

# Welcoming the Other— Being Tolerant

by Nichiko Niwano

When I think about what it means to be tolerant, I recall the following words of the Buddhist thinker Shuichi Maida (1906–67): “Tolerance is itself awareness that the world is one, and only when we base our lives on this fact does the true peace of humanity become a reality.”

Rev. Maida described tolerance in religion by quoting Mahatma Gandhi’s words: “Just as the single trunk of a tree supports a great many branches and leaves, religious faith that is true and perfect can only be one.”

There are many different religions in this world, but all of them focus on the same goal: freeing ourselves from ego and taking refuge in the gods and the buddhas. It follows, therefore, that regardless of the religious teaching one believes, taking refuge in it and freeing oneself from ego means that conflicts and superficial differences become meaningless and one arrives at true perception that the world is one—and therein lies the real meaning of tolerance.

We tend to think of tolerance as the forgiving of others or accepting that they are different from us. However, broadly speaking, it is when we become aware that everyone is one that we experience the true spirit of tolerance. If we cannot understand “oneness,” it is due to our egoistical state, and from the perspective of perceiving that the world is one, we come to see how far away from the truth we are when our egos flare up and we argue with people. We then come to realize to what extent such actions make our own point of view and our own world much smaller and narrower.

## Compassion and Wisdom Lead to Tolerance

As an example close at hand for us as members, Founder Nikkyo Niwano led his life in the spirit of tolerance. Today, every nation’s government has recognized Religions for Peace, and the United Nations has given it an important status. In the beginning, however, when it was still thought of as something impossible to come about, the leaders who built it, including Founder Niwano, overcame differences of faith in order to realize the fundamental hope common to all religions. They started out by giving a concrete form to the tolerance that comes from egolessness, as is well known today. Last November we convened the ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Vienna, and our main theme was “Welcoming the Other.”

The current world situation is such that one group starts making demands on another and it becomes difficult to maintain peaceful coexistence, for example, between Japan and its neighboring countries, or the Arab nations and the Western nations; this means that the responsibility of those of us who participated in the conference, having been given the theme of welcoming the other, was large and brimful of meaning.

Tolerance is an important principle on a large scale that affects the relations among all countries, and it is also an important principle in our daily lives. However, when we reflect on ourselves, we can see that sometimes our egos take over our emotions

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and it becomes difficult for us to put tolerance into practice.

For example, someone may say something unkind to us and this makes us angry. At such a time, we feel that we should not let that person get away with it and we want to strike back. However, when we really think about it, if what the person said had not struck a chord in us, we would hardly care at all about the comment. Rather, our reaction proves that whatever the criticism was, it reflected something that does exist in us.

In other words, when we can reflect on ourselves and realize that because the other person has a similar disposition, he or she is teaching us this insight into ourselves, we can then find something in common with the person and become as one. At that time, the spirit of tolerance brings us harmony through the working of compassion.

Moreover, being aware that the world is one gives us the wisdom to lead lives full of confidence and free of fear. This is because having such recognition means that we are able to have an expansive point of view that transcends any immediate loss or gain, or feeling of victory or defeat. For each and every one of us to become egoless and to perfect our self-reflection, in other words, attain true tolerance—that is the foundation for building a bright future. □

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**1** Welcoming the Other—  
Being Tolerant

*by Nichiko Niwano*

•••••

**3** Building a Common  
East Asian Identity

*by Masahiro Nemoto*

**4** The Roles of Politics and  
Religions in Building  
an East Asian Community

*by Kim Sunggon*

**8** Trilateral Future-Oriented  
Cooperation among Japan,  
China, and South Korea

*by Ma Junwei*

**12** China, South Korea, and Japan:  
Common Features and Issues

*by Yoshiaki Sanada*

**16** A Shortcut to Establishing an East Asian Peace Community:  
Welcoming the Other through Sharing Universal Values

*by Byun Jin-heung*

**20** Healing the Wounds of the Past, Building Peace for a Brighter Future

*by Kathy R. Matsui*

**24** On the Sanctity of Life and the Right to Peace:  
Toward Collaboration among Religious Leaders

*by Toshimasa Yamamoto*

•••••

**27** The Second Vatican Council

*by Nikkyo Niwano*

**34** A Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Ordeals:  
The Role of Suffering in Nichiren's Thought (2)

*by Jacqueline I. Stone*

**40** The Prism of the Lotus Sutra (4)

*by Atsushi Kanazawa*

### THE THREEFOLD LOTUS SUTRA: A MODERN COMMENTARY

**42** The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law  
Chapter 22: The Final Commission

# Building a Common East Asian Identity

by Masahiro Nemoto

**Early in the twentieth century, Japan invaded, plundered, and colonized its neighbors. If we Japanese are to play an active role in the creation of an East Asian community, we must sincerely reflect on and atone for the acts of aggression that Japan committed.**

Both China and Japan and South Korea and Japan are presently important partners in the economic realm. At the same time, however, frictions arising from territorial disputes and perceptions of the past are stoking nationalism on each side, and political tensions in these partnerships have never been higher.

In view of the state of these countries' political and economic relationships, religious leaders, academics, and representatives of civic groups from the three countries have met every year since 2009 at symposia hosted by South Korea's International Peace Corps of Religions for intense dialogue and to deepen mutual trust and solidarity. Further down the road lies the grand objective of creating a peaceful community in East Asia modeled on the European Union. Through the activities of Religions for Peace Japan, Rissho Kosei-kai, too, has been an active participant in these symposia.

Early in the twentieth century, Japan invaded, plundered, and colonized its neighbors. If we Japanese are to play an active role in the creation of an East Asian community, we must sincerely reflect on and atone for the acts of aggression that Japan committed. Unless we do so, we cannot hope to regain the true trust of our neighbors.

In today's world, in addition to natural

threats, man-made threats such as war, civil strife, terrorism, poverty, and environmental destruction menace our lives, our livelihoods, and our human dignity. Man-made threats such as these are based on a way of thinking that pits the self against the other. Individuals and groups that follow this thinking see things in confrontational terms, clinging to their own identities and dividing the world into friends and enemies, good and bad. As long as we persist in seeing the world this way, we will never be free of a sense of victimization and fear of others.

Overcoming such dual thinking is imperative if we are to create a world in which each of us can enjoy safety and security. I believe this is precisely where religion has a role to play. While religions may differ in their forms of expression, they all preach love, tolerance, and respect for others and the blessing of others. It is from this common understanding that there will emerge true trust among religious leaders.

Not until we recognize that we are all children of God and of the Buddha—or in more practical terms, not until we learn to value and live out a shared identity as global citizens—will we find a path toward multiethnic, multireligious, and multicultural coexistence. I believe that

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building an East Asian peace community also lies along this path.

As a Japanese Buddhist organization, Rissho Kosei-kai not only pursues dialogue and cooperation with religious leaders overseas but also sets great store by developing relations with religious leaders and leading figures in other fields in Japan, including academics, intellectuals, and business leaders. We urge the business community to make the shift from the economics of competition, which generates disparities, to the economics of coexistence. We meet with politicians and others with differing views, listen to varying opinions, and are dogged in our pursuit of dialogue to prevent our own country's government from going down the path of narrow-minded, closed nationalism.

The EU aims to achieve regional integration while recognizing diversity. It is considering establishment of a joint constitution that espouses the concept of a single European identity shared by all. Religious leaders in China, South Korea, and Japan are also continuing extensive dialogue as they seek to facilitate the creation of an East Asian community based on an identity of coexistence that transcends national borders. Idealistic though this may be, continuing to journey together in a spirit of mutual trust and blessing in fact offers the most realistic path toward achieving peace. □

# The Roles of Politics and Religions in Building an East Asian Community

by Kim Sunggon

*Europe . . . established the European Union in 1993 through reconciliation and cooperation, keys to their plan for common prosperity. This compares starkly with the situation in East Asia. . . . Why has Europe succeeded in building a common bloc while East Asia has not?*

Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe visited Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo on December 26 without notifying any of Japan's allies. Both China and South Korea quickly denounced his visit as "an act that denies history and falsely shows Japan's past invasions in a positive light."

China and South Korea are not saying that a head of state should not honor his or her country's buried veterans of war. Mr. Abe defended his visit by saying that Japanese visiting the shrine is no different from Americans visiting Arlington National Cemetery. This, however, is not why both South Korea and China strongly protest his visit and criticize it as an act of rubbing salt into the region's historical wounds; the shrine is also home to the remains of several war criminals of World War II. Thus, the question here is, Why does Japan continue to provoke its neighbors by such an act? Or do South Korea and China misunderstand Japan's intentions?

Tens of millions of lives were lost in Europe during the Second World War, but Europe managed to come to terms with the situation and established the European Union in 1993 through reconciliation and cooperation, keys to their plan for common prosperity.

This compares starkly with the situation in East Asia. A number of East Asian nations—South Korea, China, and Japan in particular—have been unable to put an end to the tensions over their history. Why has Europe succeeded in building a common bloc while East Asia has not? Does the fault lie with Japan? Or others? And what are the roles that politics and religions have to play?

## Issues in East Asia

For the purposes of this article, East Asia includes only South and North Korea,

China, and Japan. The major regional issues are as follows.

### 1. The Issues between South Korea and Japan

The two countries have yet to resolve the following territorial and historical issues.

#### (a) Dokdo/Takeshima

The disputed islets are in a sea that is called by different names: it is called the East Sea in South Korea and the Sea of Japan in Japan. The islets are claimed by Japan but administered by South Korea, and different historical documents back up each claim. South Korea claims that the Dokdo islets were simply recovered from Japan, which seized them with the rest of Korean territory after the Russo-Japanese War of 1905. Japan seeks to settle the matter through the International Court of Justice, asserting that the international community has

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already confirmed Japan's ownership, in the 1951 San Francisco Peace Treaty.

