carry out various relief activities.

In May of this year I visited the area again, to hear from the people of Fukushima, where recovery from the disaster has been the slowest of all the regions hit and where there are still no

prospects for the rebuilding of people's lives. Spring was fading into summer, and Fukushima was very beautiful. The sun shone, the air was perfectly clear, and a fresh breeze gently stroked my face. The mountains were covered in fresh greenery, and flowers bloomed everywhere. Surely, far away in the distance, the deep-blue sea was still and sparkling and schools of fish of all kinds were swimming energetically far and wide.

However, the ominous radiation that no one could see or hear, touch or smell, had bared its fangs and extended its evil spell over the skies, the land, and the sea and has preyed on large numbers of people.

I was privileged to meet Rev. Kōyū Abe, a priest of the Zen temple Jōenji, who is the leader of a project to clean up the areas in Fukushima contaminated by radiation. Jōenji is an ancient temple in the foothills about seventy kilometers from the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant belonging to the Tokyo Electric Power Company, where the accident occurred. Rev. Abe took me to a mountain path that people walk along every day. I had a Geiger counter in hand. As

soon as we got out of the car and began to walk, the counter started beeping. When I looked to see how strong the reading was, the counter registered 3 microsieverts per hour ($\mu\text{Sv/h}$). It was still too soon to be alarmed. When we placed the counter in the grass beside the road less than one meter away, it registered 80 $\mu\text{Sv/h}$ —and even rose to 100 in places. In a large empty area on the hill behind the temple, more than eight hundred special drums filled with contaminated soil from the residential area in the town were crowded together. When I placed the counter on the lid of a container, the count rose steeply to 150 $\mu\text{Sv/h}$. The beeping did not stop, warning us of danger and telling us not to approach.

The Japanese government permits an annual 1 millisievert (mSv) level of exposure for the general public. Under the Industrial Safety and Health Act, the maximum annual dose for workers in nuclear power plants and for radiation workers in hospitals is a maximum effective dose of 50 mSv per year, or 100 over five years. When an accident causes exposure to high-level radiation, there is a greater risk of cancer when the count exceeds 100 mSv, a decrease in lymphocytes at 500, and a 90 percent probability of death at 6,000. The count of 80 $\mu\text{Sv/h}$ on the mountain path translates to 700 mSv in annual terms.

Standing on the mountain road in Fukushima and looking down at the town spread out below, I felt for the people who had to live there, and my heart constricted at the thought of the contrast with those of us living in Tokyo, who have no fears about exposure to radiation. Tokyo has been, in fact, the greatest consumer of energy from Fukushima's nuclear power plants. We have received this great boon and used it willfully for mass production, mass consumption, and mass disposal of waste, enjoying a convenient, comfortable, and affluent lifestyle.

It is said that Tokyo makes money, forces nuclear power stations on rural

areas, and uses money to compensate other regions for accepting nuclear power plants. The actuality is that because the areas where nuclear power stations are placed are poor, residents are cajoled by the myth of safety and bewitched by local "economic benefits" into accepting nuclear plants. This means that when an accident occurs, its victims, despite being the injured parties, have to bear the brunt of both cleaning up after it and taking care of the final disposal of nuclear waste.

We who are privileged to live comfortably and conveniently in a place that is the greatest consumer of electric power have averted our gaze from the ever-increasing nuclear waste and have been living at the expense of the people of Fukushima, who have provided us with electric power while taking upon themselves the problem of nuclear waste and the risk of accidents. Our affluent material life has been built upon the sacrifices and hardships of others. Rejoicing in our own prosperity when others are in poverty—is there anything more unethical than that? We have become intoxicated with the illusion of a prosperity that has blossomed at the expense of others and have forgotten that it is we ourselves who are the assailants.

The questions of whether or not to continue with nuclear power generation and consumption do not concern Fukushima or Japan alone. They are common concerns for the modern world and modern civilization. All people want to be happy. If we ourselves want to be happy, it follows that other people likewise want to be happy. It

is not possible that we can be happy if others are sacrificed for our happiness. The Fukushima nuclear disaster demands that we answer fundamental questions about what it means to be human, what it means to live, what happiness is, what society and the state are, and what civilization is.

In the coastal city of Minamata in Kumamoto Prefecture, organic mercury in industrial wastewater polluted the sea for several decades beginning in the 1930s and caused a neurological syndrome in the local populace who ate contaminated fish or shellfish. A local poet, Naomitsu Sakamoto, wrote:

The vehicle
 Called modern civilization
 Is you yourself.

 Civilization must not be assembled
 from the shards of desire.

 Minamata must be the equation of
 the future.

In order to make Fukushima the starting proposition for an "equation of the future," we must first scrutinize nuclear energy as the "original sin" of modern scientific and technological civilization. This means recapturing the sense of fear about our having created something that we ourselves cannot control in the face of the "myth of safety." Human beings must have a sense of reverence for that which surpasses them and remember their place in the natural world.

Second, there is the problem of the disposal of nuclear waste. Even if we regulate it strictly for the first thousand years, it can take one hundred thousand years or more for radioactive substances to return to the same levels of radioactivity as things in their natural state. We who live in the modern world receiving the benefits of nuclear power at the expense of those in the areas that produce it are leaving a colossal burden for

future generations in terms of nuclear waste that will remain harmful in perpetuity. It is neither ethical nor permissible for the present generation to accept the comforts and benefits of our present way of life at the expense of future generations.

Third, what should we do to give future generations hope? Even if we dispose of nuclear waste carefully now, whose burden will it be in the first thousand years to meet the costs

of monitoring it, managing it, and paying compensation? Would people of the present, who are intoxicated only by their own interests, be able to understand if they were asked to underwrite these costs with their electricity rates to provide a public fund for the future? Should we stop using nuclear power or not? The answer is clear if we are to raise the hopes of those who will live in the future and entrust them with the fate of the world. Should we say no, we must

be prepared to stand resolutely before the judgment of history.

Embracing the weak in society, listening carefully to them, stretching out a hand to them, strengthening our solidarity with them, teaching the truth to society as a prophet, giving people courage and a beacon by which to live, awakening hope in the future, sharing our lot—this is the task and duty of a person of religion. Truly, the responsibility is great, the mission weighty. □

STATEMENT

Toward a Truly Prosperous Society—Beyond Nuclear Power

Referring to the effects of the nuclear accident on people in Fukushima and on the entire environment, Rissho Kosei-kai issued a public statement, “Toward a Truly Prosperous Society—Beyond Nuclear Power,” on June 18, 2012. The statement appeals for a nuclear-free and truly prosperous society. It also refers to the responsibility of people today for future generations.

Because of the great earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, many local people lost loved ones, had to evacuate their hometowns, and have been forced into lives of hardship. Rissho Kosei-kai has prayed for those who lost their lives, and it has stood by the people in the disaster area and their families. It has been providing hands-on spiritual and material assistance to them. These people are struggling hard as they move along the path to rebuilding their lives, and no words can fully express the extent of their grief and suffering.

The lives of many individuals and families in Fukushima Prefecture have been particularly uprooted as a result of the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant of the Tokyo Electric Power Company. The confusion and insecurity that immediately followed the accident severed close ties among people who had grown up together in local communities. Countless families now worry about the effects of

radiation on their children and those still unborn. Many mothers and mothers-to-be are very concerned. This accident has also caused considerable fear among people throughout the world, especially in neighboring countries, creating an incalculable burden for future generations.

Nuclear power was once called “the energy of the future,” and the Japanese are among those who have benefited from it. But we have now directly learned the lesson that it only takes one accident to cause widespread alarm and potential physical harm. We are to blame, one and all, for believing that economic prosperity is the source of happiness, and for ignoring the negative aspects of nuclear power as we increasingly relied on it. What this lesson asks of us is to build a truly prosperous society, one that does not rely on nuclear power to generate its electricity, as rapidly as possible. To do that, we must concentrate our knowledge and wisdom on developing and using renewable energy that is safer than

nuclear power. But the most important thing for us is to reconsider the values and lifestyles that have endlessly escalated our energy consumption at the cost of the sacrifices of so many. Now is the time to nurture the mindset of “knowing what is enough.” We believe we now have the best opportunity to curb our excessive consumption, and to discover the value of the happiness we can experience when we lead simpler lives.

The world today needs a transformation of contemporary civilization. If we continue with our current way of living, which seeks economic and material prosperity above all else, we will surely not be able to protect our finite global environment or leave a more livable society for future generations. Furthermore, the economy and society widespread today, which have seen a widening disparity between the rich and the poor worldwide, in no way ensure happiness for humanity at large. We must change the measure of how we live so as to bring about living together in harmony with nature and the creation of a fair “shared economy” that provides basic security for all people.

Rissho Kosei-kai esteems and cherishes all life, and we will work tirelessly to bring about a spiritually rich and peaceful society based on the harmonious coexistence of humankind and nature. We believe that doing this is a bodhisattva practice that we, as Buddhists, must undertake. □

The Three Nuclear Poisons

by David R. Loy

If institutions attain a life of their own, does it also mean that they have their own motivations? That brings us to the crucial question: can we detect institutionalized greed, aggression, and delusion in the promotion of nuclear power?

Because of the persistent threat of radioactive materials to the well-being of all sentient beings, the development and use of nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants is prohibited.

—The Buddha

You didn't know that nuclear power was forbidden by the Buddha? Of course, there's no record of his saying anything like the "quotation" above. Unsurprisingly, I haven't been able to find references to nuclear energy in any traditional Buddhist text. In fact, neither Pali nor Sanskrit (the earliest Buddhist languages) even has a term that might conceivably be translated as "nuclear energy."

The silence of Shakyamuni Buddha on this issue probably has something to do with the fact that he was born almost twenty-five hundred years ago in northeast India into a civilization that had only recently entered the Iron Age. We can speculate on what he might say today about nuclear power, but the huge difference between the technologies of his society and the crises of ours suggests that that sort of approach would not be very helpful.

Does this mean that Buddhism has nothing to contribute to the debate over nuclear energy? Another possibility

is that important implications can be drawn out of Buddhist teachings that might help us understand the situation we find ourselves in today. That is what this essay will focus on.

Just like every other way of obtaining the energy we need (or want), nuclear power has its own advantages and disadvantages, so the issue is how these compare with the advantages and disadvantages of other energy sources. What does this have to do with Buddhism? Buddhism begins with *dukkha* (suffering), which includes not only physical and mental pain but dissatisfaction in general. The Buddha stressed that all he had

to teach was *dukkha* and how to end it. So another way to frame this evaluation is to ask what types of *dukkha* nuclear power is likely to reduce (carbon emissions into the atmosphere?) and what other types of *dukkha* it is likely to promote (accidents such as at Fukushima).

What does Buddhism say about the causes of *dukkha*? The Four Noble Truths single out *tanha* (craving), but the Buddha also emphasized the three fires, or the three poisons: *lobha* (greed), *dosa* (aggression), and *moha* (delusion). When our actions are motivated by them, *dukkha* usually results.

This fits well with the Buddha's revolutionary understanding of karma, which focuses on the *intentions* behind what we do. Buddhism also emphasizes the role of habitual tendencies, which are created by the repetition of intentional actions. One's habitual expressions of greed, aggression, and delusion often end

David R. Loy is a professor, writer, and Zen teacher in the Sanbo Kyodan tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism. He is a prolific author whose essays and books have been translated into many languages. Loy's most recent book is The World Is Made of Stories (Wisdom Publications, 2010). He teaches nationally and internationally on various topics, focusing primarily on the encounter between Buddhism and modernity and what each can learn from the other.

up forming one's character and causing persistent problems (*dukkha* again).

What creates karma is not so much motivation by itself, unacted upon, as *intentional action*. Of course, we can't focus only on the motivations for what we do: in order to make intelligent decisions, we also need to evaluate carefully the likely consequences. But even here motivations are often a factor, because they can influence how objectively we assess the possible consequences. For example, those who support offshore drilling for oil usually see fewer ecological risks than environmentalists do, and the Fukushima disaster has reminded us that the same is true for energy companies that run nuclear power plants. That is why it's so important to become more aware of what actually motivates us.

So what does all of this have to do with evaluating the benefits and pitfalls of nuclear power? It does *not* mean focusing on the personal motivations of the individual people involved—for example, Tokyo Electric Power Company's CEO. It's unlikely that his motivations would be much different from those of any other corporate CEO. We can expect the same variety of somewhat inconsistent motivations (some more self-serving, some less) that preoccupy most of us. Instead, here we are challenged to extend the basic Buddhist teaching about karma and *dukkha* into a new context.

Today we have not only more powerful technologies such as nuclear power (and nuclear weapons) but also much more powerful institutions that control

them, which are socially structured in such a way that they take on a life of their own. And if institutions attain a life of their own, does it also mean that they have their own motivations? That brings us to the crucial question: can we detect institutionalized greed, aggression, and delusion in the promotion of nuclear power?

Does it make sense to bring the concept of greed into this debate? Of course the profit motive is likely to be relevant. But we should also consider the controversies over sustainable and renewable sources of energy, such as solar, wind, and geothermal. Some technical experts claim that these sources cannot provide enough power or cannot provide it cheaply enough. Others challenge that view, and I'm certainly not in a position to evaluate the technological side of that debate. Where greed becomes a factor, however, is when we ask questions about the vast quantity of energy that we "need." But how much energy is "enough"?

This is where we realize that the question of whether to use nuclear power to supply electricity cannot be separated from larger issues about the nature of our economy generally. Here we see the relevance of another important Buddhist teaching, that everything is interconnected and interdependent. Why do we "need" so much energy? Because we take for granted an extraordinarily wasteful and (from that perspective) inefficient economic system that emphasizes consumerism. In order for the system to thrive, people must be

manipulated into consuming more and more, which means manufacturing not only more goods to be consumed but also the "need" for new types of goods.

This point addresses one of the main arguments for nuclear energy, that a nuclear plant can most reliably supply the massive amounts of electricity

that we need. But a society less consumerist could flourish on much less energy. If greed is understood as “never enough,” the issue of whether to rely on nuclear power is inevitably connected with greed both on the consumer side and on the producer side. Is an economic system that depends on constant growth—that needs to expand if it’s not to collapse—really compatible with the finite ecosystems of the biosphere? And does consumerism really make us happy? Those questions bring us to the other two institutionalized poisons: aggression and delusion.

When we think of aggression (or “ill will,” another common translation of *dosa*), it’s usually some sort of overt violence that comes to mind, but some social critics have coined the term *structural violence* to indicate that violence doesn’t always need to be explicit; the threat of violence can be just as oppressive. Then do nuclear power plants embody structural aggression? A nuclear plant can be built without any intention to harm anyone, but what if it is nonetheless likely to cause serious harm to vast numbers of living beings in the future?

One part of the argument is that serious accidents, with horrific consequences, have always happened and will continue to happen, because the factors that cause such incidents cannot be avoided. After every Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima disaster, we always hear some excuse from the nuclear industry about why that was an exception and that it can’t happen again. But it will continue to happen again, because human error cannot be eliminated and the forces of nature cannot be completely controlled or even anticipated.

The other part of the argument is even more compelling. Nuclear power

plants produce huge amounts of radioactive waste, which will threaten to poison all living beings (not only human beings) for many thousands of years. Ten years after its removal from a reactor, the surface dose rate for a typical spent fuel assembly still exceeds ten thousand rem per hour, but a fatal whole-body dose of radiation for humans is only about five hundred rem (if received all at one time). There are already thousands of spent fuel assemblies, and no one really knows what to do with them because there is nowhere and no way to store them safely for a long period of time. The United States alone has at least 108 sites (the 108 Buddhist sins!) that have been designated as contaminated and unusable, some of them involving many thousands of acres. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, these sites contain “millions of gallons of radioactive waste” as well as “thousands of tons of spent nuclear fuel and material” and also “huge quantities

of contaminated soil and water.” The life span of some of these radioactive materials is very long: plutonium-239 has a half-life of about twenty-four thousand years, meaning that half of it decays during that period but the other half remains as poisonous as ever.

The fact that we continue to produce such radioactive materials without having any good idea of how to dispose of them or how to store them safely suggests another concept: collective insanity. Strictly speaking, that is an example of the third poison—institutionalized delusion—but it can also be included here because the attitude of nuclear advocates toward nuclear waste reveals such disregard for the possible—no, the *likely*—consequences for living beings in the future. Human agriculture began about ten thousand years

ago, and most of the ancient civilizations that we know about developed within the last five thousand years. The likelihood that we will be able to secure such dangerous waste for much, much longer than that is not something to rely upon, to say the least.

I have never encountered a convincing or even a reasonable rebuttal to this basic problem. Some proponents seem to believe that science will magically come up with an answer, but such a “faith-based solution” is getting harder to defend. The nuclear industry seems no closer to a solution now than it was in the 1950s.

In practice, the short-term “solution” has been to store the waste material somewhere, put a fence around it, and forget about it. If the industry can get everyone else to forget about it too, the problem is solved—for the time being, anyway. The attitude is: Let’s leave it for our descendants to figure out what to do and hope that will

happen before the radioactive waste percolates into the groundwater. In other words: “We don’t consciously intend that beings in the future will be harmed by what we’re doing now, but if it happens, don’t look for us, because we won’t be around.”

On the individual level, the three poisons usually interact: if I’m motivated by greed, I will also tend to get angry at someone who gets in the way of my getting what I want. This attitude is based upon (and reinforces) the delusion that I can become happy by pursuing what’s best for “number one” while ignoring what’s best for everyone else. Unsurprisingly, the same interaction occurs on the collective level: the issues I’ve raised in discussing institutionalized greed and aggression ultimately cannot be separated from the problem of institutionalized delusion. It is by working together that these three threaten the health of all future beings and the biosphere as a whole.

Delusion takes many forms, but for Buddhism the fundamental delusion, at the root of our *dukkha*, suffering, is ignorance of our true nature. In more contemporary terms, the Buddhist teaching of *anatta* (no-self) corresponds to the fact that our usual sense of self—the sense that there is a “me” inside that is separate from the rest of the world outside—is a psychological and social construct that normally feels uncomfortable because it can never be secure enough. The Buddhist solution is to “forget one-self” and realize one’s nonduality with the world: that I, like everyone else, am an impermanent manifestation of the whole, without any fixed reality that is separate from that whole.

Today this delusion of separation is not only an individual problem but a collective one: we share the delusion that we humans are a unique species, obviously the most important of all, and therefore we can pursue our own benefit without any concern for the well-being of the rest of the biosphere. If we

had a more nondual appreciation that we are an integral part of the planet—that the earth is not just our home but our mother and that we never really cut the umbilical cord—then it is inconceivable that we would choose nuclear (or fossil fuel) power over renewables, given all the long-term risks for such short-term gain.

The final irony is that the short-term gain for which we are willing to sacrifice so much (no, not our own sacrifice, of course—we sacrifice the future) may not be much of a gain at all. The purpose of any economic system is to help societies to flourish, yet it is becoming ever more doubtful that consumerism is actually serving that function. Recent research by sociologists, psychologists, and even economists suggests that once a basic level of income has been achieved, what makes people happy is not more consumption but the quality of one’s relationships with other people. So why do we remain so committed to a dysfunctional economic process that (among other problems) requires so much energy to keep producing unnecessary products?

The basic challenge, of course, is that the people who benefit most (in the short term) from the present system are also the economic and political leaders who control it, and it is in their own (short-term) interest to perpetuate it and keep us believing that it is the best of all possible economic systems.

If we can see through that collective delusion, however, the renewable alternatives to nuclear power become compelling. If our broader intention is to preserve healthy societies and ecosystems into the indefinite future, we will opt for sources of energy that do not release more carbon into the atmosphere or create large amounts of radioactive materials that will be dangerous to all living beings for hundreds of thousands of years. Rather than asking what we need to do to generate the enormous amounts of energy that a consumerist economy needs, we will restructure our societies according to the amount of renewable energy that is safely available.

That will not be easy to do in the short run. But in the long run nuclear power and fossil fuels will bring about far more *dukkha*. □

Nuclear Power and Contemporary Religion: A Catholic Viewpoint

by Theodore Mascarenhas

If it is the dignity of the human person that is to be placed at the very heart of progress and development and all political, social, and economic decision making, then nothing takes higher priority than the very safety of the life and health of the peoples for whom this development is meant.

“The release of atomic energy has not created a new problem. It has merely made more urgent the necessary solving of an existing one. One could say it has affected us quantitatively, not qualitatively” (Alice Calaprice, *The New Quotable Einstein*, Princeton University Press, 2005). With these words, the great Albert Einstein seems to have placed his fingers right at the heart of the problem of nuclear power and foreseen the dilemma that the world faces today.

Nuclear power or atomic energy, from being the threatening disaster looming over the world, especially after the tragic and unpardonable bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, seems to have come a long way in being projected

as a source of clean, safe, and peaceful energy that will promote rapid development and progress. In terms of supplying electricity to an energy-hungry world, the nuclear option seems to be an easy one. There has been a rapid proliferation of nuclear energy, and many countries have opted for nuclear reactors, with seemingly successful results. According to the European Nuclear Society, as of January 18, 2013, there were 437 nuclear power plant units, with an installed electric net capacity of about 372 gigawatts (GW), in operation in thirty-one countries, and 68 plants with an installed capacity of 65 GW were under construction in fifteen countries. But two tragic accidents in two different parts of the world have pointed to dark clouds hanging over the future of nuclear energy.

The catastrophic nuclear accident that occurred on April 26, 1986, at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in Ukraine (then officially the Ukrainian SSR), sent shock waves throughout the world. Two questions came up prominently: How safe can safe be? And is it worth having nuclear plants that pose high risks to life, health, and the safety of millions of persons living in vast territories around the area? Despite numerous

global accidents of varying potential dangers and at different nuclear plants, the nuclear energy march has gone ahead unhindered. The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster following a massive tsunami changed that, raising again the question, Is it worth relying on nuclear energy, or should we seek other means? It is this debate that I would like to take up specifically from the Catholic point of view. The Catholic Church itself looks at all technological developments and scientific progress in a neutral way, neither demonizing them nor needlessly glorifying them. I will put forth three important issues that should determine the suitability of nuclear energy: (1) nuclear energy, true human progress, and integral human development; (2) nuclear power and scientific development and environmental concerns; and (3) nuclear power vis-à-vis safety. This paper will only set the guidelines by which each Catholic is called to judge the nuclear power option.

Nuclear Energy, True Human Progress, and Integral Human Development

Martin Luther King Jr. once lamented, “Our scientific power has outrun our spiritual power. We have guided missiles and misguided men.” This is the danger that the world runs if care is not taken to direct scientific and technological progress toward integral human development. This means that individuals and their welfare are to be at the center of research

Theodore Mascarenhas, a Pilar father based in Rome, is head of the Departments of Asia, Africa, and Oceania of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Culture. He is a member of the Pontifical Committee for International Eucharistic Congresses. He holds a doctorate in sacred scripture from the Pontifical Biblical Institute and is a professor at the Pontifical Gregorian University and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas (all in Rome) and the Pilar Theological College, Pilar, Goa.

and development. It involves not only an individual's material well-being but his or her spiritual welfare as well. The Catholic Church officially teaches, "Basic scientific research, as well as applied research, is a significant expression of man's dominion over creation. Science and technology are precious resources when placed at the service of man and promote his integral development for the benefit of all. By themselves however they cannot disclose the meaning of existence and of human progress. Science and technology are ordered to man, from whom they take their origin and development; hence they find in the person and in his moral values both evidence of their purpose and awareness of their limits" (Catechism of the Catholic Church § 2293).

For this reason nuclear power used for arms and warfare is totally unacceptable

to the Catholic Church even under the garb of deterrence or prevention of war. As Archbishop Dominique Mamberti, secretary for the Holy See's Relations with States, said at the fifty-sixth General Conference of the International Atomic Energy Agency, "We all know the strong interlinkages between nuclear disarmament and nuclear nonproliferation: they are interdependent and mutually reinforcing and their transparent and responsible implementation represents one of the principal instruments not only in the fight against nuclear terrorism, but also in the concrete realization of a culture of life and of peace capable of promoting in an effective way the integral development of peoples." The Second Vatican Council had warned, "The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, capable of the noblest deeds or the foulest; before it lies the path to freedom or to slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred. Moreover, man is becoming aware that it is his responsibility to guide aright the forces which he has unleashed and which can enslave him or minister to him. That is why he is putting questions to himself" (*Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* [*Gaudium et Spes*] § 9). Paul VI further expounded this theme when he called upon all men "to pool their ideas and their activities for man's complete development and the development of all mankind" (*Populorum Progressio* § 5). He explained, "Development cannot be limited to mere economic growth. In order to be authentic, it must be complete: integral, that is; it has to promote

the good of every person and the whole person" (ibid., § 14). John Paul II emphasized that there is a difference between "having" and "being" and that authentic development is integral and not only consists of material benefit but also has moral and spiritual, political, cultural, and economic dimensions (*Sollicitudo rei socialis* §§ 27–34). Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, exhorts, "Development needs above all to be true and integral. The mere fact of emerging from economic backwardness, though positive in itself, does not resolve the complex issues of human advancement, neither for the countries that are spearheading such progress, nor for those that are already economically developed, nor even for those that are still poor" (§ 23).

This is an important reminder that as the technological and scientific winds of change and progress blow over the world, there is the temptation to treat them solely as harbingers of material change. Material development is only one aspect of human development, and it should be remembered that this material well-being is not to be sought at all costs. John Paul II affirmed in his World Day of Peace message in 1990: "Respect for life, and above all for the dignity of the human person, is the ultimate guiding norm for any sound economic, industrial or scientific progress."

The Council Fathers have set the basic principle for all development: "The dignity and complete vocation of the human person and the welfare of society as a whole are to be respected and promoted. For man is the source,

the center, and the purpose of all economic and social life” (*Gaudium et Spes* § 63). Nuclear energy might seem an easy means to promote material development, but the question to be asked is: Does it really keep in mind the integral development and welfare of the human person? As the very Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, the principle has to be this: “It is an illusion to claim moral neutrality in scientific research and its applications. On the other hand, guiding principles cannot be inferred from simple technical efficiency. . . . Science and technology by their very nature require unconditional respect for fundamental moral criteria. They must be at the service of the human person, of his inalienable rights, of his true and integral good, in conformity with the plan and the will of God” (Catechism of the Catholic Church § 2294).

Nuclear Power, Scientific Development, and Environmental Concerns

Mahatma Gandhi, in reference to India’s future, once said, “God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the west, . . . keeping the world in chains. If [our nation] took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts.” Science and technology have often been used as tools of the unabated human greed to possess as much as possible. In the process we have been manhandling our environment and are creating and heading for huge ecological disasters.

The Catholic Church, especially in

recent years, has been paying much attention to ecological concerns. The Church Fathers at the Second Vatican Council have noted that “technology is now transforming the face of the earth, and is already trying to master outer space. To a certain extent, the human intellect is also broadening its dominion over time: over the past by means of historical knowledge; over the future, by the art of projecting and by planning” and today, “especially with the help of science and technology, he has extended his mastery over nearly the whole of nature and continues to do so” (*Gaudium et Spes* § 33). Vatican II explained that in developing the earth by the work of its hands and with the aid of technology, humanity was carrying out the design of God in perfecting creation and developing itself. People have to work selflessly to use all earthly resources in such a way that humanity itself will become an offering accepted by God.

Paul VI continued the doctrine of the council and noted that, fashioned in the image of his Creator, “man must cooperate with Him in completing the work of creation and engraving on the earth the spiritual imprint which he himself has received.” And he cautioned that the “consciousness of the environment around us is more pressing today than ever. For men who have the means and the ability to construct and ennoble the world about them can also destroy it and squander its goods. Human science and technology have made marvelous gains. But care must be taken that they are used to enhance human life and not to diminish it” (*Populorum Progressio* § 27).

Pope John Paul II raised the alarm, saying, “Nature itself, from being ‘*mater*’ (mother), is now reduced to being ‘*matter*,’ and is subjected to every kind of manipulation. This is the direction in which a certain technical and scientific way of thinking, prevalent in present-day culture, appears to be leading when it rejects the very idea that there is a truth of creation which must be acknowledged, or a plan of God for life which must be respected.” But he also signaled that “something similar happens when concern about the consequences of such a ‘freedom without law’ leads some people to the opposite position of a ‘law without freedom,’ as for example in ideologies which consider it unlawful to interfere in any way with nature, practically ‘divinizing’ it” (*Evangelium Vitae* § 22). For Pope John Paul II, nature, environment, and ecology cannot be subjected to uninhibited consumerism but must rather be governed by the law of love, which respects the Divine plan for man and for the world.

In *Ecclesia in Asia* Pope John Paul II warned, “When concern for economic and technological progress is not accompanied by concern for the balance of the ecosystem, our earth is inevitably exposed to serious environmental damage, with consequent harm to human beings. Blatant disrespect for the environment will continue as long as the earth and its potential are seen merely as objects of immediate use and consumption, to be manipulated by an unbridled desire for profit” (§ 41). For him the protection of the environment was not only a technical question but above all an ethical issue.

In April 2008, *Newsweek* called Benedict XVI the “Green Pope,” commenting: “Benedict may not be a typical environmentalist in the modern secular sense. . . . He has . . . made a connection between how a greener lifestyle falls within the human responsibility to protect the world’s poorest communities, which are often the first to feel a

changing climate's ecological effects, such as floods or droughts, which can cause conflicts over resources." In Benedict's encyclical, he teaches us that "the Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere. In so doing, she must defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to everyone. She must above all protect mankind from self-destruction" (*Caritas in Veritate* § 51).

In assessing the value and the dangers of nuclear energy, the Catholic Church would very much like the environmental and ecological questions to be addressed. A potential nuclear disaster, tragic for human beings, also threatens the very environment in a way no other technology does. Chernobyl was an example of what a nuclear disaster can do. Therefore maximum care has to be taken that the environment, the very habitat of humankind, be kept safe actually and potentially.

Nuclear Power vis-à-vis Safety

This brings us to our final reflection, on the need for safety while we strive for progress. If it is the dignity of the human person that is to be placed at the very heart of progress and development and all political, social, and economic decision making, then nothing takes higher priority than the very safety of the life and health of the peoples for whom this development is meant.

This is one area in which no discounts can be made that is yet a field that can never be totally secured, especially in regard to nuclear energy. The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches, "Man must therefore respect the particular goodness of every creature, to avoid any disordered use of things which would be in contempt of the Creator and would bring disastrous consequences for human beings and their environment" (§ 337).

It is pointed out that the processes involved in nuclear power generation

are very much the same as in nuclear bomb building. Enrichment of uranium can be used for both nuclear power generation and nuclear bomb building. If reprocessing of waste is done, it becomes much easier to separate out the plutonium that is used for bomb building. This fact has to be kept in mind while dealing with nuclear energy, even for peaceful purposes. Archbishop Francis Chullikatt, the permanent observer of the Holy See to the United Nations, put it in these words:

The need to effectively and transparently address the toxic legacy posed by six decades of nuclear weapons production and maintenance is of the highest priority. The risks involved with even the peaceful use of nuclear technology illustrate the problem. Here I wish to underscore the Holy See's active role in confronting global environmental issues. His Holiness Benedict XVI has personally appealed for environmental justice in defense of creation. Nothing less than the dignity of the human person and the right to a fully human and healthy life are at stake in the global challenge to clean up the environmental damage of the nuclear era. The recent experience in Fukushima, Japan, has refocused attention on the inherent dangers and indiscriminate nature of radiation. As a founding member state of the IAEA [International Atomic Energy Agency], the Holy See actively participated last week [June 20–24, 2011] in the IAEA Ministerial Conference

on Nuclear Security which took place in Vienna, Austria. The concerns and observations made there by the Holy See bear repeating. (Address to the Catholic Center of the Diocese of Kansas City–St. Joseph)

When Jesuit father Federico Lombardi, director of the Vatican press office, reflected on the March 11, 2011, earthquake and resulting tsunami in Japan, he noted that the images "which have been transmitted for days, continue to disturb us and make us raise questions. . . . Nuclear energy is an immense natural resource that man tries to use in his service, but if it gets out of control it rebels against him." Father Lombardi noted, "No one knows better than the Japanese what the effects are of energy unleashed from the heart of man rebelling against him. . . . The security of the plants and the safeguarding of radioactive material can never be absolute" (<http://www.osv.com/tabid/7621/itemid/7708/Catholics-debate-benefits-risks-of-nuke-power.aspx>).

To conclude, while dealing with nuclear energy, it would be good to remember the words of Pope Benedict XVI, "Our duties towards the environment are linked to our duties towards the human person, considered in himself and in relation to others. It would be wrong to uphold one set of duties while trampling on the other. Herein lies a grave contradiction in our mentality and practice today: one which demeans the person, disrupts the environment, and damages society" (*Caritas in Veritate* §52). □

Japan and the Four Noble Truths of Nuclear Energy: A Buddhist Response to Social Injustice

by Jonathan S. Watts

Socially Engaged Buddhists have over the years developed a way of understanding dukkha (suffering), and the Buddha's Four Noble Truths on the arising and cessation of dukkha, as a particularly Buddhist approach to the problem of social injustice. This approach seeks to extend the liberatory practices of Buddhism, which appear to center on the individual, to the collective level.

With the ongoing crisis at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear complex, which began unfolding shortly after the catastrophic tsunami of March 11, 2011, we in Japan have had to confront the karmic results (*vipāka*) of a half a century of nuclear energy proliferation.

With Japan's history as the only nation to be victimized by nuclear bombs, this confrontation has been a very complex and painful one striking at the fundamental question, "Why would a nation with such a traumatic experience with nuclear warfare seek to rebuild their country on the basis of such technology?" In this short essay, I cannot possibly examine this question in full. However, I would like to briefly show what Buddhism has to offer to this ongoing examination taking place within Japan—one that must also take place elsewhere as nations all over the world seek to increase nuclear energy as an answer to global climate change and the dwindling of fossil fuels.

Since the late 1990s, a group that I helped found called Think Sangha, part of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB), has been examining the question of social justice

within the Buddhist tradition (Watts 2009). One of our core members, David Loy, has written most extensively on this issue and in a recent essay, pondered Buddhism's emphasis on *dukkha* (suffering and existential dis-ease) as a possible key resource in developing a Buddhist conception of social justice. Social justice is a concept that we find emphasized throughout Western history and appears to have developed from the Abrahamic religious traditions of the Middle East, "particularly the Hebrew prophets, who fulminated against oppressive rulers for afflicting the poor and powerless" (Loy 2013).

The strength of the Abrahamic approach, which underlies modern Western society's culture of democracy and human rights, is the injunction to restructure society on the basis of moral and ethical values. While Asian and Buddhist societies have equally strong foundations in morals and ethics, the focus has been more on the organic development of a good society through the practice of virtue by individuals and their communities. In the particular case of Buddhism, the moral law of cause and effect, known as karma, acts as an

invisible force guaranteeing that eventually righteousness, or justice, will prevail. This comparatively passive stance towards the way society and its institutions are constructed has left Buddhism open to criticism for being overly focused on individual salvation and lacking concern for collective liberation in the present world of the living.

Loy and others in our Think Sangha and INEB network have over the years developed a way of understanding *dukkha* and the Buddha's Four Noble Truths on the arising and cessation of *dukkha* as a particularly Buddhist approach to the problem of social justice. This approach seeks to extend the liberative practices of Buddhism, which appear to center on the individual, to the collective level. In our exploration, we have noticed that one of the pitfalls of the Abrahamic approach to social justice is the tendency to locate the source of injustice in an "evil other," which usually must be eliminated by any means necessary (Loy 2013). This is the shadow of tyranny that often leads to the corruption of social revolutionaries as they come to power and has haunted the American experiment with social justice around the world.

A Buddhist approach based in the Four Noble Truths could balance and complement the Abrahamic tradition with its de-emphasis on an "evil other," which from a Buddhist standpoint is ultimately non-existent based on the concepts of not-self (*anattā*) and emptiness (*suññatā*). In Buddhism, the focus is not on evil but rather ignorance, especially of

Jonathan S. Watts is a Research Fellow at the International Buddhist Exchange Center in Yokohama and serves on the Executive Committee of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). He is presently working on a follow-up volume to This Precious Life: Buddhist Tsunami Relief and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan on Buddhism and nuclear energy, which will be published in November 2013.

the interdependent chain of causes and conditions (*idappaccayatā*) that lead to violence and other forms of socially constructed *dukkha*. In today's highly complex world of global economic institutions, this focus on causality and on structures and cultures that bring harm to others yet seem to be driven or controlled by no single entity (even the United States government!) could provide us with an effective tool for meeting these forces. As Loy has argued in his recent work, the Buddhist focus on individual virtue as well as personal transformation through meditation and other contemplative practices can then extend to a conscious restructuring of society, as in the Abrahamic model. Yet this process would not seek to punish any "other" but transform the very fabric of society.

The Four Noble Truths of Nuclear Energy

1. The *Dukkha* of Nuclear Energy

Outside of a few visionary thinkers, like Joanna Macy in her Nuclear Guardianship Ethic, Buddhists for the most part have not confronted the problem of nuclear energy. This is in part due to the fact that most Buddhist countries in Asia until very recently have not developed nuclear energy programs that have made it an important issue to confront. In Japan, quite a number of Japanese Buddhist denominations—including the publisher of this magazine, Risho Kosei-kai—have spent the past half-decade and more since

the end of the Pacific War campaigning against nuclear arms and the arms race of the Cold War that threatened the entire planet for decades. Despite the tremendous, sincere energy these groups have put into this work, until Fukushima they turned a blind eye to the exploitative system of nuclear energy development that the Japanese government has been pursuing since the 1960s.