The problem, however, is that should any international dispute over a territory worsen into violent conflict, no international legal system nor authority exists to impose a fair resolution. There are, of course, the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, but their hands are tied, as neither has consent from both parties. Should either South Korea or Japan take a step back to forge an agreement, and would doing so be politically feasible? This is one of the biggest obstacles toward the goal of building an East Asian community.

### **(b) The Comfort Women**

The "comfort women" (wartime sex slaves) were women forced into prostitution by the Japanese military in military brothels during the Pacific war. The South Korean side contends that despite the 1965 treaty and agreement on reparations, the Japanese government remains responsible for illegally forcing Korean women into military brothels and violating their human rights. The Japanese government recognizes only moral responsibility. It claims that any legal liability Japan may have had was absolved with the signing of the 1965 agreement. However, in 1993 Yohei Kono, Japan's chief cabinet secretary, issued a statement of apology to the victims, admitting Japan's direct and indirect involvement in wartime sex slavery, followed by apologies from prime ministers Tomiichi Murayama and Ryutaro

Hashimoto in 1995 and 1996, respectively. Some right-wing politicians go so far as to say that all countries have had military brothels and that Japan has no responsibility for the voluntary sex service of these women during the war.

The issue is also of interest to China, where some two hundred thousand women were forced into sex slavery for the Japanese army during World War II. Though China and Japan reportedly reached a behind-closed-doors agreement not to discuss the matter, it is still of importance to both countries. Some women may have indeed joined the sex service of their own volition, but that alone hardly negates the forcibleness and cruelty of Japan's wartime sex slavery attested to by many victims. The issue is itself a regional wound that must be healed.

### **(c) History Textbooks**

At the heart of the issue is Japanese-government-approved history textbooks that contain passages of right-wing nationalist views.

For example, the textbook published by the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, a conservative group, contains comments such as "Japanese colonization helped modernize Korean society"; describes the Pacific war as an effort to liberate Asia from Western powers; refers to Japanese invasions as "expansion" into Asia; and makes no comment at all on the "comfort women."

The tensions over history textbooks stem from differences between the points of view of the invader and the invaded.

Japanese nationalists think of the colonization of Korea as an event that the Koreans did not want but that was still necessary to protect it from Western powers, resulting in the modernization of Korean society. This view of history seems to have rendered many right-wing Japanese immune to guilt for Japan's colonization in the past.

Many Koreans think that their country would never have been divided in two by the United States and the Soviet Union had it not been colonized by the Japanese, and by extension, that the Korean War would not have occurred and so much national energy would not have been squandered, as it still is to this day. In addition, the Japanese imposed numerous harsh measures on Koreans during the colonial period, including a prohibition on using the Korean language; forced assumption of Japanese names; and the impressment of young Koreans into the Japanese army, munitions factories, and military brothels, where many of them died during the war. All of these facts render utterly ludicrous the Japanese claim that colonization furthered the modernization of the Korean Peninsula.

At a summit meeting in 2001, the South Korean president and the Japanese prime minister reached an agreement to start a joint historical research project. Alas, the panel of scholars from both countries failed to reach a consensus and had to end the program in 2010, producing an empty final report. In late 2013, South Korean president Park Geun-hye proposed a joint drafting of both

countries' history textbooks—a meaningful step toward resolving the tensions between the two countries over their past.

## **2. The Issues between China and Japan**

### **(a) Senkaku/Diaoyu**

The uninhabited islands known as Senkaku in Japan and Diaoyu in China are located in the northern part of the East China Sea between Okinawa and Taiwan. Based on a map printed in 1873 showing the islands as Chinese territory, the Chinese believe that they belong to China, while the Japanese contend that these deserted islands were incorporated into Japan in 1895 after the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. The dispute between the two countries has been ongoing. The 1951 Peace Treaty of San Francisco put the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands under US administration until 1971, when the string of islands was returned to Japan with the signing of the Okinawa Reversion Treaty. China protested this treaty and asserted its claim to the islands. The dispute has since inexorably escalated because of the geopolitical and military importance of the islands and the vast energy reserves below the surrounding waters.

The cases of Dokdo/Takeshima and Senkaku/Diaoyu are similar in many respects. South Korea and China claim that these islands were seized by Japan as spoils of war (Dokdo in the Russo-Japanese War and Senkaku in the Sino-Japanese War) and wrongly returned to Japan as a result of US interference during the peace treaty negotiations. Dokdo is now under South Korean control, while Senkaku is administered by Japan. The

territorial dispute over Senkaku reached new heights of tension in 2012 when the Japanese government announced that it would purchase the islands from their private Japanese owner. China recently countered by declaring an air defense identification zone that extends over the islands.

### **(b) The Comfort Women and History Textbooks**

The issues are not very different from those at the center of conflict between South Korea and Japan. In a sense, South Korea is closely working together with the United States and Japan on security matters while cooperating with China on issues of history. To build an East Asian community, South Korea, China, and Japan should turn the page in their history of condemnation and conflict and open a new chapter of mutual understanding and cooperation by resolving the issues of sex slavery and drafting a common history textbook that all parties can agree on.

## **3. The Issues between Japan and North Korea**

The territorial dispute and the conflict over the interpretation of history between South Korea and Japan are also important in Japanese–North Korean relations. Despite twelve rounds of talks to normalize diplomatic relations, the Pyongyang Declaration of 2002, and two summit meetings between Kim Jong-il and Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2002 and 2004, diplomatic channels have been practically frozen since 2006, when such issues as North Korea's nuclear program and the abduction of Japanese citizens came into play. Although Kim Jong-il himself has admitted to some of the reported abductions of Japanese citizens into North Korea, the issue remains the greatest obstacle to the normalization of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

As briefly reviewed above, the primary issue in the discord among South

and North Korea, China, and Japan concerns history. There can be no future without healing the wounds of the past. All four parties must work together to solve the problems of the last century, but it is Japan that bears the greatest responsibility, whether it agrees or not. And only when Japan recognizes and plays its role will it be able to properly assume leadership in building the East Asian community.

## **The European and East Asian Communities**

Japan's handling of its war crimes is often compared with that of Germany. Unlike Japan, Germany rendered the most sincere apologies to its neighbors and drafted its history textbooks in cooperation with them. The image of Prime Minister Willy Brandt kneeling before a war victims' grave asking forgiveness for the Nazis' war crimes during his visit to Poland in 1970 reflected a most sincere act of repentance. And Germany's genuine reconciliation with the countries it victimized has provided an opportunity for the once-war-torn country to take leadership in the founding and advancement of the European Union.

Political leaders in South Korea and China urge Japanese politicians to learn from the German example. Therefore,

we might ask: Is it Japan's shortsighted interests and unwillingness to apologize that prevent East Asian countries from putting their historical issues behind them and establishing a peace community, just as European nations did? Or as the Japanese claim, is the problem South Korea's and China's obsession with historical issues? Or is there some particular reason that East Asia is different from Europe?

On the other hand, the Christian church had vast, far-reaching impact on the establishment of the EU. The founding fathers of the European Union—Foreign Minister Robert Schuman of France, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of Germany, and Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi of Italy—were all influenced by the Focolare Movement of unity. Thus, we may ask, is the lack of religious belief based on reconciliation and love in the East Asian region at fault? Are not the regional faiths of Buddhism and the Confucian teachings of humanism and cosmopolitanism, in particular, more tolerant and peaceful than Christianity? If so, what are the obstacles to establishing an East Asian community?

## Paths to an East Asian Community

South Korea, China, and Japan often talk about a future of peace and prosperity. How could we make this future—a peace community in the region—a reality? If building a community like the EU is not possible, how could we slowly but surely build trust and advance cooperation? We may achieve this goal through politics and the spiritual values of religion. Both approaches are closely intertwined and equally important.

To make this work, first, all sides must be honest about the facts of history. In no way should national interest affect the process of exposing truth and recording history. Politicians are often captured by national interest, so they may not have objective views. This is a time that calls

for the greatest courage and conscience of men and women of faith. A draft project for a common history textbook may also be a helpful step forward.

Second, politicians and the media should not fall into the temptation of demagoguery to score quick political points whenever diplomatic tensions arise. Appealing to nationalistic sentiments can easily give way to a nationalism that fuels aggression and hostility toward other countries. In these situations, religious people need to assume leadership and voice their opinions based on the conscience of humanity and universality.

Third, we must believe in brotherly love and universal values. The political and economic situations may indeed differ from country to country, but all humans are equal. Upholding this value of universality as a measure for interpreting and judging the matters before us (territorial and historical alike) can lead us to narrowing our differences and formulating solutions.

Fourth, we must have more human contact and improve peace education. Meeting with people of different views from other countries is key to clearing up misunderstanding and gaining profound understanding of those countries. In that regard, there must be youth exchanges via various channels, and high priority must be given to international understanding and providing peace education in every school.

Fifth, a two-stage approach following the EU model of advancing economic cooperation and then building a political community seems desirable. The trade volume between the three East Asian countries is rising fast, accounting for more than 20 percent of global trade. We are making great strides toward an East Asian community: the three countries have had separate summit meetings since 2008, with ASEAN Plus Three on track; free trade agreements are being negotiated; and the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat opened in Seoul in 2011.