Here again, Buddhism can be duly criticized for its inability or rather reticence to look at the deeper social systems of injustice. However, one particular Japanese Buddhist, who for decades toiled in obscurity, did confront these deeper issues. Rev. Tetsuen Nakajima is a Japanese Shingon Tantra priest living in the area of Wakasa in Fukui Prefecture, north of Kyoto, where the largest constellation of nuclear power plants, fifteen in all, has been built over the last forty years. His initial encounter with survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in the late 1960s and the building of reactors in his region in the 1970s made him an outspoken activist against nuclear energy.

In 1993, he helped found, along with other priests in regions affected by the building of nuclear power plants, the Interfaith Forum for the Review of National Nuclear Policy. This forum has been the sole voice of religious consciousness against nuclear energy until the Fukushima incident. It was even after the incident that mainstream Japanese Buddhism continued to show its reticence to confront "social issues" as it took over half a year for denominations to make any public declaration

against nuclear energy and the system of its development in Japan.

2. The Origin of Nuclear *Dukkha*

While being largely ignored, Rev. Nakajima and the Interfaith Forum developed substantive analyses of the structural and cultural violence that was taking place behind Japan's nuclear energy policy. From his campaigning for medical aid for the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Rev. Nakajima came to learn of the same exact illnesses befalling those underclass, non-unionized, temporary workers who were being brought in to do maintenance and clean-up work in the nuclear reactors in his region—the number of contaminated workers is now estimated at 500,000 nationwide. This discovery brought to the fore the basic human rights issue of the exploitation of underclass laborers who would not only be compliant and desperate enough to do this work but also not have the means to expose the issue to the larger public.

Rev. Nakajima and other priests living in rural areas all over the nation also came to experience firsthand the decimation of their local economies. They were able to understand the structural violence of the modern, industrial growth paradigm: systematically destroying local self-sufficient economies with subsidies for hosting these reactors; hence forcing their populations to migrate to urban areas for work in the industrial sector; and leaving behind a local economy addicted to subsidies that eventually run out and necessitate the further

building of new plants. The creation of an economic system based on the *business of energy*, rather than satisfying real energy needs, has become an embodiment of the Buddhist lower realm of hungry ghosts (Jpn., *gaki*, Skt., *preta*)—an endless and insatiable cycle of greed.

The Interfaith Forum's examination of this cycle led them to also see the cultural values that were inimical to Buddhism. Rev. Nakajima has written on how Japan's nuclear energy policy has been part of a continual system of competitive and violent nationalist development since the opening up of the country to modernity in the mid-1860s and the build-up into the Pacific War (Watts 2012). In this way, he and the Forum have exposed the Buddhist roots of greed in exploitative economic development, anger in militarism and the potential of nuclear armament by Japan, and delusion in the continual exploitation of the Japanese public by this system.

Since 3/11, one major significant mainstream Buddhist voice has joined this criticism. Rev. Taitsu Kono, the head priest of the Rinzaï Zen Myōshinji Buddhist denomination and the president of the Japan Buddhist Federation (JBF) during 3/11, has continually come out in public on the problem of contemporary culture and the parallels between Japanese Buddhist complicity with the government's policy around World War II and with current nuclear energy and economic development.

3. Nirvana: Buddhist Social Values and the "Blowing Out" of the Nuclear Fire

It was through the courage and leadership of Rev. Kono that the mainstream Japanese Buddhist world was finally able to make a substantive statement on the nuclear energy issue on December 1, 2011, through its representative body, the JBF, calling for a "lifestyle without dependence on nuclear power" (Watts 2012). In this and numerous other

statements that came forth from individual denominations, the Buddhist concept of "sufficiency" (Jpn., *shoyoku chisoku*, Skt., *saṃtuṣṭi*) has been hailed as a new cultural value for Japanese to embrace as a way to reduce extravagant consumption and build ecological lifestyles that do not endanger "life." This concept of "life" (Jpn., *inochi*) has been another point of emphasis, especially in protecting the lives of the younger and future generations, that Buddhists have been rallying around as a basis for criticizing nuclear energy. These declarations have been significant in that they have directly confronted the values of modern economic development that have been a source of Japanese national pride for well over a century. The shift to a new set of post-industrial values based in pre-industrial Buddhist ones could offer an opportunity for Japanese Buddhism to re-enter mainstream Japanese society in a substantive way for the first time since its marginalization began in the mid-1800s.

4. The Way to a "Life of Sufficiency"

We are now past the second anniversary of the tsunami and the beginning of the Fukushima incident, and more than a year since basically all Japanese Buddhist denominations made declarations against nuclear energy. Since making these declarations, however, we have seen very slow and measured action taken by the denominations to fulfill this new vision of sufficiency lifestyles. Rev. Kono, again, has been leading his denomination in installing solar panels at their headquarters and cutting down on electrical consumption. In January 2013, Ryukoku University, which is run by the Jodo Shin Hongwanji Pure Land denomination, announced its collaboration with corporate interests and local government to build a mega solar power station outside of Kyoto.

Yet the most substantive and proactive response has been the Religious

and Scholarly Eco Initiative (RSE) created in May 2011 by a collaboration of religious professionals and scholars to confront the environmental crisis. It has as its stated goal "the harmonization of humans and nature and the construction of a new principle of civilization." In November 2012, RSE launched the Religious Based Solar Power Generators Web site showing in real time the cumulative generating power of the facilities belonging to its five-member association of the Konkōkyō Shinto denomination, the Seicho-No-Ie denomination, the Risshō Kōsei-kai Buddhist denomination, the Chōzenji temple of the Nichiren Buddhist denomination, and the Jūko-in temple of the Jōdo Pure Land Buddhist denomination under the abbotship of Rev. Hidehito Okochi, a leading member of the Interfaith Forum. A data bar can be found at the top of the site showing "present total generating power" (2,443.30 kW in July 2013), "annual generating power" (2.44 million kW/h) and "annual reduction of carbon dioxide emissions" (1,366 tons).

Mutsuji Yamaoka, the group's coordinator and the head of public relations and publishing at Seicho-No-Ie, has commented that, "While it is quite difficult to mobilize the religious world for concrete collective action, the Religious Based Solar Power Generators association can right now assemble individual denominations already involved in this work" (*Chugai Nippo*, December 1, 2012). Indeed, the major Japanese Buddhist and religious federations have not yet endorsed the initiative nor promoted it within their own denominations. This overall lack of follow-through and the continuing lack of Buddhist participation in anti-nuclear demonstrations (with the exception of the small but extremely dedicated Nipponzan Myōhoji denomination) once again exposes Buddhism to the critique of a reticence to engage in action for social justice.

The aforementioned Rev. Hidehito Okochi is an outstanding exception for

his wide-ranging activism that includes structural critiques of Japanese economic and political structures and proactive environmental projects based on a Buddhist vision of “building a Pure Land without a nuclear or military presence.” In the run-up to the international climate change conference in Japan that created the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, Rev. Okochi first began working with his community on basic, local environmental initiatives, like reducing CFC use and emissions from air conditioners and refrigerators. Through this work, he and his community created the Edogawa Citizens’ Network and initiated an environmental development scheme that involved installing solar panels on the roof of Rev. Okochi’s temple as a model for local energy generation and consumption. Through the fundraising campaign to install these panels, the group launched a community micro credit bank called the “Future Bank.” This bank began supporting community members to purchase new, energy-efficient appliances, which they found has a cost efficiency factor exceeding the installation and use of solar panels. In this way, they have been able to double their environmental impact by using more clean energy while also cutting down on consumption.

Further, Rev. Okochi and his community have begun supporting local reforestation initiatives in rural areas, shifting away from destructive monoculture plantations to sustainably harvested forests with a diversity of hardwoods. This initiative is done in consultation with traditional architects and builders to help revive their livelihoods and to build non-chemical and long-lasting houses in both rural and urban areas. Two years ago, Rev. Okochi completed the reconstruction of a second temple he runs in Tokyo, devoting a large portion of the new structure to low-cost,

chemical-free apartments for urban dwellers. The realization of this vision, which Okochi calls “Building a Pure Land without a Nuclear and Military Presence,” obviously offers a radical challenge to the mainstream economic development policy of Japan (Watts 2012).

Conclusion

So what does environmental justice, especially in Japan, look like? Should it start, as it did in Germany, with hundreds of thousands of people taking to the streets and calling for an end to nuclear energy? Seeing the Japanese distaste for political protest in its tepid anti-nuclear movement—despite polls that show a majority of Japanese are against nuclear energy—this possibility seems highly unlikely. This may also further indicate the Asian and Buddhist reticence towards achieving justice through the active reconstruction of society.

At the same time, the nuclear energy issue has not disappeared from public view in over two and a half years since the Fukushima incident began. Ongoing incidents at the Fukushima reactors and other reactors around the country; concerns for the health of children in wide areas in northern Japan; and media coverage of the corruption and cronyism between the government and the nuclear energy companies have continued to

remind the general public of the dangers of nuclear energy and its deployment. Meanwhile, increased installation of solar panels in private homes and corporate-built housing developments, and the incremental growth of a generation of drop-outs from mainstream society embracing alternative ecological lifestyles show signs that a shift may be occurring towards a post-industrial, ecologically just Japan.

There is, of course, the tendency to want it all to move faster and concerns that real change is not actually happening. This is indeed the tension between an Abrahamic and a Buddhist thrust towards social change. While the Japanese Buddhist world has been slow—as always—to move proactively on this matter, there has been significant change over the last two years in awareness and attitudes on nuclear energy. With the continuing establishment of a platform of Buddhist values on economic and environmental justice, I look forward to more engagement by Buddhists in the fourth Noble Truth of building a “Life of Sufficiency” in Japan. □

References:

- Loy, David R. “Why Buddhism and the West Need Each Other: On the Interdependence of Personal and Social Transformation,” forthcoming in the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 2013.
- Watts, Jonathan S. (ed.) *Rethinking Karma: The Dharma of Social Justice* (Chiang Mai, Thailand: Silkworm Books, 2009).
- Watts, Jonathan S. (ed.) *This Precious Life: Buddhist Tsunami Relief and Anti-Nuclear Activism in Post 3/11 Japan* (Yokohama: International Buddhist Exchange Center, 2012).

Many of the writings and information referenced in this article can be found on the Web site of the Japan Network of Engaged Buddhists (JNEB): <http://jneb.jp/english>.

The TEPCO Nuclear Disaster and the Responsibilities of Religions

by Martin Repp

It is time that religious individuals and organizations in Japan liberate themselves from feudal structures and struggle against the terror of the nuclear industry, the sale of contaminated food under the pretext of false “patriotism,” the burning of contaminated waste, the insufficient evacuation of citizens, and the failure to treat cancer patients in Fukushima.

Once, during my twenty-one years of work and life in Japan, I encountered a representative of the Japanese nuclear industry. When traveling in Kyushu I happened to meet a young man who was working in the public relations department of a major power company. After learning of my German nationality, he spoke enthusiastically about the superb PR skills of German nuclear companies, from which, he said, his department had learned the following three basics: nuclear energy is safe; it is cheap; and it is environmentally friendly. I did not voice strong criticism then, even though I was critical of nuclear energy. I was not yet an antinuclear activist, as many Germans after the Chernobyl nuclear disaster had become. In subsequent years, however, I observed that nuclear accidents occurred almost annually in Japan.

In 2009 I went back to Germany because of my work, but I planned to return to Japan after retirement and spend the rest of my life in that country of good friends, a fascinating culture, and an intriguing religious world. After March 11, 2011, this dream came to an abrupt end. Of course, my disappointment is nothing compared with the pain

and despair of the survivors of the two natural disasters and the nuclear catastrophe. Since that time I have become an antinuclear activist together with a number of Japanese people living in Germany. We are developing information networks and planning to engage in humanitarian aid. During demonstrations we join hands with German activists and exchange information. We try to overcome the communication gap caused by language barriers. Since the nuclear industry is interconnected worldwide, the antinuclear movement still needs to improve its international networking similarly.

The TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company) nuclear disaster forced me to deeply reconsider my way of thinking. This change was late in coming but hopefully not too late. In this essay I try to formulate some critical and self-critical reflections about the nuclear industry from the perspective of a Christian, a student of Buddhism, and a participant in interreligious dialogue. In this matter, I think, the basic ethical positions of Buddhism and Christianity do not differ much. I have developed four points that describe the present situation and pointed out alternatives to the

ways of life and thought that dominate us in the early twenty-first century.

Lies and Truthfulness

First, one of the ethical principles of Buddhism and Christianity is truthfulness and the rejection of telling lies. The PR claims that electricity produced by nuclear power is cheap, environmentally friendly, and safe are blunt lies. It is only “cheap” when ignoring the tax money used for construction of the power plants and the tremendous costs for the final disposal of nuclear waste. It is “safe” only when the many accidents and the constant impact of radiation from the power plant under normal working conditions on the environment and human health are concealed. It is “environmentally friendly” only when claiming that the CO₂ emissions from conventional power plants are more dangerous than the radiation released by reactors during normal operation. Keeping quiet about one side of the coin (the ugly side) characterizes modern advertising. Telling only half of the truth means telling lies.

Moreover, the amount of money spent by the nuclear industry for PR to manipulate public opinion is enormous. In the case of Japan, since 2011 the electric power companies have paid huge amounts to the mass media, scientists at universities, and others. If TEPCO had instead used this money to compensate for damage caused by its nuclear disaster, the government would not now need to spend the taxpayers’

Martin Repp is a representative in Frankfurt of the Church of Hessen and Nassau (Germany) for dialogue with Asian religious organizations and a lecturer on religious studies at Heidelberg University. From 1988 to 2009 he worked at the National Christian Council in Japan's Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, in Kyoto. From 2004 to 2009 he was also Professor of Comparative Religious Studies at Ryukoku University in Kyoto. His research focuses on Buddhism, religious reform, and interreligious communication. His books include Hönens religiöses Denken (Hönen's religious thought).

money for such purposes. Since power companies in Japan possess monopolies in the regions in which they are operating, one wonders why they need to advertise so heavily in the media and sponsor academics. The only conceivable reason is the attempt to manipulate public opinion. Apparently in response to this outpour of money, critical reporting in most Japanese media has been suppressed—with a few exceptions, such as by the newspaper *Tokyo Shimbun*—and critical journalists have been fired. Even worse: as early as April 2011 the government issued laws attempting to strictly control the information flow on the Internet under the pretext of preventing

the “spread of rumors.” Previously, such drastic measures had been taken only by totalitarian regimes. I was disturbed by the absence of a public outcry by Japanese citizens and organizations.

There are other forms of lies or verbal manipulations of truth. Recently it has become customary to treat certain words as taboo, such as *hibakusha* (victims of nuclear radiation) and *hinan* (evacuation). On the other hand, euphemisms have come into use, such as *decontamination* or *cold shutdown*. “Decontamination” designates the futile effort to relocate radioactive soil to storage areas; hence the real contamination problem is not solved. (The *yakuza* [underworld] have been involved in decontamination, skimming the wages of illegally hired workers, putting tax money into the pockets of organized crime.) The government’s declaration of a “cold shutdown” in December 2011—a lie—earned derision in the media worldwide. Do government and administration officials not realize how they make fools of themselves internationally? Manipulation of speech, or verbal distortion of reality, is nothing other than telling lies. Religions like Buddhism and Christianity encourage facing the truth and telling the truth—even if it may be disadvantageous in the short run. A Fukushima citizen taught me to use the expression “TEPCO nuclear disaster” instead of “Fukushima nuclear incident.” His beloved prefecture should not receive a bad reputation while the real culprit, TEPCO, is not held to account. In summary: Why do the government and the

nuclear firms feel it is necessary to base the national system of energy production on such an accumulation of lies?

Greed and Contentment

The second point presenting the alternatives to the present way of life is that Buddhism and Christianity teach that a major reason for misery in this world is our human greed (Jpn., *yokubō*; Latin, *concupiscentia*, one of the cardinal sins). Beginning in the 1960s in Germany, when the economy and consumption began to boom, Protestant ministers ceased to use the word *greed*. Similarly, during the “bubble economy” period in Japan, Buddhist priests taught little about *yokubō*. Recently, however, the worldwide financial crisis caused by greedy bankers and speculators has prompted us to reconsider this issue. The driving force behind the nuclear power industry is blunt greed: greed by bankers of megabanks, by managers and engineers of electric manufacturing companies (Toshiba, Mitsubishi, et al.) and construction companies, and finally by the executives of power companies, such as TEPCO and KEPCO (Kansai Electric Power Company). Monetary profit has become the ultimate goal in our secularized world, the absolute value replacing God or the Dharma. Unfortunately, for too long Christians and Buddhists have failed to clearly name the driving force that has eventually led to nuclear disasters and other misfortunes.

One consequence of greed is social discrimination: reactor workers cleaning

up the nuclear waste and refugees from Fukushima Prefecture who have escaped to other parts of the country are equally victims of discrimination. The greed for profit has not stopped even after the disaster: TEPCO pays either no or completely inadequate compensation to those many victims who lost their homes and work because of nuclear contamination, although at the same time it spends huge amounts to influence mass media, scientists, politicians, (ex-)government officials, and others. In Japan one of the basic principles of neoliberalism is functioning well: privatization of profit and socialization of economic loss. Ordinary taxpayers have to pay for the huge amount of damage caused by the failures of TEPCO engineers and managers. (Investigations have shown that construction failures in the nuclear plant were the cause of the 3/11 nuclear disaster.) As after most previous nuclear accidents in Japan, the persons responsible have not been brought to justice. The rest of society has had to bear the burden, whereas TEPCO employees still receive their annual bonuses.

I am wondering why we religionists and our religious organizations today have not clearly enough taught the evil of greed and the blessings of contentment. In the garden of the temple Ryoanji in Kyoto is a stone washbasin in a shape combining four Chinese characters, each sharing the element of “mouth” 口 in the central opening of the stone. The four characters 吾唯知足 can be read in the sense of “I know only what is sufficient.” This sentence is derived from a Buddhist sutra and is also related to the Confucian saying “The heart of the person knowing what is sufficient is settled.” After I returned to Germany I became unhappy because I had not achieved certain goals I had envisioned. My mood changed only after I learned from a sermon to become grateful for every little positive experience each day: for the common blessings that cannot be taken for granted, such as health,

a safe trip, friends, food, the air. Only after we have lost such things do we start to regret that we did not appreciate them in time. For reasons of others’ greed, the people from Fukushima lost so many necessities of well-being such as home, family, friends, work, income, as well as unspoiled air, water, and food.

Technology and Religion

The third point is that the nuclear industry is based on blind trust in modern technology. Heinz Riesenhuber, a former minister for research in Germany (1982–93) who was in charge of developing the nuclear industry, stated after the TEPCO nuclear disaster: “I trusted in technology” and “I trusted that we have a secure and controllable technology. I did not consider that something like [the disaster of] Fukushima would be possible” (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, April 14, 2011). Another article criticized “faith in technology” (*Technikgläubigkeit*) (*Frankfurter Rundschau*, April 12, 2011). In Japan, Tetsuen Nakajima identified the widespread “faith in science and technology” (*kagaku gijutsu shinkō*) that has existed since the Meiji period, which began in 1868 (*Bukkyō Times*, June 2, 2011). Like money and profit, technology has achieved absolute value in modern societies. Many people serve such false

deities even at the costs of destroying land, water, and air; plants and animals; and the lives of human beings. Religious persons know that we should put our trust not in technology or money but in the Buddha, the Dharma, God, or a similar divine reality. Again, we must ask ourselves critically: Have we not failed to teach and live according to the values of our holy scriptures? Have our religious organizations not become like any other economic enterprise and thereby lost credibility? Few leaders give hope and encouragement for us to pursue a more authentic way of life.

Karma and Liberation

A final point presenting alternatives is that one of the basic Buddhist teachings is the law of karmic retribution. When Buddhism was introduced to China and to Japan, this law was taught first. Only after being acquainted with karma do human beings understand the significance of religious liberation. What happens when this law is no longer taught? In view of the many corruption scandals among politicians, civil servants, bankers, and others, I have often wondered why priests no longer teach the karmic law. Buddhist friends have told me that fear of discrimination has prevented them from doing so: in former times the concept of karma was used to legitimize ascribed low social status by reference to the person’s presumed evil deeds in a previous life. As far as I know, the Buddha used this concept not primarily to explain present situations through past deeds but first of all to encourage responsible behavior today by considering the consequences of our deeds. Christians have a similar ethical principle that is called “interconnection between deeds and their consequences.” This is expressed in the Bible, for example, by the proverb “Whoever digs a pit for others shall fall into it.” Unfortunately, Christian ministers in Europe have also neglected this

basic teaching since the second half of the twentieth century. Consequently, the sense of ethical responsibility has become considerably weaker among people in Europe—quite similar to the case in Japan.

Politicians, businesspeople, managers of banks and industry, and nuclear engineers worldwide do not seem to care about the disastrous consequences of their projects. They do not worry about the land, plants, animals, or grandchildren and great-grandchildren who will suffer the consequences of their deeds. However, as Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions are teaching, we human beings are liable for each of our deeds, without fail. Only when this is taught and understood can religious liberation be realized in this world.

Responsibility of Religion

During a European symposium for inter-religious dialogue in 1975, Cyrus Vance, a former U.S. secretary of state (1977–80), asked why the “religious community throughout the world” has “such apparently ineffective input into the management of our global village.” Indeed, many religious persons have influential positions in politics, society, technology, and the economy. So why have religious individuals and organizations not contributed more to the improvement of our world in recent decades? Is it because we religious people do not talk truthfully or our teaching and actions are not in accord?

The present situation in Japan seems to be more complicated in two respects. First, following the mingling of religion and politics from the Meiji period until 1945, most religious organizations now observe separation from the state according to the postwar constitution. In legal terms this is *negative freedom*; that is, religion is free *from* interference by the state and vice versa. However, jurisprudence also teaches the equally

important term *positive freedom*, freedom *for* something, such as a social action. In Germany, for example, a treaty between church and state regulates cooperation, such as the social service of the church and its support by the state. The German churches also play a crucial role in the antinuclear movement. In medieval Japan, Buddhism contributed to political change when it caused the state to replace capital punishment with the penalty of exile. In my view, Japanese religious organizations today should again learn to practice such positive religious freedom while respecting the separation of state and religion.

The second specific problem in Japan today is not easy for me to articulate, since I fear to offend some dear friends. While living in Japan I gained the impression that after World War II Japan had become a democracy only on the surface, not really in its social, political, economic, and mental structures. The survival of prewar feudalistic patterns is apparent in many instances: numerous politicians inherit their position from their family and then pass it on to their scions. Widespread *amakudari* (“descent from heaven,” the retirement of high government officials to executive positions in private companies)

creates collusion between state administration, politics, banking, and industry. The influence of business (specifically, nuclear power) on the media has been mentioned already. And most of all, democracy is not taught thoroughly in Japanese schools, as has been done, for example, in South Korea since dictatorship was abolished.

It is time that religious individuals and organizations in Japan liberate themselves from feudal structures and struggle against the terror of the nuclear industry, the sale of contaminated food under the pretext of false “patriotism,” the burning of contaminated waste, the insufficient evacuation of citizens, and the failure to treat cancer patients in Fukushima. It is time to protest against the present government’s right-wing intention to abolish the peace constitution, its tendency to provoke tensions with neighboring countries, and its desire to sign the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement, which would enable the United States to exploit Japan’s industry, trade, banks, insurance, and health system. Japan is in its deepest crisis since 1945, and it is now time for religious individuals and organizations to cooperate to save it from self-destruction. □

Our Sins and Responsibilities: What the Fukushima Accident Has Revealed

by Tetsuya Takahashi

We face the profound contradiction that, in our excessive desire for the good life, we have saddled ourselves with a large quantity of things that could make living our lives impossible. It would in no way be wrong to say that this is a sin.

More than two years have gone by since the accident at Tokyo Electric Power Company's Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant. During this time, those who were affected by this disaster have experienced untold hardship. Even today they are tormented by endless anxiety and privation that are truly beyond imagination.

After the accident, I first entered the disaster area on April 17, 2011. Subsequently I have visited Fukushima once or twice a month. I wondered what one could say about the accident or about nuclear power generation without having stood at the site of the disaster. Born and raised in Fukushima Prefecture, I had a visceral urge to get close to the people of my home region.

What came to me first was a strong sense of shame. How could I, while living comfortably in Tokyo, have imposed such a huge risk on the people of my hometown and enjoyed electricity from the Fukushima nuclear power plant, even though I knew of the misery caused by earlier nuclear accidents in Japan and other countries, including at Chernobyl and the accident exposing workers to high radiation levels at JCO, a nuclear fuel processing company in the village of Tokai, in Ibaraki Prefecture? I had the feeling I was split into two selves, that

the anguish of the people of Fukushima was not that of "others" but my own, that it was I who had suffered damage. But I also felt that it was I who had made Fukushima expendable and that I had been one of the wrongdoers who had profited from it.

Meanwhile, a perception of nuclear power generation as a "system of sacrifice" gradually formed in my mind. First and foremost, the myth of safety had been demolished. Serious accidents are possible at any time, and just one occurrence results in immeasurable sacrifices. Second, nuclear power generation cannot operate without workers' being exposed to radiation. Third, the uranium that becomes the fuel for nuclear power generation starts to expose laborers to radiation and contaminate the environment from the moment that it's mined. Fourth is the damage from the nuclear waste, or radioactive waste, that is a byproduct of nuclear power generation.

Nuclear power generation is a system that cannot operate without these sacrifices. A system of sacrifice, whereby one group of people profits from the sacrifices of another group, is an unjustifiable violation of human rights, including the human rights provisions of modern constitutions. In that situation, I came to

believe that there is no course of action other than to shut down nuclear power generation as rapidly as possible.

At present there are fifty-four nuclear power plants throughout the Japanese archipelago. In addition to these, we have the Monju fast-breeder reactor in Fukui Prefecture and the Rokkasho Reprocessing Plant in Aomori Prefecture. An accident at the reprocessing plant would be far more dangerous than at a nuclear power generating plant, since it would threaten all of Japan and possibly the entire Northern Hemisphere. So the fact is, we already have a great number of atomic energy-related facilities in our cramped Japanese archipelago. We must carefully consider what this really means.

The absolute necessities for human survival are land, water, and air. The land, the oceans, and the atmosphere

Tetsuya Takahashi, born in 1956 in Fukushima Prefecture, is a professor at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences of the University of Tokyo. His fields of teaching center on philosophy and ethics. He also teaches human security and other subjects. He is the author of many books, including the best-selling Yasukuni mondai ("The Yasukuni Shrine issue," 2005). In 2012 he published Gisei no shisutemu: Fukushima, Okinawa (The system of sacrifice: Fukushima and Okinawa).

cradle human life on this planet Earth. People take life from them. If just one of these is missing, human life cannot continue. In that sense, these elements constitute our environment in a most fundamental way. We could even say they constitute the environment of life.

For millennia, humans have worked with and adapted the natural environment in order to live. Before the development of agriculture and urban civilization, which are obvious examples of adapting the natural environment, humans had already changed the natural environment when they started using caves or assembling dwellings to keep out the wind and rain. Human activity absolutely must operate within the limits of not harming the fundamental environmental elements—the land, the water, and the air—because if we destroy the natural environment that enfolds us and makes living possible, all is lost. Destruction of the fundamental natural environment makes our own lives impossible.

With the growth of science and technology in modern times, humans have increasingly tampered with the natural environment and have tended to forget that there are limits to what should be done. In Japan there were a series of incidents of widespread pollution before the Second World War, such as the Ashio copper mine incident, an environmental disaster in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Tochigi Prefecture. Thousands of farmers and fishermen lost their livelihoods because of the activities of the copper

mine. After the Second World War, air pollution and incidents like the mercury pollution that caused Minamata disease have occurred. (Minamata disease resulted from the environmental disaster whereby methyl-mercury in industrial wastewater from a chemical factory was released into Minamata Bay, in Kumamoto Prefecture, causing severe neurological damage to the people who ate fish contaminated with mercury.) These incidents warn us that destruction of the environment can result in our own destruction.

And now, the Fukushima nuclear power plant accident. We have now seen with our own eyes that once there is a major accident with the technology of nuclear power generation, it can render the surrounding land uninhabitable. It's not just the land: it's the water that can't be drunk, the food that can't be eaten, the air that can't be breathed. We have been taught a lesson: that nuclear power generation contaminates and harms all the elements of our fundamental environment.

There are many nuclear power plants and nuclear energy-related facilities up and down the Japanese archipelago. Our generation built them. In the course of our economic development since the Second World War, in pursuit of more abundant, convenient, and comfortable lives, we have gone ahead and built, with our own hands and in the midst of the shared environment, things that endanger our very survival. We face the profound contradiction that, in our excessive desire for the good life,

we have saddled ourselves with a large quantity of things that could make living our lives impossible. It would in no way be wrong to say that this is a sin.

At the time of the first successful test of the atomic bomb, the American physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904–67) said, "The physicists have [now] known sin; and this is a knowledge which they cannot lose." It seems that human knowledge, even human existence itself, has both light and darkness.

The Japanese archipelago is right now plunged into deep darkness. We must seek the light within this darkness. That is the responsibility we, who made this darkness, owe to future generations. □

This article first appeared in Japanese in a bulletin of the World Conference of Religions for Peace Japan, WCRP, no. 400.

Nuclear Energy and Ethics: The Lessons of Fukushima

by Yukio Yamaguchi

Besides following a spirit of inquiry, scientists must take ethical responsibility for their discoveries and not allow their discoveries to force sacrifices on others. This means that the majority of people must press for reform of the world of knowledge.

The terrible disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant caused by the magnitude 9.0 earthquake and the tsunami that struck the Pacific coast of northeastern Japan on March 11, 2011, vividly demonstrated the impossibility of controlling nuclear energy, and the prevailing view now is that humankind faces the question of whether or not to continue using nuclear energy.

Radioactivity: Its Discovery and Development

The discovery of nuclear energy had its direct origins in the discovery of radioactivity in France at the end of the nineteenth century. The science of radioactivity not only ushered conventional science into a completely new world—it also gave birth to the nuclear energy that would transform the world's politics, economies, societies, cultures, and thought and even bear on the survival of the human race.

The science of radioactivity, first, opened the way to shedding light on the structures and principles governing the microcosmic world of electrons, atoms, and atomic nuclei, heralding a dramatic expansion of scientific knowledge and

understanding. Human understanding made what might be described as a great leap from the classical Newtonian world to the modern world of quantum physics. Second, this knowledge of the microcosmic world provided the platform for a vast world of technologies that exploited nuclear energy. And third, these technologies bestowed prestige on nations and provided a source of great power in the realm of international politics.

The quest for scientific knowledge is often likened to raising the hem of the veil of the goddess of truth to gain a glimpse of her features. This assumes

the existence of an absolute truth, and it is this that constitutes the basic thought that underlies the mainstream natural sciences of today's world.

Although the knowledge derived from such science is supposed to be neutral, it inevitably becomes ideologically charged when applied to technologies and used for human society. Technology is thus not value neutral. The theoretical physicist Mitsuo Taketani (1911–2000) defined technology as “the conscious application of objective rules in human [productive] practice.” Here, it is the substance of “conscious application” that is problematic.

During World War II, the new science of nuclear physics was applied to creating the atomic bomb in an act that was ultimately motivated by the Allies' fear that they themselves would be destroyed unless they succeeded in developing the bomb before Germany

Yukio Yamaguchi, PhD in Engineering (University of Tokyo), is co-director of the Citizens' Nuclear Information Center (CNIC) in Tokyo. He specializes in solid-state physics and has been a research fellow at Northwestern University and has taught in the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Tokyo, Hosei University, and several other schools. CNIC is an antinuclear public interest organization dedicated to securing a safe, nuclear-free world. The center was formed to provide reliable information and public education on all aspects of nuclear power to ultimately realize this goal.

did. The atomic bomb was designed as a weapon that would instantaneously liberate the nuclear energy locked in the atomic nuclei of uranium to unleash immense lethal power. From the atomic bomb came the tragedies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and so came into existence and began to proliferate the nuclear weapons of the modern world.

The Fukushima Crisis

Provided that the nuclear fission of uranium can be controlled and maintained, the energy released from it can produce high-temperature steam to drive a turbine and so generate electricity. It is therefore only natural that scientists and engineers should have regarded this as representing the true peaceful application of nuclear power.

Shoichi Sakata (1911–70), one of Japan's leading theoretical physicists in the early days of nuclear power generation, wrote as follows in 1952: "The nuclear energy obtainable from a single pound of uranium, converted to electric power, is a massive 11.4 million kilowatt-hours. Research into nuclear power generation by converting the energy released in a nuclear reactor into electricity might therefore be described as the most desirable of the peaceful uses of nuclear power."

The crucial assumption here is that the reaction can be *controlled* and *maintained*. It should also be noted that scientists and engineers then thought that the likely radioactive products of fission in a nuclear reactor could also somehow be dealt with.

However, the Three Mile Island accident in the United States in 1979 and the Chernobyl disaster in the Soviet Union seven years later, in 1986, raised questions about the controllability of nuclear reactors, and it began to be feared that the release and dispersion of radioactivity in the environment could not be prevented.

Two and a half years after the crisis erupted in 2011, the situation in Fukushima is still not under control. The melted nuclear fuel is having to be continuously cooled; four hundred tons of groundwater a day is flowing into the basements of the reactor buildings; and the quantity of radioactively contaminated water underground is constantly rising. Sometime this will probably have to be released into the sea. The amount of radioactivity that has been released into the atmosphere has reached 200 million becquerels per day, and contamination of the environment continues. The crisis is thus very much ongoing.

When the huge earthquake struck, control rods were inserted into the reactor cores to halt nuclear fission, successfully stopping the reactors. However, efforts to cool the reactors and contain the radioactivity failed. Though hard to believe, experts cannot say when the situation will be brought under control. The assumption that nuclear fission can be controlled and maintained thus appears to have crumbled.

Fukushima was rated a worst-possible level 7 on the International Nuclear Event Scale, putting it on a par with

Chernobyl. The massive amount of radioactivity released into the environment has contaminated mountains, forests, rivers, fields, and soil. The radioactive cesium-137 that accumulated most heavily has a half-life of thirty years, which means that its radioactivity must be dealt with for ten to twenty times that period—in other words, for three hundred to six hundred years. Katsutaka Idogawa, the former mayor of the town of Futaba, which lies entirely within a ten-kilometer radius of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, evacuated the town's entire population from within this zone. After relocating several times, the residents eventually ended up in the city of Kazo, two hundred kilometers away in Saitama Prefecture. Two years after the crisis, explains Idogawa, "we

are still evacuees.” Fukushima’s level 7 rating barely begins to describe the impact that the disaster has had.

Why Did the Crisis Occur?

Was the crisis in Fukushima due primarily to the earthquake or to the tsunami? Or was it a combination of the two? The investigation into the Fukushima crisis is not yet over, nor is it clear when it will be. What is already clear, however, is that the inaccessibility of information about nuclear energy is a problem.

Both the atomic bomb and nuclear power plants use the nuclear energy contained in atomic nuclei. Science in this realm is highly advanced and specialized, and closed communities form to prevent nuclear proliferation. In such a world, it inevitably comes to be believed that people should do as they are told without having to understand why. It is also unavoidable that those who seek to promote nuclear power for “peaceful purposes” should form communities of interest. It has been widely observed that the failure of the “nuclear power village” to listen to the views and warnings of nuclear power’s critics was a key cause of the Fukushima crisis.

Although investigative reports into the causes of the crisis have now been published by four parties—the Diet (parliament), the Cabinet, the public sector, and Tokyo Electric Power Company—it was the Diet commission set up to

investigate the crisis that argued this point most forcefully. Its report describes concrete instances of collusion between the electricity utilities and the bureaucracy to undermine the views of experts critical of nuclear power. Why did an accident that should have been foreseeable occur? The Diet’s report concludes the root cause was “regulatory capture.” The regulators had, in other words, become the captives of the regulated.

The science of the microcosmic world that began with the discovery of radioactivity is one that is intuitively incomprehensible to ordinary people who are not experts. Despite this, that science was generally accepted because it contributed in practice to the production of electric power. In this sense, we must recognize that we lacked imagination. Having experienced Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and now Fukushima, however, we can no longer say yes to nuclear energy.

Ethical Issues

Was it right to pursue physical affluence and convenience? Should the national economy really be the prime concern? And was it right to have sought to build a society founded on advanced science and technology?

The victims of Fukushima have had to leave their beloved homes, never to return. Homeless and with their livelihoods destroyed and ties with close friends severed, they are beset by health worries. Confronted head-on by the

reality that the people of Fukushima face, now is the time for us to establish exactly where we stand.

Nuclear power is founded on a system of sacrifice. As the philosopher Tetsuya Takahashi puts it, “Benefits for some are generated and sustained only by the sacrifices made by others in terms of their everyday lives, property, human dignity, hopes in life, and even their very existence. The benefits enjoyed by the sacrificer cannot be generated and sustained without the sacrifices made by the sacrificed.” It is a historical fact that it was pure curiosity and a spirit of scientific inquiry that led to nuclear power. The lessons of this history must be learned. Above even pure curiosity and a spirit of inquiry, scientists must take the ethical responsibility for not forcing sacrifices on others. This means that the majority of people must press for reform of the world of knowledge. This goes beyond the newly formed Nuclear Regulation Authority’s simply setting new regulatory standards for nuclear power stations to prevent another Fukushima.