## Conclusion

South Korea, China, and Japan share a great deal in common in terms of their physical and cultural anthropology, more so than any other neighboring countries around the world. This geographical and cultural closeness, however, also contributes to an uncomfortable and tense relationship between the three countries. As we say in Korean, “We fight with our brothers and sisters under the same roof but get along with the ones far away.” What we see is a lack of maturity that gives way to shortsightedness and ignorance toward each other, resulting in continued misunderstanding and endless arguments. However, the time will come when the immaturity will end, and the three siblings will become one family or one regional bloc without borders. The key to this future is mutual understanding between the peoples of South Korea, China, and Japan, in which politicians and religious leaders have a crucial role to play. ≥

# Trilateral Future-Oriented Cooperation among Japan, China, and South Korea

by Ma Junwei

*There is massive scope for cooperation among [Japan, China, and South Korea] in several areas, including East Asian security, economic cooperation within the framework of free trade agreements (FTAs) and economic partnership agreements (EPAs), and action on environmental issues and infectious diseases.*

Japan, China, and South Korea all saw new leaders take office between the end of 2012 and the early part of 2013, providing grounds for optimism that progress can be made on trilateral future-oriented cooperation among the three countries. Nevertheless, territorial disputes involving Japan, China, and South Korea and difficulties over their different perceptions of history are indubitably causing Sino-Japanese and South Korean–Japanese relations to deteriorate. With top-level talks yet to be held between leaders of the three countries, it is unclear how these issues could even start to be resolved.

Japan, China, and South Korea have assumed clearly greater economic roles as economic activities have grown more globalized, and they are now so important that their every move can affect Asia and the rest of the world. There is massive scope for cooperation among the three countries in several areas, including East Asian security, economic cooperation within the framework of free trade agreements (FTAs) and economic partnership agreements (EPAs), and action on environmental issues and infectious diseases. Working together to tackle regional and global challenges such as these should be considered very much a duty of the three countries' governments.

However, Sino-Japanese and South Korean–Japanese relations are not susceptible to easy improvement. Intense nationalistic tendencies aggravate national sentiment between China and Japan and between South Korea and Japan and have also engendered intergovernmental distrust.

Resolving territorial and historical disputes has become unprecedentedly difficult, and a way of reconciling the differences must be quickly found. Recognizing their common strategic interest in promoting peace and shared prosperity, Japan, China, and South Korea must throw the door to trilateral dialogue wide open in a spirit of seeking common ground on major issues while leaving aside minor differences in order to deepen economic cooperation among the three. This, I believe, will herald a new phase of improvements in relations.

With this in mind, I would like to put forward the following proposals for improving Sino-Japanese and South Korean–Japanese relations and furthering economic growth and the development of security arrangements in East Asia built on partnership among the three.

## 1. Eliminate the Malign Influence of Sensitive Issues by Strengthening Mutual Trust

### (a) Learn the lessons of past poor judgments and responses that have inflamed sensitive issues (the Sino-Japanese case)

- In 1996, China conducted military exercises in the Taiwan Strait. These were intended to intimidate Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui and discourage him from his pro-independence stance. However, Japan misinterpreted

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them as an attempted attack on Taiwan and responded by passing the Emergency-at-Periphery Act.

- In 2001, Japan's prime minister Junichiro Koizumi was misinformed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs before an intended visit to Yasukuni Shrine that China would not oppose such a visit provided that he avoided doing so on August 15, the anniversary of the end of World War II. Mr. Koizumi visited the shrine on August 13 instead but still encountered opposition from China. The issue became inflamed, and his visits to the shrine for five consecutive years plunged Sino-Japanese relations to a new low.
- In 2010, a Chinese fishing boat and two Japanese Coast Guard vessels collided near what China calls the Diaoyu Islands and Japan calls the Senkaku Islands. Ignoring China's repeated attempts at negotiations and warnings, Japan detained the captain of the Chinese vessel for a lengthy period, and tensions between the two sides continued to increase. (A similar incident occurred during the Koizumi administration, but Japan's swift release of the Chinese crew prevented it from affecting bilateral relations.)
- In 2012, the Democratic Party of Japan administration, led by Yoshihiko Noda, "nationalized" the Diaoyu Islands, having unilaterally decided that doing so would have less impact on Sino-Japanese relations than allowing them to be purchased [from a private landowner] by someone such as Tokyo governor Shintaro Ishihara. Instead, however, the move escalated hostility between the two countries to its current serious level.

**(b) Develop mechanisms for handling sensitive issues properly in a spirit of trust and friendship**

- Japan's steadily worsening relations with China and South Korea have made it all the more important to

pursue high-level bilateral and trilateral exchanges. Such negotiations can not only help eliminate strategic misunderstandings and suspicions but also contribute positively to improving national sentiment on all sides. Mechanisms for holding regular top-level talks must be urgently developed in order to strengthen two-way communication and heighten trust.

- The agencies responsible for diplomatic relations between China and Japan and between South Korea and Japan should endeavor to play constructive roles in paving the way for top-level meetings and developing crisis-control systems based on principles of peace and friendship in order to prevent the conflagration of sensitive issues. This can be achieved by, among other things, pursuing forward-looking negotiations on sensitive issues from the wider viewpoint of maintaining bilateral relations with neighboring countries.
- Regarding the historical issue, Japan should adhere to the commitments expressed by Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama on August 15, 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, and the statement by Chief Cabinet Secretary Yohei Kono on the "comfort women" issue in August 1993. The Japanese prime minister and cabinet ministers should also stop visiting Yasukuni Shrine in order to avoid stirring up national sentiment in China and South Korea. Ideally, a solemn commitment should be made in the form of a Diet resolution.
- Territorial disputes should be tackled in line with the principles of tacit compliance, maintenance of the status quo, and peaceful settlement, and such strategies as unilaterally abrogating commitments and pursuing changes to the status quo must not be employed. Recognizing the existence of territorial disputes represents, in effect, a shortcut to resolution of the Diaoyu Islands dispute.

Northeast Asian waters and, by extension, Japan's involvement in isle recapturing drills, are regarded as having been focused on China as the hypothetical enemy.

## **2. Accept the Other Countries' Development in a Spirit of Peace and Friendship**

### **(a) Avoid claims and actions that damage the images of the other countries (the Sino-Japanese case)**

- Japan has been gripped by a sense that China's spectacular economic growth has disturbed the equilibrium that has to date existed between the two countries, and it is unable to accept this fact squarely. In the realms of politics and security as well, Japan is concerned that China's development may harm its own interests.
- Vociferous claims that there exists a "Chinese threat," value-oriented diplomacy, the "arc of freedom and prosperity," and so forth also act as constraints on China's development process.
- Actions by Japan such as its overseas military deployments, relaxation of its three principles on arms exports, advocating exercise of the right to collective defense, and elevation of the Self-Defense Forces into a national defense force appear from China's point of view to represent a return to militarism.
- The strengthening of the US-Japan alliance; Japan's active participation in the United States' "pivot" toward Asia; repeated conduct of US-Japan joint military exercises in

### **(b) The three countries should link their development**

- China's rapid economic growth has generated huge economic benefits for Japan as well as the rest of the world. Economically speaking, neither Japan nor China could survive without the other, and they are already becoming intertwined in a win-win relationship in which they share a common destiny.
- "Cold political relations but warm economic relations" is not easily maintained. Good political relations are an important key to deepening economic cooperation. Maintaining good collaborative and complementary relations in the political and economic spheres is a challenge faced by Japan, China, and South Korea alike.
- The three countries should strengthen dialogue and exchange in the defense sphere, eliminate strategic misunderstandings and suspicions, and work together to promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia.
- The three countries should cooperate in fields such as energy, the environment, and finance and develop cooperative mechanisms to reduce uncertainties in the political and security spheres.

## **3. Japan, China, and South Korea Should Work Together toward East Asian Economic Integration**

### **(a) East Asia is already taking root in the global economy**

- In economic weight and value of trade, Japan, China, and South Korea together already compose a crucial component of the world economy, and they are important trade partners.
- At the level of economic cooperation, the three countries lag considerably behind Europe and North America. Lacking an economic community along the lines of the European Union or the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), their economies remain closed and unintegrated.
- Although all three countries are pursuing bilateral negotiations on entering FTAs and EPAs, these arrangements are being negotiated independently of one another. The benefits of complementarity in industry and mutual-support capabilities in trade are consequently extremely constrained.
- The impetus for economic integration in Asia is weak, and risk-avoidance capability is somewhat poor. Consequently,

Asian economies as a whole are highly vulnerable to the effects of contractions in Western markets caused by international financial crises.

### **(b) The main direction of East Asian economic integration centers on Japan, China, and South Korea**

- Japan, China, and South Korea should place emphasis on cultivating awareness as Asian nations, clarifying the positions of Asian nations, and striving to arrive at a common conception of how to go about developing regional FTAs.
- Vigorously promoting the development of regional economic institutional arrangements, such as an FTA among Japan, China, and South Korea, is in the three countries' long-term economic interests and also enhances mutual political trust.
- The three countries should coordinate their respective industrial structures, demolish trade barriers, and accelerate moves toward creating an FTA framework for Japan, China, and South Korea.
- Japan, China, and South Korea should make arrangements to promote regional economic cooperation without attaching excessive importance to the United States' pivot to Asia, and they should work to avoid or mitigate shocks caused by the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

## **4. Japan, China, and South Korea Should Be the Standard-Bearers of Development of a Northeast Asian Security Cooperation Framework**

### **(a) Various destabilizing factors lurk in Northeast Asia**

- Continued missile launches and nuclear tests by North Korea as it persists down the road to becoming a nuclear power present a challenge to the international community, and there is a growing possibility of a localized war breaking out on the Korean Peninsula.
- Japan has territorial disputes with three countries—China, South Korea, and Russia—and visits in close succession to some of the disputed islands by the South Korean and Russian presidents in 2012 cast a pall over improvements in mutual trust and national sentiment between Japan and these countries.
- Friction between China and Japan over the Diaoyu Islands is intensifying. With Japan not recognizing the existence of a territorial dispute and China sending patrol boats to the area, the situation is like a tinderbox.
- The escalating island dispute and the “comfort women” issue between South Korea and Japan are inflaming nationalistic

sentiment on both sides, making it impossible to view the prospects for bilateral relations with complacency.