Ordinary people must make a break from the past in which they depended on and left things to scientists, engineers, and other experts.

Fukushima has made it clear that we must create a civilization founded on ethics. □

Heeding the Voices of Foxes and Brown Dippers

by Sarah M. Strong

With our human intelligence . . . we have developed technologies that have made the frightening kamui of nuclear reactions an ongoing presence in our human world. Much as we long for perfect control over this power, there is no way we can achieve that with certainty.

In the days following March 11, 2011, as the world confronted the devastating news of the monumental earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan and the reports of shockingly high levels of radiation escaping from the crippled and dangerously unstable Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, I received a personal message from an Ainu friend in Hokkaido. The message was simple and straightforward, and for me offered some welcome clarity at a time of bewilderment and distress.

My friend had seen the same appalling images as I of the tsunami washing over coastal towns as well as the distant view of helicopters, heavy loads of seawater swaying beneath them, desperately trying to approach the out-of-control plant. She wrote that as she watched these images, she thought, “This earthquake and tsunami are the power of *kamui*, which is greater than the ability of humans. Since the nuclear power plant is something that humans made, for that, the responsibility is with the humans.” Her assigning of different areas of responsibility for the natural disasters, as opposed to the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant, made sense to me and in ways that I will explain below, has guided my thinking about

these events and the questions they raise.

The Ainu word *kamui*, usually translated as “god,” more properly denotes natural phenomena in both their physical and spiritual dimensions. Striking occurrences such as thunder, wind, and tsunamis; important resources such as fire and water; places in the landscape such as estuaries, beaches, mountains, and the different areas of the ocean; even critically necessary tools such as boats, are all *kamui*. Within the Ainu worldview, all of these phenomena are understood to possess powers beyond those of human beings. While we think of many of them as inanimate, in the traditional Ainu worldview they are all animate in the sense that, in addition to their physical manifestations, which are very different from those of humans, they possess cognition and emotions similar to our own.

According to traditional Ainu cosmology, the world in which we humans live is the *ainu moshir*, literally, the “peaceful land of the humans” (*ainu* meaning “human being” in the Ainu language). Although it is named for us, we are not the only beings present in the *ainu moshir*, since it is also the place where we humans encounter *kamui* in their physical manifestations. It is

Sarah M. Strong is Professor of Japanese Language and Literature at Bates College, Lewiston, Maine. She received her PhD in Japanese literature from the University of Chicago. As a scholar she has focused on works that portray Japan’s natural beauty and rich ecosystems. Her studies and translations of the works of Kenji Miyazawa, a Japanese poet and author of children’s literature, have appeared in both the United States and Japan. Her most recent book is on Ainu oral traditions, Ainu Spirits Singing: The Living World of Chiri Yukie’s Ainu Shin’yoshu.

perhaps helpful to think of the landscape of the *ainu moshir* in terms of a metaphor created by the Japanese anthropologist Hiroshi Watanabe, who saw it as a “carpet of spirits.” It is a landscape filled not with “things” but with “beings” with whom we humans live in relationship.

The particular animistic conceptions that inform the traditional Ainu worldview are distinct from but nonetheless share much in common with the belief systems of other predominantly hunting and fishing cultures. Indeed, animism is an ancient mode of human religious thought. While, in the late nineteenth century, scholars of religion, most notably Edward Tylor, discredited animism as a “primitive” mode of thought and a failed epistemology, animism, as the understanding of the personhood of the natural world and phenomena within it, has

proven strikingly persistent and resilient in modern times. Trends from the New Age movement to neo-paganism involve animistic concepts, and animism plays an important role in contemporary discourse on religion and the environment. My own conclusion is that in seeing the natural world and the things within it as something with which we can, and indeed do, have a personal, interactive relationship, humans are responding to a deep longing for connectedness with the nonhuman.

But what kind of connection can we feel with the spirits, the *kamui*, of such powerfully destructive forces as earthquakes and tsunamis? How did the Ainu of earlier generations, living within the traditional lifeways, conceive of these powerful beings and how did they define the human relationship to them? While the rich legacy of Ainu oral tradition includes stories and rituals involving both earthquakes and tsunamis, it is particularly rich in accounts about the latter. It is on those traditions about tsunamis—and what they tell us about the Ainu conception of that natural phenomenon—that I would like to focus here.

In the Ainu pantheon, *kamui* are grouped, among other things, by their

degree of power. Some very powerful *kamui* are deemed *pase*, “weighty.” *Pase kamui* are understood to have been contracted at the very beginning of the *ainu moshir* to act in ways that are helpful to humans. The fire *kamui*, Ape-huchi, who watches out for the well-being of the family; the fish owl, Kotan-kor-kamui, whose vigilance protects the village; the orca, Atui-kor-kamui, who sometimes brings the gift of a whale to the beach for the humans; and Nupuri-kor-kamui, the bear of the high mountains who puts on gifts of flesh and fur to visit the humans: all are examples of these helpful, powerful *kamui*. Humans have relationships with these *kamui* and can communicate with them through the sacred technologies of prayer and ritual. But not all *kamui* with exceptional power are helpful to humans. Powerful, unhelpful *kamui* are often called *wen* (bad) *kamui* and are much feared. Despite humans’ concern about the potential actions of *wen kamui*, humans are not normally able to petition them directly; the help of a friendly *kamui* is needed for that. Given their potentially destructive power, it is not surprising that tsunami *kamui* are considered to be *wen kamui*.

A good example of the role of a *pase kamui* in conveying the petitions

of humans to tsunami *kamui*, asking them not to attack, is provided by the elder Motozō Nabesawa, who recorded magical rites and prayers offered early in the twentieth century at the mouth of the Saru River in order to ward off a tsunami that was considered imminent. In preparation for the rites, villagers erected on the beach six long mounds of sand in the shape of waves. In the troughs between the wave-like mounds they set out old broken dishes and household utensils, as well as offerings of unhulled millet wrapped in mats. As the ceremonies began, the villagers performed an energetic dance, moving along the troughs between the mounds. As they danced, the women in the group kicked vigorously. Their kicks drove the dishes and other offerings down to the sea and at the same time trampled down the wave-shaped mounds. The prayers offered at this time were addressed to the friendly *kamui* of the ocean, Moachan-kur, and were not directly spoken to the violent *kamui* of the ocean, a male-female couple responsible for tsunamis. A passage from the prayer recorded by Nabesawa reads:

. . . If
it [the tsunami] should reach land
near the shore
of the *ainu moshir* [land of the
humans],
it would be bad,

and because of that,
in place of the humans,
all the dishes and utensils,
all of them
near the beach,
we set out, and so
pase kamui,
we ask that you
offer them
from yourself
to the old man of tsunamis,
to the old woman of tsunamis.
Weighty *kamui*!

Moacha-un-kur!
(Monbetsu-chō Kyōdoshi Kenkyūkai,
ed., *Inonno itak: Ainu no norito* [Ainu
prayers] [Sanyō Insatsu, 1966],
110–11)

As is apparent from this passage, the petitioning prayer to avoid the tsunami is addressed to the good-natured sea *kamui*, Moacha-un-kur—a *kamui* with whom the community has a close relationship—with the request that Moacha-un-kur act as an intermediary between the humans and the more socially distant and potentially violent tsunami couple. It is fortunate that the villagers feel they can use worn-out and broken items as their offering to the couple, thus lessening

the practical cost to themselves. It seems possible that the broken state of the goods offered is understood to be acceptable since a tsunami ordinarily breaks so much of what it takes. Nabesawa does not tell us whether or not the prayers were effective and the tsunami was averted.

One detail that is important to note in Nabesawa's statement about the tsunami rite is that

these magic rituals are held only at times when a tsunami's approach has been perceived "by means of an alert by a good *kamui*." In other words, for the human community, avoiding the damaging effects of a tsunami begins with an alert from a friendly *kamui* and is dependent on one or more of the humans correctly perceiving that message. Indeed, the importance of the correct perception of tsunami warnings appears to be the central lesson taught by the many Ainu narratives about this natural disaster. This responsibility rests with all humans but is particularly consequential for community leaders, who can then lead their people out of harm's way. Since *kamui* are natural phenomena, this responsibility equates to being attentive to events in the natural world.

In many Ainu communities there are stories of foxes, particularly ones with black coloring, whose cries of warning were heeded and allowed the villagers to escape from a tsunami to high ground. Other friendly animal *kamui* are also known to warn humans of tsunamis. For example, some *kamui yukar*, a genre of Ainu oral performance, tell the story of an alert given by a brown dipper (Ainu,

katken; Jpn., *kawagarasu*). In these narratives, a brown dipper flies to the *nusasan* (altar) behind the leader's house in two different villages and, while flicking its tail, gives this warning:

ri-shir-ka kakun kakun
moshir-kurka penê penê
(The high mountains won't be covered, covered
The surface of the land will become water, become water)
(Itsuhiko Kubodera, ed. and trans., *Ainu jojishi, shin'yō, seiden no kenkyū* [Research on Ainu narrative verse: *Kamui yukar* and *oina*] [Iwanami Shoten, 1977], 225)

In the village led by the notoriously inept Samai-un-kur, this message goes unheeded, and Samai-un-kur wrongly assumes that the brown dipper is an evil spirit. When the tsunami comes, Samai-un-kur and the villagers flee only to a low mountain and end up being swept out to sea. The culture hero Okikurmi, by contrast, responds as a wise leader should when the brown dipper comes to his *nusasan* and gives warning. He venerates the brown dipper as a *pase kamui*—asking the entire village to join him in this—and as the tsunami approaches, he heeds the dipper's warning and leads his people to safety in the high mountains.

It is not always clear which animal or other *kamui* that appear in the human world have come to give warning of natural disasters. It is therefore important for humans to heed carefully all natural phenomena, most especially the behavior and cries of animals, and to give careful consideration to what they might mean.

As noted above, the *kamui* of tsunamis are *wen kamui*, and human beings have little contact with them as "persons." However, we should not assume that there is no mutual knowledge. For example, in some areas of Hokkaido, tsunami *kamui* are understood to hate

sake, especially its smell. Residents of one village regularly sprinkled the lees from sake brewing around the periphery of the town in order to discourage a tsunami's approach. Tsunamis are also known to respond critically toward those humans who show a lack of compassion toward others. Kentarō Urakawa, an elder of Urakawa-chō, for example, told the story of how, when a tsunami came, people living in a higher village laughed at the people in a lower village, making fun of their plight. The tsunami, however, saw this unkind behavior and turned to attack the higher village rather than the lower one. The people in the lower village then responded by offering help to those in the higher village (Yasuhiro Takashimizu, "*Hokkaido ni okeru tsunami ni kansuru Ainu kōhi densetsu to kiroku*" [Ainu oral traditions and historical records on tsunami in Hokkaido], *Rekishi jishin* 20 [March 2005]: 191).

The many Ainu narratives about tsunamis do indeed reflect the understanding that the ultimate responsibility for them rests with *kamui* and their extraordinary power. At the same time, however, these stories also indicate clearly that how humans behave with regard to tsunamis matters and can influence the outcome of human survival. They show that in the *ainu moshir*—the world of contact between humans and *kamui*—humans are called upon to be alert and knowledgeable; to attend to the sounds, movements, and other events in nature; and also to be concerned for the well-being of others. In a world where natural phenomena have cognition and emotions, humans must act toward every "thing" with informed respect.

Returning to my friend's post-3/11 statement, the reader will recall that while she assigned the source of north-eastern Japan's devastating earthquake and tsunami to *kamui* power, she placed responsibility for the disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi plant squarely in

human hands. The majority of people around the world would, I believe, agree with this understanding. While it is true that the huge tsunami that knocked out the critical backup generators at the Fukushima Daiichi plant is considered to be of a size that occurs only once in a thousand years, humans are the ones responsible for mining and refining the fuel, for building and running Fukushima Daiichi's nuclear reactors, and for storing its spent fuel rods. More generally, humans are responsible for having developed the technologies, such as uranium enrichment, that enable nuclear power and that create the possibility of uncontrolled nuclear reactions and the release of high levels of hazardous ionizing radiation into the environment. Beginning with those who first developed the atomic bomb, many nations, institutions, and individuals share responsibility for nuclear technology and its potential for the destruction of life, including the harm done by the plant breakdown in Fukushima.

When we bring the values and outlook of the traditional Ainu worldview to the Fukushima Daiichi disaster and its aftermath, we can see that although humans hold the responsibility, nature, in the sense of *kamui* power, is also involved. It is not difficult, I believe, for most of us to sense a frightening *kamui* power in nuclear chain reactions, something that is far beyond the human scale in terms of its physical force and energy and also terrifying for its invisible, toxic effects as radiation and its radioactive half-life lasting hundreds of thousands of years. Ordinarily the *kamui* power of nuclear reactions—in the form of fusion—dwells far away from the human world (the *ainu moshir*) on places such as stars, including our sun, where its terrific but remote energy is a boon and not a toxin to organic life. With our human intelligence, however, we have developed technologies that have made the frightening *kamui*

of nuclear reactions an ongoing presence in our human world. Much as we long for perfect control over this power, there is no way we can achieve that with certainty. The many victims of the Fukushima disaster—those displaced from their homes, their farmlands, their livelihoods; those who live in fear of returning, in fear for their and their children's health; those who worry over the safety of the food and water supply—all teach us the consequences of our failed relationship with this powerful force.

Since 3/11 the majority of the people of Japan have made their opposition to nuclear power clear. The opinions expressed by concerned citizens reflect, I feel, much the same wisdom as that conveyed in the traditional Ainu stories. These voices remind us of our responsibilities in a world where our lives as humans are profoundly intertwined with the nonhuman. They inform us of the need to be alert and knowledgeable about all the many beings and phenomena that share our world; to attend closely to their sounds, movements, and changing states; and to be concerned for the well-being of others. The goal of a nuclear-free future requires that Japan and many other nations give up looking for a return on their past investment in nuclear power and the bright hope of energy independence that it seemed to offer. Greater reliance on renewable energy will undoubtedly demand greater restraint in the use of energy from everyone. Even with this understanding (and perhaps because of it), the vision of a future in which humans rely on green, renewable sources of energy is one that beckons strongly to many people around the globe. It is a vision that appeals to our longing for a balanced and intimate relationship with the vibrant world around us and that taps an ancient wisdom regarding the sacred nature of all life that is expressed in the oral traditions of the Ainu and many other indigenous peoples. □

The Prism of the Lotus Sutra

by Atsushi Kanazawa

Atsushi Kanazawa is a professor in the Faculty of Buddhism at Komazawa University, Tokyo. He specializes in the Indian philosophy of language and the history of Indian philosophy and culture.

The Udumbara Flower

The Japanese word *arigatai*, meaning literally “difficult to be,” is used to refer to something that is rare or seldom occurs. Gratitude over a joyful, rare encounter is said to have originated the familiar word *arigatō*, meaning “thank you.” A Japanese linguist has sought the origins of the word *arigatai* in the Lotus Sutra.

The theory that *arigatai* has its origins in the Lotus Sutra is based on several passages in the Lotus Sutra. For instance, in the chapter “Skillful Means” we read: “The Buddha addressed Śāriputra: ‘Such a wonderful Law as

this is [only] preached by the buddha-tathāgatas on [rare] occasions, just as the udumbara flower is seen but once in [long] periods.’” In another chapter, “The Story of King Resplendent,” we find: “It is as hard to see an udumbara blossom as to meet a buddha.” The gist of these passages is that it is extremely difficult to be blessedly born human and moreover to meet the Buddha and hear his teachings, so we should not forget to be grateful for our good fortune in being blessed with such a rare opportunity.

The analogy used in such contexts in the Lotus Sutra and other sutras is to the udumbara flower. A tall deciduous tree of the Moraceae, or mulberry, family,

the udumbara (*Ficus racemosa*) belongs to the same genus as the fig tree, with which

we are all familiar. The syconium, or fruit, of the udumbara is filled with masses of tiny flowers, but because the flowers are not normally visible, Indians believed that the udumbara flowered only once every three thousand years. But even though this is why its blossoms came to symbolize rare events, it goes without saying that this does not in any way diminish our fervor and feelings of gratitude for the Buddha, his teachings, and the Lotus Sutra. □



The Mandārava Flower

In the opening section of the “Introductory” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find the following astonishing reference to the Buddha’s preaching of the Dharma to a multitude of bodhisattvas: “Having preached this sutra, the Buddha sat cross-legged and entered the contemplation termed ‘the station of innumerable meanings,’ in which his body and mind were motionless. At this time the sky rained mandārava, mahā-mandārava, mañjūshaka, and mahā-mañjūshaka flowers over the Buddha and all the great assembly, while the universal buddha-world shook in six ways.”

The four kinds of flowers mentioned

here, starting with the mandārava, are known as the Four Flowers of Heaven, and we should regard them as an expression of the felicitations of gods living in celestial realms when an auspicious event occurs in the world of human beings in which the Buddha is active. This is what is implied by references in Buddhist scriptures to the strewing of flowers. For the moment, let us focus on the mandārava flower, the first of the four flowers listed in the quotation above. In Japan it is usually equated with the datura, but it is actually the Indian coral tree, which is also the prefectural flower of Okinawa.

A tree of medium to great height belonging to the Fabaceae, or pea, family, the coral tree (*Erythrina*) produces

clusters of bright red flowers with butterfly-shaped corollas, distinctive of the

pea family, in spikes on the tips of its bare branches, from which the leaves have fallen. When a joyful event blessedly occurs, these red flowers are miraculously created by the gods and rain down from the heavens thick and fast, regardless of the season.

It could just as well be the American coral tree of the same genus. Regardless, let us savor day by day the good fortune of being able to live as Buddhists as we visualize these beautiful mandārava flowers raining down from the blue sky. □



A Catholic Appreciation of Buddhists and Buddhism: A Personal Journey

by Leo D. Lefebure

The voices of Shakyamuni Buddha and Jesus Christ are clearly not the same, but their overtones intermingle and flow together into our ears.

My life has long been enriched by my contacts with Buddhists, from whom I have learned so much, and by my study of the Buddhist tradition, in which I have found many riches. I would like to express my appreciation of Buddhists and Buddhism around four themes: aesthetics, academic sharing, spiritual encounter, and concern for the world.

Aesthetics: The Appeal of Beauty

What first drew me strongly to Buddhism was the beauty of the artistic tradition. My first experience of traditional Buddhist culture came during a trip to Asia in August 1986, when I visited Japan, Thailand, Myanmar/Burma, and also Indonesia, where I experienced the vibrant Hindu culture of Bali. Our first stop was Kyoto, where I was deeply moved by the beauty of the Japanese Buddhist temples, paintings, sculptures, and gardens. The rock garden of Ryoanji struck me deeply, and I was impressed by the great Buddha statue in Nara and by the faces on the sculptures of the Buddhist figures surrounding him. I sensed that there was a wisdom here that went far beyond words.

In Thailand I found a very different style of Buddhist art, as I was struck by the gracefulness of the images and

temples in Bangkok, Ayutthaya, and Chiang Mai. I recall the charm of the temple Wat Po and its bas reliefs along the river. In Myanmar I was again deeply moved by the beauty of the artwork, especially at Pagan, the medieval capital, where there is an entire plain filled with glorious Buddhist temples. Our guide took us atop one of the temples just as the sun was getting low in the west. The rays of the setting sun illuminated one stupa after another, and the brilliant gold leaf of one of the stupas was especially radiant. It was a marvelous sight. The Catholic tradition has its own wonderful religious art and music. There is a communication in aesthetics that is for me one of the most profound encounters between the Buddhist and the Catholic traditions. Both tell us that ultimate truth is beyond our conceptual grasp; often the most powerful evocations come from art.

Academic Sharing: Research with Masao Abe in Kyoto

The second area from which I have learned much from Buddhists and Buddhism is academic sharing. When I was finishing my doctoral studies at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago, Masao Abe came there as

a visiting professor, and I went to hear him lecture on Zen and Western thought. About a year later, as a junior professor, I approached him at an interseminary faculty reception and introduced myself. I later asked him to be the senior mentor scholar for me in a postdoctoral research project sponsored by the Junior Scholars Program of the Association of Theological Schools of the United States and Canada. He graciously agreed, and so I returned to Kyoto in the summer of 1989 to do research under his guidance on the meaning of wisdom in Buddhism and Christianity.

Professor Abe introduced me to a whole circle of Japanese scholars, both Buddhist and Christian, from whom I learned a great deal. As I read different Buddhist perspectives that often seemed to contradict each other, I became progressively more and more confused. Then Professor Abe introduced me to Professor Gadjin Nagao, who gave me an article he had written on the ascending path of wisdom and the descending path of compassion in Mahayana Buddhism. That article had a tremendous influence on me and became the key that illuminated for me the logic beneath the many different forms of Buddhism that I was encountering. Nagao's perspective also resonated deeply with my own Catholic heritage. In both traditions, we find ourselves in a situation of ignorance in which we do not know our true identity. Overcoming this requires a process of negation in which we learn wisdom by seeing through illusions. If, however, we grasp at our newly won insights as

Leo D. Lefebure is Matteo Ricci, SJ, Professor of Theology at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. He received his PhD in Christian theology from the University of Chicago Divinity School in 1987 and is a trustee of the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions. He is the author of four books and numerous articles and has coauthored, with Peter Feldmeier, The Path of Wisdom: A Christian Commentary on the Dhammapada (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2011).

if they were absolute truth, we assume a posture of prideful superiority that is actually another form of ignorance. Thus the negations must themselves be negated on a path of compassion with all who suffer. Even though the cosmological assumptions of Mahayana Buddhism and Catholicism are very different, there is a shared spiritual wisdom.

Abe was both deeply rooted in the Zen tradition and very curious about other traditions and open to learning from them. He was extremely knowledgeable about Christian theology, and he would always ask me questions about Catholic perspectives. On the one hand, Abe insisted on the profound differences between our traditions, but having established that, he then went on to very creatively reinterpret both traditions in relation to each other. From him I learned that even though our traditions have very different assumptions about human existence and the cosmos, nonetheless we share many values. Abe's comments on the significance of emptying (*shunyata* in Sanskrit or *kenosis* in Greek) still echo in my mind. Abe's example of creatively reading both Christian and Buddhist texts in relation to each other made a deep impression on me. I owe him as well as Professor Nagao and the many other Buddhist and Christian scholars whom I met that year in Kyoto a tremendous debt of gratitude. Since then I have been involved in many other academic exchanges, including the International Conference on the Lotus Sutra sponsored by Rissho Kosei-kai in Beijing in 2005.

Spirituality: Buddhist Meditation and Buddhist-Christian Retreats

Another area in which I greatly appreciate Buddhists and Buddhism is spiritual practice. Both the Buddhist and the Catholic traditions insist that academic exploration be integrated into the practice of a spiritual path. On my trip to Thailand in 1986, I wanted to learn about Buddhist monastic life, and so I spent five days at the monastery of Wat Rem Poeng near Chiang Mai in the north of Thailand. I went there hoping to have some good conversations, but my gracious hosts assumed I was there to practice *vipassana*, or insight meditation in silence. So I entered very willingly into this practice. However, my meditation teacher instructed me to meditate

twenty-four hours a day, and I was not prepared for that. I threw myself into the practice as best I could but repeatedly encountered challenges. My mind would start to become calm but then would jump all around again and again. I never reached a state of stillness, let alone of *samadhi*, but I did learn something of how one is initiated into Thai Buddhist meditation practice. I sensed that there was a profound wisdom here, and I had a desire to learn more.

Early in 1989, before I went to Kyoto to work with Abe, I went to Zen Mountain Monastery in the Catskill Mountains north of New York City, where I met John Daido Loori, who was one of the great leaders of American Zen Buddhism. He hosted a Buddhist-Christian dialogue that was supposed to be about ethics but ended up being on many other things as well. At one

point in the dialogue, he exclaimed, “I am still a Catholic.” I stayed on at the monastery afterward and met with him individually. As in my experience in Thailand, I was not yet really ready for the rigors of Zen practice, but this was another step in my initiation into Buddhist meditation. Later I read many of John Daido Looi’s writings and listened to his tapes, and I was with him at the Gethsemani Encounter in 2002, which I will mention later. I count him among my teachers in the Dharma. I dedicated my last book, *The Path of Wisdom: A Christian Commentary on the Dhammapada*, coauthored with Peter Feldmeier, to the memory of both Masao Abe and John Daido Looi.

A couple of years later, I participated in a Buddhist-Christian retreat with Mary Jo Meadow, who combines traditional Theravada *vipassana* meditation with the spirituality of the Catholic Carmelite tradition coming from Saint John of the Cross, a sixteenth-century Spanish mystic. She teaches the structure of sitting and walking meditation from the Burmese Theravada tradition in which she was trained. In her Dharma talks during the retreat, she wove together Buddhist and Catholic themes harmoniously. In this retreat, for the first time I entered into a deeper level of stillness and experienced both tumult

and peace on a profound level. This retreat was deeply moving and transformative. The practice of meditation in the Buddhist tradition has been a profound gift in my life. The following year I sat a similar retreat with her and met her collaborator, Peter Feldmeier, who would later become the coauthor of my commentary on the *Dhammapada*.

In 1996 Mary Jo Meadow collaborated with Joseph Goldstein from the Insight Meditation Society in hosting a *vipassana* retreat at the Catholic Benedictine monastery of Conception Abbey in Missouri. Here we engaged in traditional Buddhist meditation in the friendly atmosphere of a Catholic monastery. I greatly appreciated the spiritual, practical wisdom of Joseph Goldstein and his colleagues. I was fortunate to be in his small group for discussion and reflection.

On another occasion I participated in a retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh at the University of Saint Mary of the Lake in Mundelein, Illinois, northwest of Chicago, where I was teaching during the 1990s. I learned much from the wisdom of Thich Nhat Hanh on breathing, on making peace at each moment, on being open to all the wonder and pain of each moment. At the university, a bell tower on the church rings every quarter hour. Thich Nhat Hanh loved this,

and he insisted that we stop whatever we were doing whenever we heard the bell. So as we were walking slowly to the refectory for lunch, the bell rang, and we all froze in place until the sounds had faded away.

Later, when I was teaching at Fordham University in New York City, I went to a number of Catholic Zen retreats with Robert Kennedy, an American Jesuit priest who was trained in Zen in Japan and who is recognized as a *Zen roshi* (elderly master) in a Japanese lineage. Kennedy has a *zendo* (Zen meditation hall) in the Jesuit residence of Saint Peter’s College in Jersey City, New Jersey, just across from lower Manhattan. I used to go there on Saturday mornings for sitting and walking meditation. I participated in a number of weekend retreats and one weeklong retreat with Roshi Kennedy. During this period Kennedy trained my friend Kevin Hunt, a Catholic Trappist monk from Saint Joseph’s Abbey in Spencer, Massachusetts, in advanced koan study. When Kevin’s training was completed, I attended the ceremony when he was installed as a *Zen sensei* (teacher). Buddhist meditation practice has been a great blessing in my life, teaching me to observe all that is happening.

Concern for the World: Monastic Interreligious Dialogue and the Gethsemani Encounters

The fourth area in which I greatly appreciate Buddhists and Buddhism is concern for the world, which follows directly from spiritual practice. When I sat the retreat with Thich Nhat Hanh, I was very impressed by his application of traditional Buddhist wisdom to the pressing issues of the present. During the course of the retreat, I decided that in the book I was working on (*The Buddha and the Christ*), I would compare him to Gustavo Gutierrez, a Peruvian Catholic

priest who is a major leader in reflecting on Catholic theology from the perspective of the poor. Thich Nhat Hanh had a gift for illuminating current concerns with the light of ancient practices that were now seen as having fresh relevance. I have also been moved by the witness of A. T. Ariyaratne and many other socially engaged Buddhists concerned with shaping a better world.

For a number of years I served as an adviser to the board of Monastic Interreligious Dialogue (MID), an organization of Catholic monks and nuns who reach out to monastics from other traditions, especially Buddhism. In 1996 and again in 2002, I helped plan and participated in the weeklong encounters that MID organized between Buddhist and Catholic monks and nuns at the Trappist abbey where Thomas Merton lived in the rolling hills of Kentucky, not far from Louisville. The first encounter took place the week after my retreat with Joseph Goldstein in Missouri. I still remember the surprised look on Goldstein's face when he saw me the first time at Gethsemani, just a couple days after I had been in his reflection group at the retreat in Missouri.

The first Gethsemani Encounter was organized around themes of monastic life in Buddhist and Catholic practice, but we continually spoke about the challenges and problems facing the world, especially issues of violence. The presence of His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet and of Maha Ghosananda, the patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism, evoked the tremendous sufferings that their people had undergone in recent decades. One of the Catholics present, Armand Veulleux, a Trappist monk, had just traveled to Algeria a few months earlier to retrieve the bodies of the French Trappist monks who had been slain by Islamic militants in their struggle against the Algerian government. He recounted the moving story of how the monks knew their lives were in danger and how they determined whether to

return to France and safety or to stay in Tibherine with their Muslim friends and be in danger. We were constantly reflecting on the violence of the world in one context after another.

In one dramatic exchange, the Japanese Zen leader Eshin Nishimura recalled his visit to a refugee camp in Thailand close to the border of Cambodia/Kampuchea. The Cambodian people there had fled the terrible fighting in their homeland with nothing but the clothes on their backs. In one corner of the camp was a simple makeshift hut that served as a Buddhist meditation spot. Inside the hut Nishimura saw a single monk meditating. He turned dramatically to Maha Ghosananda and exclaimed, "That man was you! My question to you is: What were you doing in a place in which there is nothing to do?" It was a classic Zen-style challenge. Without a moment's pause, Maha Ghosananda replied, "I was seeking peace within myself so I could bring peace to others."

The Westerners present kept trying to get Maha Ghosananda to coach them on the tactics of nonviolent protests, but he would respond only with brief one-line aphorisms. Finally, someone had the inspired idea of asking him to lead us in walking meditation to the grave of Thomas Merton. We walked silently out of the chapter room where we were meeting, past the graves of the monks behind the chapel, to the cross marking the grave of Merton. Maha Ghosananda stood silently behind the cross as the rest of us formed semicircles around him. It was most moving.

The Catholic monastics continually referred to "the Rule," meaning the Monastic Rule of Saint Benedict, which structures their lives. The Buddhists asked to see the Rule, and a number of them decided to write a Buddhist response, which was published a few years later (Patrick Henry, ed., *Benedict's Dharma: Buddhists Reflect on the Rule of Saint Benedict* [Riverhead, 2001]).

Six years later, in the spring of 2002, we had the second Gethsemani Encounter, this time organized directly around the theme of different forms of suffering and Buddhist and Catholic ways of responding. On the opening evening, Bhante Gunaratana, one of the leaders of Theravada Buddhism in the United States, spoke of the tremendous value of friendship for Buddhists. Friendship is a central value for Catholics as well. In the twelfth century, a Catholic monastic leader, Aelred of Rievaulx, wrote that "Christ is the third between two friends" and even stated, "Deus amicitia est" (God is friendship). One of the greatest blessings for me in Buddhist-Christian dialogue has been the wonderful people I have met along the way and the friendly relationships I have developed with them. At the conclusion of this encounter, Zoketsu Norman Fischer, former abbot of the San Francisco Zen Center, and I were asked to describe what had happened during the week. We both agreed that the most significant development was the forming of a new community of friends and companions across religious lines. None of us were trying to deny or minimize the important differences between our traditions, but we encountered common values and concerns that drew us together.

area who would guide him. Norman is not only one of the leading Zen Buddhists in the United States but also a published poet. Just before the second Gethsemani Encounter, Norman's book *Opening to You: Zen-Inspired Translations of the Psalms* was published. He had selected many of the Psalms and done a free, poetic rendering of them into English. So they are not so much literal translations as free interpretations in light of his adult experience as a Zen Buddhist. I rode with him into Louisville one evening for a book-signing event arranged by his publisher, and we had a wonderful conversation along the way.

In one context after another, beyond all the differences, we find a strong, vibrant reso-

he developed a type of cognitive psychology to overcome our deep-seated ignorance.

Further, a Christian can embrace the hope that we do not have to allow our lives to be dominated by ignorance, craving, and anger. There is an alternative lifestyle of wisdom and compassion, but it demands a transformation of our fundamental assumptions about ourselves and our world, a change of behavior, and a practice of mental discipline leading to a wisdom that cannot be defined or measured. The traditional Buddhist virtues of the Brahma-viharas, the dwelling places of the Buddha, resonate deeply with Catholic values. I greatly appreciate the Buddhist teachings on loving-kindness, compassion, appreciative joy, and equanimity as well as the application of these virtues to contemporary life. These are all values that Catholics can affirm together with Buddhists.

The Buddha finds the absolute freedom of nirvana where one is "profound, immeasurable, unfathomable" (MN 72.20). The apostle Paul writes of the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, and John of the Cross tells us that atop Mount Carmel, in the state of union with God, there is an experience of freedom, compassion, and truth that no formula can define (*Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez [ICS Publications, 1991], 111). Each tradition insists that only those who have experienced can speak; no verbal formulation could contain the content of either experience, let alone univocally define the relationship between them. The voices of Shakyamuni Buddha and Jesus Christ are clearly not the same, but their overtones intermingle and flow together into our ears. □

This essay is based on a speech by the author on July 1, 2012, at a Sunday service of the International Buddhist Congregation of Rissho Kosei-kai, in Tokyo.

Norman's experience is an example of how interreligious encounters can change us. At the first Gethsemani Encounter, we sat with the Trappist monks in their choir stalls for evening prayer. These monks sing the entire collection of the Psalms, which include some that pray for deadly violence upon one's foes. Norman was raised in a Jewish family where they prayed the Psalms in Hebrew. In the dialogue he asked us Catholics what it meant for us to pray these violent, bloody Psalms. A number of us spoke, but none of us fully answered his question. The experience sparked a desire in Norman to explore his own Jewish heritage, and so he went back to studying Hebrew and found a rabbi in the San Francisco

nance between our traditions. Encounters with Buddhists direct Christians to the wisdom of the Buddha himself. In hearing the Four Noble Truths, a Christian can agree that life as usually lived is unsatisfactory, filled with unnecessary suffering. A Christian can also acknowledge that our cravings and untamed desires lie at the root of our needless suffering. The three poisons identified by Buddhism—ignorance, craving, and anger—are very similar to the three forces that Thomas Aquinas identified as the internal causes of vice and sin: ignorance, passion, and malice. Even though their contexts and perspectives are in many ways very different, Thomas Aquinas, like the Buddha, also proposed a middle way in which virtue is found between the extremes, and

Designation of the Second President

by Nikkyo Niwano

In March 1999 an autobiography by Rev. Nikkyo Niwano (1906–99), the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was published in Japanese under the title Kono michi: Ichibutsujo no sekai o mezashite (The path that we have walked: Aspiring to the world of the One Buddha Vehicle). The book is a lively account of the life of Founder Niwano as a leader of an international lay Buddhist association and a pioneer of interreligious cooperation who dedicated himself to liberating all people from suffering with firm faith in the Lotus Sutra. Dharma World will continue to publish excerpts from the book in installments.

Nikkyo Niwano, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was an honorary president of the World Conference of Religions for Peace and honorary chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan) at the time of his death in October 1999. He was awarded the 1979 Templeton Prize for Progress in Religion.

When my eldest son, Nichiko, was studying at university, Rissho Kosei-kai decided to make the presidency of the organization hereditary. The issue of presidential succession was examined from a number of angles, but the final decision was made in accordance with the regulations of Rissho Kosei-kai after careful discussion with members of the Board of Trustees and the Council. And so it was determined that Nichiko would succeed me as president. However, Nichiko himself was strongly opposed to the idea.

I had six children: three girls, Tomoko, Kyoko, and Yoshiko, and three boys. My eldest son, Nichiko, was my fourth child. He was born on March 20, 1938, just two weeks after Rissho Kosei-kai was founded. His name at birth was Koichi. Two more sons were born later, Kinjiro and Hiroshi. Busy as I was with my trade and my guidance work, I left their upbringing entirely to my wife.

One of Nichiko's earliest memories is of a milk cart that was always parked

in front of our house. That is what I used to deliver milk, morning and evening. At that time the number of members was doubling every month. With only Myoko Sensei [Myoko Naganuma,

cofounder of Rissho Kosei-kai] and me able to give them guidance, I was almost too busy to think.

I would get up at three or four o'clock each morning and deliver the milk. As soon as I got home and began my devotionals, members would invariably come to ask my help. One might be having a marital fight, another would have illness

in the family. After their visits, I would immediately have to go out with Myoko Sensei to give religious guidance.

It would be eleven or twelve at night before I returned home. I slept no more than three or four hours each night. Day after day the same pattern continued. I hardly like to say it, but there were times when I was overcome with sleep while reciting the sutras. Without realizing what I was doing, I would topple over, with the sutra book still in my hands. I worked in my small business for three or four hours a day and then spent the next sixteen walking around helping people out as they needed it.