### **(b) The critical need to develop a multilateral security cooperation framework in Northeast Asia**

- The application of pressure on North Korea through United Nations resolutions, recommencement of six-party talks on the North Korean nuclear issue, and signing of a Korean Peninsula peace agreement to replace the cease-fire agreement will eliminate anxiety over North Korea on the security front.
- The emphasis will be on the US presence in Northeast Asia, and it is hoped that the United States will play a constructive role in areas such as peacekeeping on the Korean Peninsula and the easing of territorial disputes between Northeast Asian nations.
- Japan, China, and South Korea should endeavor to establish mutual relations of trust and mutually ease strategic suspicions by, among other things, taking the initiative in engaging in regular high-level dialogue in the political and security spheres and setting up hotlines for communication among their respective heads of government.
- The three countries should aim to build a Northeast Asian community of peace and contribute together to the development of a multilateral Northeast Asian security cooperation framework based on a consensual recognition that regional economic cooperation is in everyone's interests. □

**Editor's note:** This article is based on the presentation by the author on July 6, 2013, at an international seminar titled “Challenges and Practices for Building a Peace Community in Northeast Asia” held in Yokohama by the International Peace Corps of Religions, of South Korea.

In this article, and in other feature articles, the terms *East Asia* and *Northeast Asia* refer to the region that includes China, the Korean Peninsula, and Japan. Authors of other essays in this magazine might apply these terms differently.

# China, South Korea, and Japan: Common Features and Issues

by Yoshiaki Sanada

*The relationship of Japan with both China and South Korea within the context of the post-nineteenth-century history of East Asia has been one of colonial rule and war, and this has given rise to deep-rooted and complicated national sentiments that are characterized by hostility and distrust.*

Today, fires of territorial nationalism have broken out between China and Japan and South Korea and Japan over issues that are deeply rooted in different perceptions of history, creating a dangerous situation where the seas of East Asia are on the verge of becoming a site of war, not peace. It was in the midst of this tension that an international seminar was held in Yokohama on July 5–6, 2013, under the auspices of the International Peace Corps of Religions (IPCR), attended by religious leaders, scholars, and representatives

of citizens' groups from South Korea, China, and Japan.

An IPCR seminar has been held each year since 2009 on the common general theme of building a peace community in East Asia. Its purpose is to tackle actual issues, seeking ways to open the future by healing the wounds of history inflicted as a result of past conflicts among the countries of East Asia and by looking at the possibility of forming a community like the European Union (EU) in the region.

## Building an East Asian Peace Community: The Concept of Asia

“Asia” is a created concept. The name has its origins in *asu*, an Assyrian word meaning “the east,” which in the ancient world denoted what we now call Asia Minor. As time passed and the various countries of modern Europe expanded their power, *Asia* came to refer to the non-European, eastern regions of the Eurasian continent. Thus, in a historical sense, Asia is an artificial construct produced by Europe, and it cannot be characterized as a cultural community in the European sense, where different regions can be identified with one another.

This is clear when we compare it to the makeup of the European Union. First, Europe shares a common and deeply rooted historical and cultural tradition of Greco-Christian civilization. East Asia as a whole, by contrast, does not have such a common historical and cultural tradition, since it contains different religions and cultures based on Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism, as well as monotheistic religions such as Christianity introduced to the region from the West in the modern period. It is apparent that the people of East Asia do not possess a unified and shared spiritual culture.

Second, Europe has a common political system marked by ideas of individualism, freedom, and equality, and this system has become an effective driving force in the formation of the EU. In East

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Asia, though, the nation-state was late in taking shape and no mature civil society emerged. Rather, the socialist and capitalist systems coexisted, their conflicting ideologies impeding fundamental mutual reliance, either politically or economically. This makes for difficulties in achieving a common, unified political system.

Third, Europe looked on the non-European world of Asia and Africa as backward or stagnant, bound by the shackles of tradition and subject to imperialist colonial domination. The countries of Europe to some extent or other held a common strategy toward Asia—to acquire, divide, and expand their colonies. Though the countries of Asia shared an experience of this European policy, they differed in the way they understood it and in their political and military responses.

Japan, fearful of European colonization, embarked in 1868 on its own policy to abandon the vestiges of feudalism and build a European-style modern state. This was to lead, over the next decades, to the Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), the Russo-Japanese War (1904–05), the forcible annexation of Korea in 1910 and subsequent imperialist colonial rule there, the attack on China and the Second Sino-Japanese War, and Japan's ultimate defeat in 1945.

The end of the Second World War led to the division of China into the mainland and Taiwan and the division of Korea into the North and the South. This type of division happened nowhere else in the world on such a

scale. These divisions had been created by Japan, which had invaded and colonized both countries. In this sense, the relationship of Japan with both China and South Korea within the context of the post-nineteenth-century history of East Asia has been one of colonial rule and war, and this has given rise to deep-rooted and complicated national sentiments that are characterized by hostility and distrust.

## **Prospects for an East Asian Cultural Community**

Compared with the EU, the cultural, political, and international social infrastructure for an East Asian regional community is very weak, and ideas to build such a community may inevitably provoke only a negative reaction. However, I think it is possible to say that there already exists an institutional and systematic framework to achieve it.

Although Asia as a whole has a large number of developing countries, the economic scale of the East Asian region rivals that of western Europe and the United States. In terms of gross domestic product, in 2012 China ranked second, Japan third, and South Korea fifteenth (first, second, and fourth in Asia, respectively), while in 2003 the degree of dependence on mutual foreign trade in the region (Japan, China, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations [ASEAN] countries) reached that of the EU at the beginning of the 1980s (more than 50

percent) and exceeded that of the countries of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), about 45 percent.

Personal exchanges through tourism have fluctuated owing to the massive earthquake and tsunami that struck northeastern Japan in March 2011, the Fukushima nuclear disaster, and the territorial disputes, but all the same, the number of tourists between Japan and South Korea has risen to four million a year, and those between Japan and China have exceeded that number. Tourism between China and South Korea is on

the rise, with already more than four million visitors a year between them.

Culturally, too, pop songs, anime, fashion, and television dramas—the culture of the young and of women—have crossed borders and are particularly popular in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, the maritime provinces of China, and Beijing.

Politically, there is virtually no one international organization in Asia that includes most of the countries in the region, unlike the EU and the African Union. However, numerous organizations do exist, within which high-level exchanges and policy consultations are held—both between ASEAN and the countries of East Asia and among those countries themselves. Efforts are being made to strengthen these mechanisms and to enhance mutual reliance.

Increases in mutual economic dependence among the countries of East Asia should also mean a growth in effective cooperation among them. Sino-Japanese and South Korean-Japanese relations, however, are troubled by questions of territory and history that are the after-effects of Japan's colonial domination and wars in the region. These questions have been left unresolved, like unexploded land mines, and like them, are in constant danger of blowing up when least expected.

Even if we cannot completely dispose of these land mines immediately, in order to guard against explosions, Japan, as the perpetrator of colonial rule and war, must reflect on its pre-war hegemonism; militarism; and narrow-minded, closed nationalism and express to the peoples of East Asia its repentance for the sins it committed against them, vowing that such things will never happen again.

France and Germany fought terrible and bloody wars three times in a century, yet from this tragic experience

they faced questions concerning their mutual benefit directly and in doing so paved the way for what has become the European Union. This historical experience has much to teach us when we are contemplating building an East Asian peace community.

## **The Role of People of Religion in Building a Peace Community in the Region**

As I mentioned above, unlike the Greco-Christian civilization of Europe, East Asia has no universal historical and cultural tradition uniting it. This is a major factor in the weakness of the identity of East Asia as a regional community. All the same, we hope that this weakness is not seen as a negative legacy but rather as a valuable opportunity to search for a regional identity, so converting weakness to strength. What is needed is the creation of a common universal ethic compatible with the rich spirituality that is deeply rooted in the traditional cultures of the various countries and regions of East Asia and that can be shared broadly among them, thus achieving identity from within

rich diversity. This is the role and mission of people of religion; in order to fulfill it, they must be deeply aware of the following three points.

First, the ultimate and absolute truth of all religions can be none other than respect for the life of all that is living. This means that they seek the happiness of all and the peace of the world. All expressions of doctrine, acts of faith, and religious sentiment are simply forms of human response to this truth. It is only natural that the form the response takes is varied according to different historical, natural, social, and cultural circumstances.

This being so, we cannot allow ourselves to make instant judgments about religions because they look different in terms of the forms they take, look down on them or reject them for emotional reasons, or assert self-righteously that our own religion is the only true one. In realizing the ultimate, universal truth of their own faith, people of religion must open their hearts to one another and deepen their mutual understanding in positive ways, strengthening their mutual intellectual and spiritual ties with tolerant minds and pursuing the path of interreligious dialogue and cooperation as they further their mission.

Second, we should be aware of the draft proposal for a Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities that was drawn up by the InterAction Council for adoption by the United Nations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1998. The InterAction Council is made up of a group of statesmen who have held the highest office in their countries, including former presidents and prime ministers.

Behind the declaration is the conviction that the globalization of the world's problems that we see today can only be overcome by a global solution strategy. Such a strategy should be based on attitudes, values, and standards that

conform to those of the various regions, societies, and cultures of the world. In other words, it should be founded on a common and universal global ethic that is able to respond to problems arising from globalization and in which there is a balance between rights and duties and freedom and responsibilities. This will pave the way toward solving global problems. The declaration, which embodies this strategy, is made up of nineteen articles in five sections: Fundamental Principles for Humanity, Nonviolence and Respect for Life, Justice and Solidarity, Truthfulness and Tolerance, and Mutual Respect and Partnership. Its basic principles may be summarized as follows:

- If we have a right to life, then we have the obligation to respect life.
- If we have a right to liberty, then we have the obligation to respect other people's liberty.
- If we have a right to security, then we have the obligation to create the conditions for every human being to enjoy human security.
- If we have a right to partake in our country's political process and elect our leaders, then we have the obligation to participate and ensure that the best leaders are chosen.
- If we have a right to freedom of

thought, conscience, and religion, we also have the obligation to respect each other's thoughts or religious principles.

- If we have a right to benefit from the earth's bounty, then we have the obligation to respect, care for, and restore the earth and its natural resources.

Third, religion has always tended to be personal, dealing with the individual's internal spiritual salvation. It has been far less concerned about how to respond to social and global problems, that is, as social ethics. Today, though, a person of religion has to be not only responsible for his or her own individual ethic but also socially responsible, in terms of a social ethic that encompasses issues such as human rights, peace, science and technology, the manipulation of life, and the preservation of the environment. People of religion should no longer content themselves with interreligious dialogue and cooperation alone but take part in dialogue and cooperation with people from every walk of society in all fields of endeavor. True peace can only be realized in concert with all the various actors in society: civil societies; international bodies such as the United Nations; central and local governments; and the economic, social, and cultural sectors. □

# A Shortcut to Establishing an East Asian Peace Community: Welcoming the Other through Sharing Universal Values

by Byun Jin-heung

***Religion must take the lead in laying the foundation for an East Asian peace community. . . . It is religion that can make a paradigm shift from East Asian countries' contention for regional supremacy to their defining national interest as cooperative competition, peaceful coexistence, and coprosperity.***

Not only Japanese but also Koreans and Chinese expressed great concern when Japan's Diet (parliament) passed the National Referendum Law on April 13, 2007, for it would result in the eventual revision of Article 9 of Japan's pacifist constitution, thus potentially resurrecting Japanese militaristic nationalism and threatening peace in East Asia. Five years later, such concern began to be voiced again as Shinzo Abe was resworn in as prime minister. Worse than five years ago, even without a revision of Article 9, is Prime Minister Abe's determination to open a path to rearming Japan by exercising its right to collective self-defense, heightening political and military tensions in East Asia.

In my article published in *Dharma World* in 2008, I emphasized that Article 9 is the stronghold of peace in Asia, since Japan's attempt to transform itself into "a normal country with normal armed forces," which can intervene politically and militarily in an international crisis, would be considered a resurrection of Japan's militaristic nationalism, enabling it to dominate neighboring countries by regaining "freedom of rearmament" ("Article 9 of Japan's Constitution: The Foundation of Peace in Asia," *Dharma*

*World* 35 [Jan.–March 2008]). In this context, I cannot but think that the extreme right-wing nationalist policies that Abe has so intensively and offensively put into practice since he regained power in 2012 run counter to building an East Asian peace community.

Of course, Japan is not solely responsible for establishing an East Asian peace community; all East Asian countries are. More specifically, South Korea, China, and Japan are mutually responsible. The resurrection of Japanese militaristic nationalism is not the only obstacle to peace in East Asia. More complicated issues are involved, such as the conflict between the United States' pivot to Asia policy and China's new relations among superpowers; territorial disputes; the possibility of ensuing military conflicts among North and South Korea, China, and Japan; and the division of the Korean Peninsula.

What would be the solutions to these problems? President Park Geun-hye of South Korea has emphasized the need to settle the "Asia paradox" and proposed that South Korea, China, and Japan work together to write a common history textbook. Such a proposal is, however, all the more unrealistic because

the relationship between South Korea and Japan is now, at best, extremely chilly. Politicians cannot move beyond the frame of national interest, so it is up to people of faith to build an East Asian peace community, for religion seeks to realize universal values more than anything else.

## Efforts through International Seminars on Peace in Northeast Asia

Since 2009, members of interfaith-dialogue organizations in South Korea, China, and Japan have held international seminars under the theme "Peace in Northeast Asia." In 2010, participants in the seminar proposed, as a common goal, building a Northeast Asian peace community. In a keynote address, Dr. Kim Sunggon, secretary-general of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, asked how the three Northeast Asian countries can heal the wounds from past conflicts and found a peaceful community of coprosperity and cooperation. In the following sessions, participants started to discuss intensively the role of religion in building a Northeast Asian peace community.

In the 2011 seminar, under the theme "How to Build a Northeast Asian Peace Community and the Role of Religions," Dr. Yoshiaki Sanada, a professor emeritus of Chuo University, Tokyo, said in a keynote address that "it is difficult to bring peace only through intergovernmental dialogue and arbitration of

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conflicts.” He stressed that “in East Asia, where no one common religion exists, interfaith dialogue and cooperation are needed, and consequently the biggest challenge will be the creation of universal common ethics that represent the nature of peace in Asia.”

Agreeing with Dr. Sanada, participants in the seminar decided to make efforts to set the initial common ethical grounds for building a Northeast Asian peace community. In the same vein, the 2012 seminar was titled “How to Respond to Ethical Challenges and Suggest Best Practices for Establishing a Peace Community in Northeast Asia” and concentrated on discussing at each session the practical means needed in laying the ethical foundation for a Northeast Asian peace community. At a session that dealt with politics, Tadashi Inuzuka, a former member of Japan’s House of Councilors, proposed that people of faith in Northeast Asia found a humanitarian relief task force to cope with disasters. It would be a kind of network of shared security, an extension of human security. The proposal drew positive responses from the participants, although it may not have been the right time to implement it. Implementation remains a long-term task for religious leaders in South Korea, China, and Japan.

Dr. Sohn Byeong-hae, a professor at Kyungpook National University, in South Korea, discussed ethical challenges for building an economic community. He said that the three countries must create a new order of an ethical market economy based on ethical

economic perspectives derived from their shared Confucian values. In so doing, he stressed, the three countries must open a path to forming a peaceful community that respects the order of coexistence in Northeast Asia. Dao Shuren, vice president of the China Committee on Religion and Peace, suggested that people of faith from the three countries work together for peace, development, and cooperation, and make great efforts to push for a peaceful development project that aims to continue the history of friendship in Northeast Asia in the spirit of “seeking common ground while agreeing to disagree.”

The 2013 seminar was held in Risho Kosei-kai’s Yokohama Fumon Hall in Yokohama amid high political and military tensions between South Korea and Japan, and between China and Japan. Speaking of the tense situation, Rev. Kim Young Joo, secretary-general of

the National Council of Churches in Korea, emphasized that the more tensions rise between these countries, the louder people of faith should speak out for peace and justice, especially encouraging younger generations to share with people around the world the values in their hearts: peace, justice, and life. He demanded that China, as a superpower, serve the world at large; that Japan come clean about past wrongdoings; and that North and South Korea overcome the obstacle of division and show the world that love for humanity comes before ideology.

Professor Ma Junwei, deputy director of the Institute of Japanese Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations, pointed out that as intergovernmental mistrust deepens between China and Japan, and between South Korea and Japan, public opinion, public enmity, and negative sentiment

take a turn for the worse, which further complicates resolving territorial conflicts and historical problems. Stressing the urgent need for reconciliation, he proposed that the three countries “seek common ground on major issues while leaving aside minor differences” on the strategic level of peace and coprosperity, open wide a door to dialogue, and intensify economic cooperation.

## **The Foundation of an East Asian Peace Community: Global Universal Ethics and Values**

Emphasizing that “global universal values are not given to us; they are created by us,” the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein said:

The human enterprise of creating such values is the great moral enterprise of humanity. But it will have a hope of achievement only when we are able to move beyond the ideological perspective of the strong to a truly common (and thus more clearly global) appreciation of the good. Such a global appreciation requires a different concrete base, though, a structure that is far more egalitarian than any we have demonstrated up to now. (*European Universalism: the Rhetoric of Power* [New Press, 2006], 28)

I interpret that to mean that although political approaches by states cannot go beyond “the ideological perspective of the strong” that cares only about “national interest,” religion leads us to the path to peace through “a truly common appreciation of the good.”

Reflecting on what Wallerstein said, we must not consider that universal values for establishing an East Asian peace community are given to us; we must create them more actively. Indeed, that is

what the interfaith dialogue organizations in South Korea, China, and Japan have been attempting to achieve for the last five years.

With regard to the common work by the conferences of the three countries, Dr. Sanada stressed that “it is a new challenge to history. This challenge absolutely commands us to thoughtfully consider others’ memory of history, to share a common soul with which we ache and sympathize with others, to coexist and keep solidarity with our neighbors for a better future, and to put into practice concrete cooperation.”