Of course, members came to my milk shop. The building consisted of two rooms downstairs and two up. At times forty or fifty people would crowd into the upstairs rooms, putting such weight on the ceiling that the door of the cupboard in the room below would get stuck. However you looked at it, it was just a small house. Without going into too many details, such conditions meant that the lavatory (in those days not a flush toilet but a cesspool type) was frequently full, and after everyone had gone home I would clean it out and carry the night soil to a reservoir for that

purpose in a nearby field. Again and again a patrolling policeman would ask me what I was doing about the streets in the middle of the night.

Speaking of policemen, when I was being questioned at the Nakano police station, one of the detectives tried to put pressure on me by demanding that, since I was supposed to be an expert in onomancy [divination of names], I analyze his name. When I told him various particulars about the type of family he had and the things troubling it, he was astounded at how accurate my remarks were. "If you know all that, I guess you know how much I earn. Try and guess." When I replied that I did not know as much as that, immediately the atmosphere in the interrogation room became very cordial. The detective even gave me a certificate of permission to practice onomancy after that event. I still have that certificate, which I have kept as a memento. However, I never once used it for a business. In view of the fact that later the detective asked me for counseling, I can only be amazed at the strangeness of fate.

Now that I come to think of it, I first met Motoyuki Naganuma, who later became the chair of Rissho Kosei-kai's Board of Trustees, when he was about twelve years old. He was working in a sweet-potato and ice shop called Saitamaya, run by his aunt, Myoko Sensei. It had become part of my daily routine to go to Saitamaya, which was in the Hatagaya district of Tokyo's Shibuya ward, every afternoon to speak about the Dharma to people in the neighborhood. Though Mr. Naganuma was still very young at that time, he used to sit beside me and listen intently to everything I said. Whereas other assistants who worked at Saitamaya rarely returned promptly after Myoko Sensei sent them out to deliver messages, he alone was conscientious about his working hours, and he was also exemplary in his way of life.

I thought how outstanding he was, even though he was so young.

As the organization steadily grew and more and more people gathered at my house every day, emptying the lavatory became a massive task. Mr. Naganuma quietly took it upon himself. He later assisted me for many years as Rissho Kosei-kai's chair; if I was the pitcher on the team, he was the catcher. He would always catch whatever ball I threw him. I could always rely on him, and I felt easy with him around.

Wartime Evacuation from Tokyo

In May 1942 Rissho Kosei-kai's first headquarters was completed in the Wada Honcho part of Tokyo. The membership swelled rapidly, until it became impossible for me to both manage my business and undertake religious activities. It was not what I had intended, but I decided to close my milk shop and devote myself to dissemination work. As a result, I moved into the new headquarters building with my family.

Though we called it our headquarters, in reality it was just a small building of 890 square feet, with two large rooms and one small one. My six children slept in that small room. Because *hoza* meetings were held in the neighboring room, it was my wife's task to keep the children quiet so they would not disturb the discussions. The paper in the frames of the sliding door of our room gradually wore away from being rubbed against by the cramped bedding. When, in the summer of 1944, my wife and children were evacuated from Tokyo and went to live at my family's home in Suganuma, Niigata Prefecture, I was very relieved, to tell the truth.

The war had worsened by this time, and the skies above Japan were filled incessantly with American bombers. In Tokyo the evacuation of school-age children had begun, and my wife, worried about our children's safety, told me

They say you have to pass through hell once if you want to specialize in any kind of work. Rare are the days when you can stretch out and sleep. It is something you have to be able to endure for a time, like having to stay up late every night to study. When I think about it now, it was because of that decade of study, when I lived alone, that I can confidently say I achieved much spiritual growth.

family, I did not speak with any of them. I preserved my vows of separation. When my young children came to my side and looked into my face, I wanted to embrace them; but I restrained myself. My apparent lack of feeling could not fail to arouse the suspicions and opposition of relatives and villagers. My wife bore all the suffering, including my share.

that she wanted to evacuate them to the country. In fact, the previous year, Myoko Sensei had received a divine revelation. The deity's words were unpromising: "Shakyamuni renounced the world as soon as his son Rahula was born. Niwano, you have six children. Aren't you still letting yourself be distracted by your six children and your wife? How can you be called a disciple of the Buddha?"

I was not as calm as I might have seemed on the surface. If I had told my wife exactly what the revelation was, she would not have accepted the decision placidly. It was just when I was wondering how to broach the matter that she herself brought up the subject of evacuation. For me, the departure of my family was the beginning of a long period of living alone, dedicated completely to my religious training.

There were times when I thought longingly of my children, living far away in the country. To combat these feelings, I read the Lotus Sutra over and over again, even going without sleep. As dawn approached, I would doze off, but as soon as the sun was up, members would arrive, and my day would become completely taken up with guidance work. It meant a continual loss of sleep at night and loss of leisure by day.

My wife left with the children from Ueno Station on August 12 that year, at the height of summer. Only my eldest daughter, Tomoko, remained. She had just started at Rissho Girls School, and we did not want her to have to leave. So she remained in Tokyo one more year. When I think about the fact that I had to keep living apart from my family, I realize it was a miserable situation for the youngest children. At the time, Nichiko was six, Kinjiro three, and my third son, Hiroshi, just one.

I remember that when my wife and children were boarding the train, the children looked embarrassed when she urged them to say farewell to me. They only came up to me and made a quick bow. As you might imagine, it filled me with a deep sense of loneliness.

I have already written about that time in *Lifetime Beginner* and would like to quote from it here.

During the ten years of our separation, I returned to Suganuma only twice: once for a memorial service on the occasion of the death of my father-in-law and once when I was drafted into the military a second time and faced the possibility of grave danger on the field of battle. But though on those occasions I came into contact with my own

During these ten years of living apart, it seems my wife's family urged divorce a number of times. She did not know when she would be permitted to return to Tokyo, and there were times when things became almost unendurable for her, as suspicions arose that possibly things would remain the way they were forever. She says that at such times all she could do was to continue to recite the Threefold Lotus Sutra with complete dedication.

Thirteen Years Apart

For my wife and children, evacuation to the country meant a change in environment. Since they had to fit in with the household where they went to live, it was not an easy time for them. But it also placed major demands on my elder brother's family, who had taken them in. When I think about it now, it must have caused a lot of trouble for my elder brother, and I have hardly the words to thank him for providing me with the opportunity to commit myself to my religious training.

I was told later on about an extraordinary experience that my father, Jukichi, had had. When I first established Rissho Kosei-kai and was running from place to place for dissemination work with no distinction between day and night, my father went to a hot spring at Nozawa in Nagano Prefecture for a cure. There was quite an old physiognomist who happened to be staying at the same lodge, and he made it a point to soak in the

large bath at the same time as my father. Looking intently into my father's face, he said, "There is no doubt that you have a son who is deeply religious. Thanks to him, the palsy that is endemic in your family has disappeared." Palsy is a disease that paralyzes the arms and legs because of a cerebral hemorrhage. Many members of my family had been afflicted by it. The physiognomist told my father that, really, he too should have come down with the disease, but he would be all right because of the merits of my faith.

Deep inside, my father had apparently thought that it was all very well for me to have a faith, but it would be far better if I were a lot more diligent with my paid work. However, after hearing the physiognomist's words, it seems he began to talk a lot to my elder brother about the blessings of faith. Given this, when it came to having my family evacuate to my old home, I think my brother willingly accepted my family even though he knew they would be a lot of trouble.

One year after my children were evacuated, Japan met with defeat in the war. Gradually the other people who had similarly evacuated returned to Tokyo. Only my family did not return. Even when they did return, it was to be three more years before we could live together as a family. Though we were under the same roof, my wife and children lived on the first floor, while I lived on the second, and we took our meals separately. Thus we continued a form of life incomprehensible in terms of accepted social practice.

In the end, we lived apart for thirteen years. It was a difficult time for my wife and children alike. It was, however, thanks to their being able to put up with the situation, despite its hardships, that I was able to immerse myself in my own religious training. If at that time I had clung to my wife and children, I would never have been able to put everything I had into pursuing my study and practice.

However, that was the most impressionable period of Nichiko's boyhood. Living apart from me gave him a complicated view of our situation and of his father. Every day he saw his mother's difficulties and wondered what sort of faith it was that his father was involved in. He went to elementary school and junior high school in Suganuma and after that commuted to the prefectural high school in the city of Tokamachi, a few miles away. On returning to Tokyo, he entered the Second High School of Nihon University and went on to major in literature at Nihon University.

He wrote, "When my father at last called us to return, after neglecting us for ten years, we were told we were not allowed to call him 'Father.' When he returned home from the headquarters, he would immediately go upstairs, saying nothing to us. He also ate separately from us. It was not a warm and harmonious family. Why was I born into such a family?"

Seeking an opportunity to sweep away these doubts, Nichiko transferred to the Buddhist studies faculty of Rishsho University, in Tokyo, at my suggestion. At that time he was not the sort of person who could put his own ideas forward and test them against others. Rather, he would bottle everything up inside himself and try to find a solution in his own way. I think he was rather introverted. He took eight years to graduate from university, but after that he went on to study for a master's degree in the same faculty.

Nichiko's Anxiety

Nichiko was twenty-two when a committee of Rishsho Kosei-kai's Council decided that he would succeed me as president. He has written about his state of mind at that time in *My Father, My Teacher*:

The complications of home and school upset me tremendously. To make matters worse, around 1960

the Rishsho Kosei-kai committee responsible for such matters at last decided that I should be designated my father's official successor. Though I had suspected this was in the offing, when the blow came I lost all remnant of interest in schoolwork. I was a mere student with absolutely no knowledge of the world or experience in spreading the religious teachings of the group. It seemed wrong to select such a person as me to be successor to my father on the strength of nothing more than family ties. The idea terrified me, and I could not bring myself to consent to it. Still, when I realized how puny my own pride and self-respect were in the face of the consensus of the organization's leaders and the will of the president, I was crushed under an oppressive weight and could not sleep at night.

Overwhelmed by the situation, Nichiko left home without telling anyone, returning four days later. All he could think of was that he wanted to get as far away as possible, and so he traveled all the way to Kagoshima, in the far south of Japan. Presumably he wanted to look at his own position, oscillating between family and Rishsho Kosei-kai, from a distance and to find out for himself the type of person he should be. It was seeing the anguish he was going through that made me think that I could place my confidence in him. Treated by those around him as the son of the president, he could have just accepted willingly, not questioning his own ability. However, by saying that he didn't have the ability and had achieved nothing, he gave me hope, because this showed me he could see himself clearly. I hoped from the bottom of my heart that Nichiko could become a fine human being by sorting things out himself to find an answer on his own. For religious leaders especially, agony and suffering in the time of youth become important assets, since unless they have suffered themselves,

they cannot fully empathize with others who suffer. Thus I tried to prevail with him, saying, “The decision that you are the best person to succeed me as president has been made by everyone, studying the question from a variety of angles. It’s the consensus of the whole organization.” Even so, Nichiko refused to be persuaded.

I told him, “Since the rule to make the presidency hereditary has already been decided by Rissho Kosei-kai, I would like you to accept. If after you become president you think that the hereditary system is unreasonable, then you can change the rule for the next generation.” After hearing these words, Nichiko at last seemed to become settled in his mind. He has written about this as follows:

“My father said to me in a very serious voice, ‘People’s real capabilities, which lie deeply concealed, are all more or less the same. Success in work depends more on effort than on an innate ability.’ The idea that people’s true capabilities lie concealed made a powerful impression on me.”

Nichiko had felt resentful about the fact that because I was the founder of a religious organization, my religious training meant I had to live apart from my family for thirteen years. He harbored strong doubts about a faith that could force such a sacrifice. If he could cut through this entanglement and come to realize what underlay it, it would be of enormous benefit to him.

Religious Experience

Nichiko first attended a Rissho Kosei-kai event formally in January 1964. I was due to attend the Conference of Youth Leaders of Western Japan Regions, but on the day it was held, I happened to fall ill with a cold, and Nichiko attended in my place at the last moment. I had him read out a message from me.

At that time not many Rissho Kosei-kai members, not even some of the

directors, knew him by sight. However, they all seriously set about the task of his education as president-designate.

In March 1965, when Nichiko graduated from Rissho University, I encouraged him to come to work at Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters. Perhaps to mark the changing circumstances of his life, he decided to undertake an eight-day fast at the training hall of the Nishi Health System in Ichigaya, Tokyo, as a form of spiritual training. He had read about fasting in a book he had found in Tokyo’s second-hand book district of Kanda. The following June, he began working out of Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters.

At first he traveled around the country in my stead to read out congratulatory messages at inaugurations of new training halls and enshrinements of statues of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, Rissho Kosei-kai’s focus of devotion. In this way he learned more about the faith of Rissho Kosei-kai through his own eyes and ears, coming into direct contact with members at Dharma centers throughout Japan. He has written that he learned from individual members how precious religious faith is, and they trained him in our faith. He wrote in *My Father, My Teacher*:

The sincerity of believers is always the most stirring part of Kosei-kai ceremonies. Testimonials of actual experience with the Law strike me especially deeply because, though

I have theoretical understanding of the wonderful characteristics of Buddhism and have heard much about the splendid things it can do, my knowledge and understanding are merely intellectual. They have not yet taken full form in flesh and blood. Coming into contact with people who have directly experienced the working of the Law and hearing their voices allows me to feel the blessedness of Buddhism with my whole person.

I too had had exactly the same experience.

The third chapter of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, “Ten Merits,” states, “This sutra originally comes from the abode of all the buddhas, leaves for the aspiration of all the living for enlightenment, and stays at the place where all the bodhisattvas practice.” The working of the Dharma appears of itself within the bodhisattva practice of each and every believer.

However busy I am, I always make it a point to hear members’ testimonies to the faith at the Great Sacred Hall. I ask headquarters officers not to interrupt me during such speeches, explaining that I want to devote my whole self to listening to them. Each member becomes my teacher through those narratives, and all members continue to encourage and nurture me.

To be continued

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 21

The Divine Power of the Tathagata (2)

This is the 114th installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra by the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.

TEXT In the midst of these [worlds] all living beings, gods, dragons, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, mahoragas, human and nonhuman beings, and the other beings, by reason of the divine power of the Buddha, all saw in this *saha* world the infinite, boundless hundred thousand myriad kotis of buddhas seated on the lion thrones under all the jewel trees, and saw Shakyamuni Buddha together with the Tathagata Abundant Treasures seated on lion thrones in the midst of the stupa, and also saw the infinite, boundless hundred thousand myriad kotis of bodhisattva-mahasattvas, and the four groups who reverently surround Shakyamuni Buddha. After beholding this they were all greatly delighted, obtaining that which they had never experienced before.

COMMENTARY The Buddha's power enabled all living beings in the universe, both human and nonhuman,

to see this great assembly of the buddhas on Divine Eagle Peak in this *saha* world.

Shakyamuni Buddha and the Tathagata Abundant Treasures sit together in the stupa. The other buddhas all sit on lion thrones at the feet of jewel trees that stand in rows as far as the eye can see.

An infinite number of splendidly attired bodhisattvas, monks, and nuns in their brown robes, and lay believers in white robes reverently surround Shakyamuni Buddha. When the Buddha's divine power showed all living beings this indescribably solemn scene before their very eyes, they all felt its mystery, and their hearts were filled with gratitude.

All living beings' ability to witness this holy spectacle of the great assembly for preaching the Dharma is the state of *fugen-daie*, or "all living beings in the universe witnessed the great assembly."

This expression signifies that because all living beings saw the buddhas, they all can awaken to the Buddha's teachings.

At present, this is impossible, for people differ in their capacity to understand the Buddha's teachings. Some may attain enlightenment quickly, while for others it may be difficult. This is why teachings of skillful means are necessary to enlighten people in various ways according to their different capacities.

This is the present state of humanity, but in a future age all people will attain enlightenment, and the Buddha's great wish is a world in which this comes to pass.

Moving quickly or slowly is merely part of the process of reaching that goal, and people's capacities to understand the Buddha's teachings differ only before they reach that goal. Once people reach "the other shore of enlightenment" they will all become buddhas. Therefore, there is no essential difference in their capacity to understand the Buddha's teachings.

This state is called *mirai-ki'itsu*, or "future oneness in capacity to understand the Buddha's teachings," in the sense that all people will become one in that capacity.

The term mentioned earlier, *fugen-daie*, meaning "all living beings in the universe witnessed the great assembly," also means that the Buddha has the great divine power to guide all living beings equally to supreme enlightenment.

TEXT At the same time all the gods in the sky sang with exalted voices: "Beyond these infinite, boundless hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of asamkhyeya worlds, there is a realm called Saha. In its midst is a buddha, whose name is Shakyamuni. Now, for the sake of all bodhisattva-mahasattvas, he preaches the Great Vehicle Sutra called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, the Dharma by which bodhisattvas are instructed and which the buddhas watch over and keep in mind. You should with all your utmost heart joyfully follow it and should pay homage and make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha."

COMMENTARY *The Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.* Like the lotus flower, which grows out of the mud to bloom, this most wonderful teaching guides the people of the world so that, while living in this world, they can live pure, free lives unsullied by it.

- *The Dharma by which bodhisattvas are instructed.* This means the supreme Dharma, which is preached for the instruction of the bodhisattvas.

It may be defined as the teaching that attaining buddhahood is possible through practices to elevate one's own character along with compassionate practices for others' benefit.

- *And which the buddhas watch over and keep in mind.* This is the teaching which the buddhas have guarded since the

infinite past as the most essential of all and which they have kept in mind for proper dissemination.

All living beings fully understood that the gods were praising the Buddha by calling to them in voices that echoed in their ears. That kind of revelation, through "exalted voices praising the Buddha reverberating in the sky," is not unique to Buddhism. Christian writings and the teachings of Confucius and Mencius refer to hearing "the voice of Heaven." That is, this passage of the sutra means that people receive revelations from heaven, or perceive the truth of faith from an inspiration that flashes into their minds.

All living beings were inspired by those exalted voices' revelation that in the *saha* world Shakyamuni Buddha preached the sutra (the teaching) called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, the Dharma by which bodhisattvas are instructed and which the buddhas watch over and keep in mind. All living beings profoundly and clearly realized that this is a true and peerless teaching, which sustains them and brings them harmony and peace of mind.

When we expand this realization, it becomes something like the following.

In the present, all knowledge in this *saha* world is based on divergent ways of thinking, and this obstructs the road to human happiness. However, in the future all knowledge will be united in the Buddha's teachings. When that happens, this *saha* world will become the most exalted place in the universe.

At present, all knowledge, which should be used to improve humankind, is applied for different purposes. The various religions and their sects or schools have different beliefs, so they are bound to conflict with one another.

Even in politics, which should give people a degree of comfort in their daily lives, diverging ideologies clash, and this leads to disputes which only worsen people's hardships.

The same is true of scholarship. Although scholarship ought to promote increasing benefits for humanity, it becomes so overly specialized that it neglects this fundamental spirit. It becomes scholarship for its own sake, collapsing into a form of learning without humanity as its core. At worst, science even assists evil, since the most notorious products of nuclear physics—atomic and hydrogen bombs—threaten human survival.