According to him, what is urgently needed to found a Northeast Asian peace community is creation of universal ethics that can harmonize with the spirituality deeply rooted in traditional cultures in each country, which is a significant mission for people of faith. For the peace of East Asia, he emphasized “shared security,” a keyword of the Kyoto Declaration of the eighth World Assembly of Religions for Peace in 2006. As the ethical standard of shared security, he noted the expression “a being that lives and is lived through relationships with others.” It means to say that one’s safety is not possible without the safety of others, or a true safety does not come when we try to secure our own safety by sacrificing others. Indeed, Dr. Sanada stressed that the ethical standard of shared security is a universal value common to every religion and a guideline that needs to be understood and followed in regional politics in East Asia. He believes that it is possible to

build a Northeast Asian peace community only when each country accepts the universal value of shared security: realizing that the security of each country is interdependent and that each country must not secure its safety by sacrificing that of others. I know that it is very difficult for each country to follow these universal values, but it is the only possible way to found a Northeast Asian peace community. I would like to plead with the civil sectors, including religious organizations, to continue to march toward realizing this value.

## **“Welcoming the Other”: The Vienna Declaration of the Ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace**

In the book *A Common Framework for the Ethics of the 21st Century*, Yersu Kim, director of the division of philosophy and ethics at UNESCO, stresses that “we are witnessing a number of vigorous attempts to arrive at new syntheses of ideas and values that would be acceptable across cultures and societies and relevant to the tasks of human survival and flourishing” ([UNESCO, 1999], 10).

In 1993 the Parliament of the World’s Religions declared a fourfold promise: (1) a culture of nonviolence and respect for life, (2) a culture of solidarity and a just economic order, (3) a culture of tolerance and truthful life, and (4) gender equality and equal partnership between the sexes. All of

these are sure to realize universal values for world peace.

The ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace, held in Vienna in November 2013, focused on the roles that religions and people of faith can play in realizing universal values for world peace. Participants in the assembly expressed their determination to fully prepare themselves together for any threat to peace. Their strong will and the core value of the final statement at the closing session were well reflected in the theme “Welcoming the Other.” Common efforts to cope with any threat to peace must start with none other than welcoming the other. At the assembly’s closing session, His All Holiness Bartholomew I, archbishop of Constantinople, New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch, said, “When we embrace and welcome ‘the other’ with genuine concern and love—as if ‘the other’ is our very own neighbor and our very self—then we have the foundation for creating lasting peace in the world.” If South Korea, China, and Japan can embrace each other as neighbors and as their very selves, an East Asian peace community will surely be founded.

Indeed, there was, at the closing session, a historic moment that represented the ethos of the assembly. Announcing that North Korean delegates were taking part in a World Assembly of Religions for Peace for the first time, Dr. William F. Vendley, secretary-general of Religions for Peace, invited both South and North Korean delegates to the podium. Hand in hand, they stood onstage and bowed to an audience cheering them with thunderous applause. Dr. Jang Jae On of North Korea, president of the Korean Council of Religionists, emphasized that “although Korea is divided between north and south, in our religious communities we are not divided. We are performing reunification.” His Eminence Archbishop Hyginus Kim Hee-joong of South Korea, president of the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace, declared that “we

will do our best to continue our work to bring peace to all of Korea. Peace in Korea will surely bring peace to the world.”

## Practical Tasks and Future Visions

Today’s conflicts in East Asia have resulted from high political and security tensions among neighboring countries. Regarding regional conflicts as “the curse of success” that accompany the rapid development of East Asia, former South Korean prime minister Lee Hong-gu explains that “East Asian countries have neglected to care about the next stage. They must work together to advance, because they have concentrated too much on fast economic growth and building up their own national strength.” He proposes that “with independent visions, the three countries set up a new order that warrants a peaceful relationship with each other,” pointing out that the countries are in conflict because they were not prepared to embrace the changes of the time.

Evans J. R. Revere, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, points out that for East Asians to avoid conflicts, they need to find ways to come to terms with the tragedies of the past. He further emphasizes that South Korea, China, and Japan must understand the seriousness of the past legacy and share the responsibilities to resolve it. Recalling that despite the invasions, wars, and territorial conflicts of the past, East Asian countries have achieved unprecedented prosperity and peace since the late twentieth century, he warns that East Asians must face “a danger that an old hatred in a new cloth decides relations in the region.”

Haruki Wada, a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo, declares that “Japan caused the crisis in East Asia, and its root cause is Prime Minister Abe’s perception of history.” According to him, by not fulfilling its responsibility

as a part of the region or bearing full responsibility for its past, Abe’s Japan is becoming a primary cause of another crisis. Professor Wada’s remarks seem to suggest that if Japan had come clean about its past wrongdoings and done its best to forge a future-oriented view of history and foster a spirit of community for the future of Asia, East Asia would have avoided excessive political and security concerns and conflicts.

Dr. Lee Jong Seok, copresident of the Korea Peace Forum, considers it a significant historical legacy that the termination of the Cold War enabled South Korea, China, and Japan to discuss peaceful coexistence and coprosperity, for it was unimaginable for the three countries to cooperate during the Cold War. Synthesizing the opinions of Lee Hong-gu and Dr. Lee Jong Seok, I believe we have to seek a new vision for an East Asian peace community as the next stage in history after the Cold War. According to Dr. Lee, a new power that leads a new East Asia comes from the cooperation and solidarity of civilians in the three countries. Through solidarity, cultural exchanges, and enlarging the sense of community, the three countries may obtain a dynamic energy that can neutralize political conflicts and security issues. Where, then, can we find such a dynamic energy? It is our realistic task to discover it in religion.

Religion must take the lead in laying the foundation for an East Asian peace community. It must wield its power to encourage East Asian civilians to keep up solidarity, give full support for cultural exchanges, and enlarge their sense of community. It is religion that can make a paradigm shift from East Asian countries’ contention for regional supremacy to their defining national interest as cooperative competition, peaceful coexistence, and coprosperity. For, as history witnesses, religion is the source of “truth” that principally constructs a paradigm. It is the source of universal ethics and values. □

# Healing the Wounds of the Past, Building Peace for a Brighter Future

by Kathy R. Matsui

***Peace education is crucial in establishing a peaceful community in East Asia, and . . . peace building cannot be achieved exclusively by governments and international organizations.***

Almost seventy years have passed since the end of World War II, yet to this day there are people in East Asia who suffer from the wounds of the past. Japan, known as a perpetrator, left deep scars in China and Korea before and during World War II, but at the same time, Japanese citizens were victims of the nuclear bomb. After the war, East Asia changed tremendously, both politically and economically. As the region changed over the years, violence was used in various forms, and each violent upheaval left the footprints of wounds in the minds and bodies of the people.

The activities of religious and civil society organizations have an important role in establishing positive relationships among the countries in East Asia where governments have not been able to accomplish peace. Federico Mayor, a former director-general of UNESCO, underscored the importance of peace education in this era:

Peace, as we now understand, is no longer the exclusive business of governments and international organizations. It is more than the absence of war and violence. It is our values and attitudes in our communities, our families, our schools. Peace must be cultivated and learned and, above

all, put into practice. To make peace, we must act to transform the conflicts of everyday life into co-operation to make the world better for all. (“Message from the Director-General of UNESCO on the Occasion of the International Year for the Culture of Peace”; accessed September 26, 2006, <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/projects/2000DG.html>)

The civil society organization is “the political side of society, creating the social organization to engage citizens with public life that is necessary for democracy. This idea refers to non-state and non-profit making sections of society, which includes, but is not limited to those groups explicitly concerned about public matters” (Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict, “The Role of Civil Society in the Prevention of Armed Conflict: An Integrated Programme of Research, Discussion, and Network Building” accessed January 10, 2007, [http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/GPPAC\\_brochure\\_9Feb05.pdf](http://www.gppac.org/documents/GPPAC/GPPAC_brochure_9Feb05.pdf)).

Peace in East Asia may depend upon developing relationships among nations based on mutual respect and trust. This relationship building may be especially important because, to date, Japan has

not publicly acknowledged and apologized for crimes committed during World War II. This study seeks to identify peaceful methods and the role of religions for establishing a foundation for reconciliation and diplomatic relations. The study also explores justice and reconciliation of postwar issues that involve Japan and its neighboring countries.

Peace education is crucial in establishing a peaceful community in East Asia, and as Mayor has intimated, peace building cannot be achieved exclusively by governments and international organizations. Japan still faces current issues with China and Korea because of unresolved matters from the war. These countries resent Japan’s refusal to include Japanese military atrocities in its own history books, while there are clearly many unresolved issues regarding Japanese military activities during World War II. Moreover, Japan is faced with territorial issues with China regarding the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands, with South Korea regarding the Takeshima (Dokdo) islets, and with Russia regarding the Kuril Islands.

The wounds of the victims are also known as trauma. Gina Ross, the founder and president of the International Trauma-Healing Institute, specifies “war, genocide, repressive governments, religious persecution, oppression, acts of terrorism, captivity, homicides, assaults, and natural disasters” as extraordinary traumatic events (*Beyond the Trauma Vortex into the Healing Vortex: A Guide for Psychology and Education* [International

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Trauma-Healing Institute, 2008], p. 11). It is important first to address and diagnose the root causes of past wounds, then prescribe the tools that would help the victims to heal. Ross states that trauma can be healed through various healing tools. Two instruments of healing are apology and forgiveness. If human injustice is committed, it is important to restore honor to those who have been treated in an undignified way. Processes of public apology, forgiveness, justice, and reconciliation are considered instruments for social healing.

## **The Role of Forgiveness in Healing Past Wounds**

In order to bring about solutions to the problems caused by historically rooted conflict, it is important to include forgiveness in the process of conflict resolution and reconciliation. It is also suggested that reparations need to include means to help the victims heal in order to live a life of justice and dignity. C. J. Montiel stated that acts of forgiveness and apology can contribute to postconflict healing (“Sociopolitical Forgiveness,” *Peace Review* 14, no. 3 [2002]: 271–77).

Past violations against humanity committed during conflict remain as a scar in the memories of the victims. The harmed have carried a long history of grievances, and unless these memories have been identified and understood, the reconciliation process will not be adequately conducted.

The process of forgiveness includes both retributive justice, which refers to repaying an unjust act, and restorative justice, which brings back “the well-being of the person or a society that was damaged by the wrongful acts” (ibid., p. 275). It is important for the parties in conflict to realize that grievances will not lead them to a positive future and that their well-being will not be improved unless they place a high value on peace.

## **The Role of Religion**

The situation in East Asia is a sensitive and complex social issue that requires moral decision making and social responsibility. Religion can offer these moral and ethical overtones of leadership. The UNESCO “Declaration on the Role of Religion in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace” recognizes the importance of religion in human life. It states in the section “Religious Responsibility” that “communities of faith have a responsibility to encourage conduct imbued with wisdom, compassion, sharing, charity, solidarity, and love, inspiring one and all to choose the path of freedom and responsibility. Religions must be a source of helpful energy” (accessed August 2, 2010, <http://www.unesco.org/cpp/uk/declarations/religion.pdf>). The values and attitudes of a person are influenced by the moral and ethical standards of the culture an individual is raised in. Thus, religious leaders may contribute to the development of moral and ethical standards of the society.

Interfaith religious organizations have made great effort in playing an important role in building peace in their respective regions. During the ninth World Assembly of Religions for Peace, formerly known as the World Conference on Religion and Peace, an epoch-making event took place where religious leaders of North Korea and South Korea stood hand in hand onstage for dialogue and exchange. The World Assembly was held in Vienna on November 20–22, 2013. The theme, “Welcoming the Other,” led the participants to practice hospitality, a concept they defined as a way of welcome that is beyond tolerance. It is a genuine conduct of moral inclusion. This, indeed, is the first step toward reconciliation and peace building.

The International Peace Corps of Religions (IPCR) has met for the past several years to find constructive means for peace building in Northeast Asia. In their most recent conference, held July 5–6, 2013, IPCR took the initiative to find common grounds among different religions and countries and sought for shared security, which encourages joint effort to protect all forms of life. The conference theme was “Challenges and Practices for Building a Peace Community in Northeast Asia—Searching for Common Ground for Fullness of Life and Peace.” It was sponsored by IPCR, the Korean Conference of Religions for Peace, and Religions for Peace Japan. Religions of various traditions have valuable resources of spiritual and ethical foundations to promote

and practice peace. The international events are a good opportunity to share common values, namely, valuing and respecting life.

## The Role of Peace Education in Peace Building

As introduced previously, one instrument of healing wounds of the past is forgiveness. Furthermore, various supports are needed to make healing possible, such as religion and leadership. With this healing process in mind, peace education has an important role in avoiding repetition of armed conflict and actions that violate humanity in order to promote peaceful and diplomatic relations in East Asia.

Multiple efforts are made to direct education toward the cultivation and learning of peace. Peace may be cultivated, learned, and put into practice through peace education (B. Brock-Utne, "Peace Education in an Era of Globalization," *Peace Review* 12, no.1 [2000]: 131–38). The pedagogy of peace education includes the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed to develop adequate capacities with the appropriate characteristics to conduct reconciliation and peace-building processes.

In addition, regarding one of the goals of peace education, Gavriel Salomon and Baruch Nevo mentioned in their article "The Dilemmas of Peace Education in Intractable Conflicts" that "empathy entails the ability to appreciate the pain suffered by the other side, a willingness to see experiences of the other side from its point of view" (*Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 8, no. 3 [2001]: 64). Empathy is a virtue encouraged by various religious traditions. Moreover, Johan Galtung stated that empathy, along with nonviolence, creativity, knowledge, compassion, and perseverance, is a basic skill needed in conducting conflict transformation.

He suggested these skills need to be taught in the peace education curriculum ("Implementation of Peace Education in Norwegian Institutions of Higher Education," accessed September 29, 2006, <http://www.transcend.org>).

It is important to face the challenges of change with new insights and different perspectives. There is a need for policy change to achieve shared security that would truly safeguard our lives and peaceful environment and a need for public awareness to change our mindset and behavior toward nonviolent conflict transformation. Peace education can encourage citizens to take action and transform our society into a culture of peace.

## The Significance of Peace Education

A 1974 recommendation adopted by UNESCO includes international understanding, cooperation, peace, and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. The guiding principles stated that education should be directed "to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms." Education "shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" ("The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>). Peace education is not complete unless the knowledge and skills acquired, and the attitude and values developed, are applied to action for the benefit of all.

Action in peace education brings about transformation. This transformation means profound global cultural change that affects ways of thinking, worldviews, values, behaviors, relationships, and the structures that make up our public order. It also implies

great change in the human consciousness and in human society. Therefore, peace education integrates a transformational approach that seeks a larger, more comprehensive goal: the rejection of all violence—not just arms races and war—with an objective that embraces behavioral and institutional change as well as changes in thinking and in the formation of values. Capacities for innovation and change are developed through an education that meets the challenges of the issues the world faces, namely, the continued development of weapons of mass destruction; armed conflicts between states and ethnic groups; the spread of racism, gender inequality, and community violence; the huge and widening gap between the rich and the poor throughout the globalized economy; massive violations of human rights; and the degradation of the environment. To face these challenges, and to achieve a culture of peace, people need to learn skills to resolve conflict constructively and collaboratively, understand and live by international standards of human rights, achieve gender and racial equality, and appreciate cultural diversity.

A culture of peace is defined as a culture that consists of values, attitudes, and behaviors that resolve conflicts nonviolently by addressing their root causes and prevent conflicts through collaborative dialogue, fostering harmonious and cooperative relationships and facing the realities of one planetary system.

Education for a culture of peace promotes the valuing process that stimulates cognitive skills by being aware and understanding and touching the mind; affective skills by responding to the feelings concerned and touching the heart; and active skills by taking action. Knowledge enables us to form attitudes through critical thinking and take action to transform the structure of violence.

## International Organizations and Their Efforts at Peace Building

### *Hague Appeal for Peace, Global Campaign for Peace Education*

In May 1999, civil society representatives from twenty-six countries around the world met at The Hague, Netherlands, to attend the largest peace conference of the era, the Hague Appeal for Peace Conference. “The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century,” specifically to abolish war, was adopted at this significant gathering. To develop mechanisms for abolishing war and to realize a culture of peace in the twenty-first century, several initiatives were taken after the conference. Among them was the Global Campaign for Peace Education (GCPE). This campaign seeks to promote networking among peace educators and establish regional peace-education centers that will promote comprehensive peace education. It also advocates the inclusion of peace education in teacher-training programs. In short, GCPE is an international network that promotes peace education in formal and nonformal educational settings to cultivate a culture of peace.

The establishment of university-based peace-education centers contributes to training future peace-education teachers. The network of peace-education centers in Japan, Lebanon, and the Philippines is coordinated by the Peace Education Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. A project was launched to introduce ethical and spiritual values as well as the philosophical foundations of peace education to promote interreligious understanding and educate for universal human dignity with a spirit of nonviolence.

### *Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict*

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)

was formed in response to then UN secretary-general Kofi Annan’s call to NGOs around the world: “I urge NGOs with an interest in conflict prevention to organize an international conference of local, national and international NGOs on their role in conflict prevention and future interaction with the United Nations in this field” (UN Security Council, *Prevention of Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, A/55/985-S/2001/574 [June 7, 2001], p. 32). Kofi Annan explained further that peace building cannot be achieved without the work of the civil society. The worldwide conflict-prevention community joined together to establish GPPAC and to hold a global conference on the role of civil society in the prevention of armed conflict at UN Headquarters in New York on July 19–21, 2005. GPPAC is a worldwide civil society organization that was established to generate a new international consensus on peace building and the prevention of violent conflict.

Peace-education working-group meetings of GPPAC are held regularly two or three times a year to provide an opportunity for participants to exchange information and update one another on recent peace-education activities and projects carried out in the regions; to review annual projects; to discuss strategic and administrative details of regional and cross-regional peace-education activities; to be introduced to the regional-conflict context, in particular to learn about various peace-education activities addressing several aspects of conflict dynamics in the region; and to meet with the local actors working in the area of peace education as well as with their beneficiary communities in order to gain and share experiences.

## Conclusion

Peace education can nurture leadership qualities and train people in conflict-transformation skills relevant

to forgiveness and reconciliation. As summarized by Betty Reardon in *Education for a Culture of Peace in a Gender Perspective*, “Ethical problem-solving and conflict-processing, including the goal of transformation and the skills of reconciliation, are two of the areas of endeavor to which the present generation of peace educators are called upon to contribute with innovative practices” ([UNESCO Publishing, 2001], p. 172).

GCPE is planning future activities such as building an overall framework for peace education by holding seminars and publishing a book; continuing an annual two-day workshop on peace education by inviting resource persons; and collaborating with the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI), which was launched with the leadership of GPPAC Northeast Asia’s Korean regional members. As a GPPAC project, NARPI will offer a place for training, collaboration, and networking for civil society organizations, peace educators, religious leaders, university students, and government officials (Lee Jae Young, presentation at GPPAC Northeast Asia Regional Steering Group meeting in Seoul, April 18, 2009). It is hoped that NARPI will boost acceleration in achieving GPPAC peace-education goals.