If these diverse religions, ways of thought, and branches of learning all unite with the ideas of respect for humanity and universal harmony taught by Shakyamuni Buddha, the ideal Land of Tranquil Light will be realized in the *saha* world, and this world with its remarkably advanced material civilization will truly become the center of the universe.

That is the idea expounded here, and it is said that all living beings' hearing the exalted voices praising the Buddha reverberating in the sky symbolizes *mirai-kyoitsu*, or the

“future oneness in doctrine,” in the sense that in the future all teachings will unite as the Buddha Dharma.

TEXT All those living beings, after hearing the voices in the sky, folded their hands toward the *saha* world and thus exclaimed: “*Namah Shakyamuni Buddha! Namah Shakyamuni Buddha!*”

COMMENTARY The Sanskrit word *namah* (*namu* in Japanese) means devotion with all one’s body and soul. There is great significance in the fact that all living beings in the universe exclaim “*Namah Shakyamuni Buddha,*” that is, “We take refuge in Shakyamuni from the depths of our hearts.”

Buddhism is the teachings originally imparted by the historical Shakyamuni Buddha, and without him Buddhism would have been unimaginable.

As a human being, Shakyamuni Buddha made clear in chapter 16 of the Lotus Sutra, “Revelation of the [Eternal] Life of the Tathagata,” the truth that he was not the only manifestation of the Buddha, but that the Buddha’s true form is that of the nonborn and nondying Eternal Original Buddha.

When we consider these things together, Buddhists’ main focus of devotion (the central object of faith) should be the Eternal Original Buddha and the human embodiment of that Eternal Original Buddha, Shakyamuni—Great Benevolent Teacher, World-honored One. I firmly believe that this is the true view of the focus of devotion.

The gesture of all living beings in the universe folding their hands in a prayerful attitude toward the *saha* world and exclaiming, “*Namah Shakyamuni Buddha! Namah Shakyamuni Buddha!*” is referred to as *kankai kimyo*, meaning “all unanimously put their faith in the Buddha.” The meaning is as follows.

This description also represents a prediction. At present, some people do not know about the Buddha’s teachings. Others have heard about them but are not interested. Some are enthusiastically devoted to mistaken ideas, while others do not think at all, but live routine lives. Some do evil, violating morality and the law. Although there are many kinds of people, all will eventually take refuge in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha.

When that happens, there will be no evil people, and human folly will cease, since everyone, while retaining their individuality, will have been perfected by the Buddha’s teachings and all people will live virtuous lives. This stage is called *mirai-nin’itsu*, the “future oneness of humanity,” meaning that all people will be one in their perfection. The exclamation by all living beings, “*Namah Shakyamuni Buddha! Namah Shakyamuni Buddha!*” is pregnant with this significance.

TEXT [Then] with various flowers, incense, garlands, canopies, as well as personal ornaments, gems, and wonderful things, they all from afar strewed the *saha* world. The things so strewn from every quarter were like gathering clouds, transforming into a jeweled canopy, covering all the place above the buddhas.

COMMENTARY *Personal ornaments.* These are items to adorn the body. Because the Buddha is here attired in a simple brown robe with no ornaments whatsoever, the reference here is to various things that the great gathering has brought to offer as adornments.

This falling of “wonderful things” from all directions is called *yosan-shomotsu*, or “scattering wonderful things far away,” and it symbolizes true devotion and gratitude to the Buddha.

These things fall from the air like gathering clouds, piling up above the ground and forming a beautiful jeweled canopy, making the sky above the buddhas one color. “Making the sky above the buddhas one color” is an important point here. This phenomenon means that all people will eventually worship the Buddha.

Earlier we considered in detail the meaning of “Taking Refuge in the Three Treasures.” Because all practices that manifest this true devotion are only worship, let us now consider just what we mean by worship of the Three Treasures.

There are said to be three kinds of worship: (1) worship through offerings, (2) worship through reverence, and (3) worship through deeds.

Worship through offerings means showing true devotion and gratitude by offering goods or money. Let us examine this as it relates concretely to the Three Treasures—the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha.

For the sake of the Buddha, this refers to offerings of incense, flowers, food, and drink at the Buddhist altar.

For the sake of the Dharma, it means donations of money or material goods for work to help preserve or disseminate the teachings.

In honor of the Sangha, it means giving alms, such as food and drink, to individual priests or donating land or buildings to religious groups and providing for their upkeep.

Worship through reverence refers to the deeds that help us offer our sincerest adoration and reverence. These are direct manifestations of religious faith, which is deepened by these expressions, or these deeds. Therefore, it is difficult to say exactly whether those expressions or our religious faith are causes or effects of deepening our faith.

In other words, because during our morning and evening devotions and our reading of the scriptures before the main focus of devotion we are responding to the invisible Buddha (the Original Buddha) and vividly feel that we are

taking refuge in him, our minds are completely purified and we can attain true liberation.

Let us examine worship through reverence with regard to the Three Treasures. With regard to the Buddha, it means veneration and praise. In other words, because we worship the Eternal Original Buddha, who sustains us, we express deep gratitude to the trace Buddha, Shakyamuni the World-honored One, who taught us the right way to live. We make offerings by worshipping the main focus of devotion, reading the sutras, and making music, including the singing of songs in praise of the Buddha.

In relation to the Dharma, worship through reverence means sincere devotion to and praise for the teachings. For a believer in the Lotus Sutra it means chanting the formula “*Namu Myoho Renge-kyo*,” meaning “I take refuge in the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma.” This is because the seven Chinese characters in which the formula is written express the true feeling of worshipping, praising, and devotion to the teachings (the sutra), which is peerless, like a lotus flower.

In relation to the Sangha, worship through reverence means the acts of sincere veneration offered in ancient times to such practitioners as monks and nuns who renounced the world, whether as individuals or as religious orders. In this respect, there has been no change through the ages, except that it is necessary to add that a present-day Sangha is usually a group of lay Buddhists.

For members of groups of lay Buddhists, it means always showing gratitude and respect to one's group and its leaders, pride in being a member, and speaking highly of the group among members and nonmembers.

The last kind of worship is that through practice. Let us examine how it applies to the Three Treasures.

In relation to the Buddha, worship through practice means striving to perfect ourselves by living according to his teachings. This is the best way to express devotion and gratitude to the Buddha, because it is the true way to becoming of one mind with the Buddha and pleasing him.

In relation to the Dharma, worship through practice means not only practicing the teachings but dedication to their worldwide dissemination. This concrete practice is a supreme expression of our devotion to and gratitude for the teachings.

In relation to the Sangha, worship through practice means performing various acts to strengthen the bonds between members of the local Sangha and spurs their efforts to develop it and promote its endeavors so that worship through practice in relation to the Buddha and the Dharma will be thorough.

It is hardly necessary to reiterate that practical activity is absolutely the best way for a person to show devotion and gratitude to the religious group as well.

We have noted the three kinds of worship in honor of the Three Treasures. It should be clear that of these three, the greatest is actual practice.

We now return to the text, and as we have just noted, the supreme kind of worship of the Buddha is making all of our deeds in daily life accord with the mind of the Buddha. Though we do many kinds of deeds, they are all equal when they accord with the Buddha's mind.

This is metaphorically expressed in the following words: “The things so strewn from every quarter were like gathering clouds, transforming into a jeweled canopy, covering all the place above the buddhas.” This is the teaching of *mirai-gyoitsu*, or the “future oneness in practice,” in the sense that although deeds done now are right or wrong, all future deeds will accord with the Buddha's mind.

To make all of our deeds accord with the Buddha's mind is a very important standard in daily life. We must have a knowledge of law and morality. But in society we are

confronted with many things that are unrelated to law and morality. Moreover, law and morality differ from country to country and from age to age. If we do not have a standard for all our deeds beyond time and place, we cannot feel completely secure.

If we adopt the standard of making our deeds accord with the Buddha's mind, we can act with assurance and peace of mind in any situation and will never be tempted to do anything evil or dishonest.

Because the Buddha is ultimately the universal truth, acting according to his mind is also acting according to the universal truth. By doing so, we can avoid mistakes in whatever we do.

TEXT Thereupon the worlds of the universe were united without barrier as one buddha land.

COMMENTARY *As one buddha land.* This phrase literally means that all worlds in the universe seem to be one place, implying one spiritual realm.

In terms of just our own planet, nations such as India, Japan, and the United States are independent nations with landmasses bound by seas. But in the sense that the people receive instruction from the Buddha and live according to the truth, there are no national boundaries, but only one world wherever one looks.

Hence, the phrase “united without barrier as one buddha land” manifests something similar to what follows.

At present, the *saha* world is defined as a realm of delusion. The Pure Land of Utmost Bliss is described as peaceful and beautiful, without suffering. The hells are described as realms of great suffering. But if a time comes when all living beings live in perfect accord with the truth by following the Buddha's teachings, this universe will become one buddha land, without distinction between heaven, the *saha* world, and hells. This world, just as it is, will become the one world of the Buddha.

The preceding refers to the idea “united without barrier as one buddha land,” in terms of spiritual life. In terms of daily life, this means that all nations and peoples will live according to the one true Dharma (universal truth). Discrimination, discord, and conflict will cease, and everyone will work in harmony and enjoy life. In other words, a world of great harmony will emerge and the world will become one buddha land.

Because truth is one, all people will eventually accept it and contribute to the creation of a world of perfect harmony based on that truth. In this sense, the phrase “united without barrier as one buddha land” is regarded as the teaching of *mirai-ri'itsu*, the “future oneness in the truth.”

We have examined the various auspicious and mysterious

phenomena known as the ten great divine powers of the Tathagata, and now let us briefly sum them up.

1. Putting forth a broad and far-stretched tongue: the oneness of the two realms in faith (*nimon-shin'itsu*)
2. Every pore emanating light: the oneness of the two realms in truth (*nimon-ri'itsu*)
3. Coughing simultaneously: the oneness of the two realms in doctrine (*nimon-kyoitsu*)
4. Snapping fingers in unison: the oneness of the two realms in humanity (*nimon-nin'itsu*)
5. Lands shaken in six ways: the oneness of the two realms in practice (*nimon-gyoitsu*)
6. All living beings universally see the great assembly: future oneness in capacity to understand the Buddha's teachings (*mirai-ki'itsu*)
7. Exalted voices praising the Buddha reverberating in the sky: future oneness in doctrine (*mirai-kyoitsu*)
8. All unanimously put their faith in the Buddha: future oneness of humanity (*mirai-nin'itsu*)
9. Scattering wonderful things far away: future oneness in practice (*mirai-gyoitsu*)
10. United without barrier as one buddha land: future oneness in the truth (*mirai-ri'itsu*)

While that is a sweeping summarization of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, it also sets forth its ultimate ideal. It is not only an ideal, but the Buddha's assurance that it is an ideal we can surely attain.

Having read the Lotus Sutra carefully to this point, we will have realized that its teachings are a perfect and exhaustive preparation for leading all living beings to buddhahood, and we will feel inexpressible gratitude to the Buddha.

At the same time, even though the ideal seems a long way away for us, the expectation of it will surely put us in high spirits, give us great courage, and make us feel keenly that life is worth living, being aware of the possibility of approaching even a step or two toward that ideal spiritual state by practicing the Buddha's teachings.

Nothing is more welcome than having a single firm goal in life. Those who have two or three goals at a time will always feel anxious rather than at ease.

However, those who aim only for the most precious goal of buddhahood never stray from the correct path, because their lives are filled with that great purpose, whether they are in the workplace, at home, with friends, reading books, or taking exercise.

Inevitably, ordinary people sometimes have evil thoughts, become indolent, make mistakes, worry about little things, indulge in shallow pleasures, and constantly fall victim to various delusions.

But they will not suffer a major breakdown along the path to their goal if they are conscious of proceeding step by step toward the ideal of buddhahood, even when swayed by delusions. This is because their awareness always serves as a spiritual support and prevents major collapse.

As I have said before, while these teachings (the divine powers mentioned above) are ideal, they are also an assurance from the Buddha, and each of these aspects impresses us as an aspect of “oneness.”

This is a wonderful thing and is found in the scriptures of no other religion. Here is rendered perfectly the tolerance and comprehensiveness of the Lotus Sutra, and its ideal of great harmony, in the spirit that all religions have the same origin. In this sense, it can be said that chapter 21, “The Divine Power of the Tathagata,” is the highlight of the Lotus Sutra.

The above-mentioned ideals may seem beyond the reach of ordinary people, and some people may feel that they belong to a dream world remote from their actual lives. Yet we should not feel that they are something vague and abstract, but we should strongly believe that they can really be attained, especially the eighth, ninth, and tenth divine powers of the Tathagata described above.

If we do this, that belief will affect our daily lives, gradually improving us, and it will bring us closer to them a step at a time. We must not overlook this in our reading.

TEXT At that time the Buddha addressed Eminent Conduct and the host of other bodhisattvas: “The divine powers of buddhas are so infinite and boundless that they are beyond thought and expression. Even if I, by these divine powers, through infinite, boundless hundred thousand myriad kotis of asamkhyeya kalpas, for the sake of entrusting you with it, were to declare the merits of this sutra, I should still be unable to reach the end of those [merits].

COMMENTARY *For the sake of entrusting you with it.* This means a request for the undertaking of a difficult or troublesome task. What the Buddha says here is, “Though it may require great effort to spread this teaching abroad, I entrust you with this task.” Hearing these words, can we not help but rededicate ourselves to the mission entrusted to us by the Buddha?

The Buddha said that he would be unable to reach the end of describing all the merits of the Lotus Sutra even if he were to use his divine powers for an infinite hundred thousand myriad kotis of asamkhyeya kalpas. He speaks about the essential points of those merits as follows.

TEXT Essentially speaking, all the Dharmas belonging to the Tathagata, all the unrestricted, divine powers

of the Tathagata, all the mysterious, essential treasures of the Tathagata, and all the very profound matters of the Tathagata, all are proclaimed, displayed, revealed, and expounded in this sutra.

COMMENTARY This passage contains the most profound summary of the Lotus Sutra. Crystallized here in these few words are all the virtues, strengths, and works of the Buddha.

- *All the Dharmas belonging to the Tathagata.* Dharmas here refer to the true Dharmas, so this phrase “all the Dharmas belonging to the Tathagata” means all the Dharmas that the Tathagata explained and revealed in the Lotus Sutra.

The true Dharmas realized by the Tathagata have also been preached in other sutras, though they have not been completely stated but have been revealed as teachings of skillful means according to each person’s capacity to understand them.

The Lotus Sutra preaches the supreme Dharma that is the absolute Truth, or Thusness itself, so it includes the entirety of the true Dharma. Because it is the culmination of all teachings that Shakyamuni Buddha imparted in his lifetime, all the truths realized by the Tathagata are fully expressed in this sutra.

- *All the unrestricted, divine powers of the Tathagata.* When the supreme Dharma revealed by the Tathagata is seen as the work of giving life to all living beings, liberating us, and leading us to improve ourselves, it possesses free, unrestricted power and omits no one from liberation. The phrase “all the unrestricted, divine powers of the Tathagata” means that the Lotus Sutra includes all divine powers, such as the infinite works of the Tathagata.

Therefore, reading even a single verse or phrase of the Lotus Sutra can liberate us, since every word in the Lotus Sutra is true. If we understand perfectly the supreme Dharma contained in the whole of the Lotus Sutra and fully live by it, our minds will become one with the Buddha’s.

Hence this sutra is overflowing with the “unrestricted, divine powers of the Tathagata,” the free and unrestricted powers to liberate all living beings.

- *All the mysterious, essential treasures of the Tathagata.* The phrase “mysterious, essential” means something that is very important and very rarely manifested externally. “Treasures” refers to things stored in great quantities, such as the complete collection of the Buddhist sutras. So the phrase “all the mysterious, essential treasures of the Tathagata” means all the teachings that the Tathagata holds precious.

This shows the infinity of the Tathagata’s teachings. He penetrates the true nature, or aspect, of all things and discerns the capacity of all living beings to understand his teachings. He can therefore adapt his way of teaching to

each person. Because his mind possesses the core of this mysterious and essential teaching, the variety of teachings that spring forth from his mind are boundless.

This infinite number of teachings are all contained in the Lotus Sutra.

- *All the very profound matters of the Tathagata.* “Matters” refers to phenomena rather than noumena. In basic terms, a noumenon is the invisible, basic Dharma and refers to universality and equal application. By contrast, a phenomenon is visible and concrete, and therefore has individual characteristics and distinction.

When we understand the teachings in this way, we realize that the universal truth that applies eternally to everyone is a noumenon. The way that truth applies to each individual is a phenomenon.

Those of us who aim to follow the Buddha Way always experience that noumenon and phenomenon at the same time. At the same time that we must learn the fundamental truth (noumenon) taught by the Buddha, we must practice it in a way that is appropriate to our character and situation. Therefore, in Buddhism we can conclude that truth is a noumenon and practice is a phenomenon.

In the Lotus Sutra, the historical Shakyamuni Buddha does not preach only the universal truth (noumenon) but also shows the concrete form (phenomenon) of his actual

practice, the process through which he attained enlightenment, and his method of leading his disciples and all living beings.

Moreover, he discusses not only events that occurred after he appeared in this world but his bodhisattva practice in his former lives. His practice in former lives as well as his spiritual experiences during his period of asceticism in this world are too profound for ordinary people to imagine. This is the meaning of the phrase “the very profound matters of the Tathagata.”

We can summarize the above text as follows. Chapter 21 explains the essentials of the entire Lotus Sutra, and in this passage, which is the very essence of chapter 21, the Buddha declares:

All the Dharmas (truths) realized by the Tathagata, all the free and unrestricted workings born of these supreme Dharmas that liberate all the living, all the teachings that filled the mind of the Tathagata and have been the driving forces of their workings, and all the practices of liberating all the living that the Tathagata has actually showed in the past—all of these great matters have I expounded and revealed in the Lotus Sutra.

The infinite value of the Lotus Sutra and its absolute perfection as a teaching are reaffirmed in the words of Shakyamuni himself.

Entrusting the Lotus Sutra to the bodhisattvas, he clearly demonstrates that he is conferring all these divine powers on the bodhisattvas who had sprung up from the earth, that is, the bodhisattvas enlightened by the Original Buddha. This passage of the text has therefore been considered very important since ancient times, as the Buddha’s “bequeathing and entrusting the core and culmination of the most essential.”

The Buddha then declares in various ways the following attitude that bodhisattvas (ourselves included) must maintain after the extinction of the Tathagata.

TEXT Therefore you should, after the extinction of the Tathagata, wholeheartedly receive and keep, read, recite, explain and copy, cultivate and practice it as the teaching.

COMMENTARY This is a reiteration of his encouragement of “the five practices of teachers of the Dharma.”

To be continued

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