The purpose of peace education is to aid in transforming the social structure of society in ways that would also benefit the less privileged. The outcome of the education may not resolve the tense situations in the war zones of the world, but it may teach the young and their offspring that every individual has a choice, and the choice rests upon them. We can choose to have war, but we can also choose to have dialogue and transform structures without violence. We can dismantle the structure of the society we live in to make it a safe and secure place where we can enjoy peace and an adequate standard of living. □

# On the Sanctity of Life and the Right to Peace: Toward Collaboration among Religious Leaders

by Toshimasa Yamamoto

*Humans . . . seem to spend all of their time in futile competition—if there is something that they want, they will scramble to get it by whatever means. And it is when they fail to get what they want that wars claiming the lives of others break out.*

Several years ago, the molecular biologist Shin'ichi Fukuoka wrote a piece in the Japanese newspaper *Asahi Shimbun* on the mystery of life. He observed that while the natural world is governed by the law of the jungle and existence is a life-and-death struggle, a perfect balance is nevertheless preserved. If a certain creature were to eat another into oblivion, it too would die out. To avoid such a fate, he explained, creatures in the natural world live, to an extent,

abstemiously in order to protect themselves. An important concept in the biological world is what, in other words, is called an ecological niche.

Nonhuman life forms live according to their ecological niche. The larva of the Asian swallowtail, for example, eats the leaves of orange trees and Japanese prickly ash, while that of the Old World swallowtail eats parsley and carrot leaves. Thus even different species of butterfly know and occupy their own different

ecological niches so that they do not have to battle one another for limited resources and habitats.

Humans, on the other hand, seem to spend all of their time in futile competition—if there is something that they want, they will scramble to get it by whatever means. And it is when they fail to get what they want that wars claiming the lives of others break out. One reason that a peaceful East Asian community is proving so hard to build is that people follow lifestyles that show scant regard for their social niche and hold values that tolerate a selfish excess of competition. When considering how to build an East Asian community of peace, we must start from a standpoint that recognizes the sanctity of others' lives and that regards them as being as irreplaceable as our own.

## “Life” in Christianity and the Establishment of a Basic Position on Human Rights

The first story in the Old Testament is the story of creation. The creation of the world and humankind is told in mythical style. The story does not relate historical and scientific facts. It was written by people of antiquity and understandably reflects the world-views and mind-sets of their times. The Bible is not a scientific book but concerns itself instead with the nature of the world, human life, and the meaning of living. Two different accounts of

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the creation of humankind are given at the beginning of Genesis. The first says, "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Gen. 1:27, New Revised Standard Version). The second, in the following chapter, says, "Then the LORD God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). "Breath of life" in Hebrew is *ruwach*, which also means spirit. Of note here is the significance of humankind's being made in God's image. "Image of God" in Latin is *imago Dei*.

Humans are, in other words, beings that mirror God's presence, and we cannot but think of God when we see a human being (though this must not lead us to mistakenly believe that we *are* God). That we are made in the image of God means no more nor less than that the divine nature dwells in each

one of us and that we are all beings to be cherished. If I harm my neighbor, I harm God too. And when I share in my neighbor's joy, I share joy with God. The first Bible passage above is considered to have formed the basis for the concept of human rights originating in western Europe that sees life and human dignity as irreplaceable. Humans have value as beings made by God, and each individual therefore has human rights deserving of equal respect regardless of his or her abilities.

## **The Right to Peace, and Peace as a Human Right**

A key concept to emerge whenever Religions for Peace has considered the question of peace has been that of shared security. This term is translated more or less literally by Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs as *sasaeau anzen hoshō*. Religions for Peace Japan, on the other hand, translates it as *tomo ni subete no inochi o mamoru*, which literally means "protecting all lives together." This is far better than the ministry's translation, which implies that it is the state that is the principal agent. That, in turn, leads to the peace's being maintained by a balance of arms within a framework of deterrence. In contrast, Religions for Peace Japan's translation makes it clear that it is life (*inochi*), not the state, that is the primary concern, with the further implication that it is all life, and not just human life, that is to be protected. Peace is made possible by the

coprotection of the sanctity of every single irreplaceable life, and it is the responsibility and role of religious leaders to protect all life together.

A noteworthy development has recently emerged at the international level concerning peace and its attainment through the protection of life. This is the drafting of a declaration on the right to peace by the United Nations Human Rights Council. Peace has hitherto normally been discussed by the UN Security Council, which is a pragmatic reflection of the fact that peace has been addressed within the context of an interstate framework, and war has been seen simply as a form of policy making to protect national interests. It is thus of momentous importance that peace is now being debated as a right and recognized as a human right. Discussion of the issue of peace by the Human Rights Council indicates that peace depends on human beings and that the threat to life posed by war is a material human rights concern. The declaration on the right to peace now being drafted by the Human Rights Council is premised on the idea that citizens and groups have a right to demand peace from governments and countries.

Interestingly, it is Cuba and other Third World countries that have led discussions of the right to peace in the Human Rights Council. In contrast, opposed to this development have been the United States, the countries of the European Union, and Japan. It is slightly puzzling that opposition should come from countries that value peace and

are considered leaders in the realm of human rights. It may be that recognizing peace as a right of individuals and groups will render war difficult as an element of policy to protect national interests. The individual's exercising of the right to peace will, moreover, make it difficult for governments to force people to go to war. There may also conceivably be a rise in the number of conscientious objectors who refuse to be conscripted and to take up weapons on the battlefield to kill enemy soldiers. If nuclear weapons and nuclear energy policy pose threats to life, then citizens and groups should also be able to demand from the state that life be kept safe from those threats too.

Building an East Asian community of peace, enabling each individual in the community to demand peace as a human right, will lead to citizens' initiatives promoting shared security. It will in principle be each of us, as individuals, and not the state, that will take the lead in overcoming threats to peace. There will undoubtedly be fewer people who leave grave decisions on peace entirely to states and governments. This tenet must serve as the common ground for an East Asian community of peace and be promoted as a powerful counterweight to the various non-peaceful factors that threaten not only

members of the peace community but all life, including the natural environment and ecosystems.

## **The Potential of Japan's Pacifist Constitution: Collaboration to Protect the Lives of People in Asia**

Japan's pacifist constitution can make a pivotal contribution to establishing a right to peace. Toward the end of the preamble to this impressively pioneering document, it states, "We recognize that all peoples of the world have the right to live in peace, free from fear and want." Precisely anticipating the declaration on a right to peace, it thus explicitly articulates the right to peaceful existence. The Japanese constitution further upholds the complete renunciation of war, nonmaintenance of war potential, and demilitarization. The first and second paragraphs of Article 9 respectively renounce wars of aggression and the maintenance of war potential:

Aspiring sincerely to an international peace based on justice and order, the Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right

of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes.

In order to accomplish the aim of the preceding paragraph, land, sea, and air forces, as well as other war potential, will never be maintained. The right of belligerency of the state will not be recognized.

Although I am no legal expert, the preamble and Article 9 of this pacifist constitution appear together to be interpretable as granting the Japanese people the right to demand peace from the government and the right to refuse war. Given that the constitution also recognizes the right to life in Article 13 and the right to decent living standards in Article 25, it might be argued that exercising the right to peaceful existence guarantees protection of the self from war, nuclear weapons, nuclear power, and other threats to life. And as the possessors of the right to peaceful existence are specified in the preamble to be "all peoples of the world," I would suggest that Japan's pacifist constitution might be interpreted as advocating the protection together of the lives of people living in East Asia as well as Japan.

In order to build a community of peace in East Asia, there is now a strong need for religious leaders to collaborate toward achieving a declaration on the right to peace founded on the sanctity of life. □

# The Second Vatican Council

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 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.*

My decisive meeting with Pope Paul VI, which determined the course of the second half of my life, came about through an unexpected call.

Following the manifestation of the true nature of Rissho Kosei-kai in 1958, I spent the years between 1962 and 1964 perturbed about the fact that the Vatican would not take other religious organizations into its confidence, and I spoke about this in many venues.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that there is just one Buddha vehicle. The Buddha's desire comes down to one thing: that all people be led to the Buddha realm. The One Buddha Vehicle can be understood to mean a way of thinking that is uniform and equal. The fact that there are many teachings in the world that speak of different things reflects the skillful means of the gods and buddhas. People are all different, and therefore there are different teachings to suit different people. The ultimate truth, however, does not change according to religion or sect. The problem is how

to give concrete expression to that religious truth.

The Lotus Sutra says in the second chapter, "Skillful Means": "The Tathagata, by means of the One Buddha Vehicle alone, preaches to all living beings the Law; there is no other vehicle, neither two nor three."

If we follow the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, even if religions and sects are different, they should cooperate and combine their strengths so as to lead all people to the Buddha realm, to true salvation. It is my unshakable conviction that this and none other is the great path of religion.

I do not need to reiterate here why interreligious cooperation is so necessary. I would like to point out, however, that while it is good for people to carry their individual karma, when the world grows smaller and interactions increase, a person cannot avoid being influenced by the shared karma that goes far beyond individual karma. Shared karma means the good and bad

karma created by people everywhere and the suffering or joy experienced uniformly by all as a result. The most extreme type of shared karma can be said to be war and poverty. These are problems that individuals cannot solve alone, however much they try. It is here that the need for interreligious cooperation arises.

I think that many religions exist because the one truth takes many forms according to time, race, and the general environment. This view, however, has often been severely criticized. And such criticism has come more from those who follow the Lotus Sutra than from adherents of other religions.

One of my critics said, "Rissho Kosei-kai holds up the Lotus Sutra, but isn't it showing contempt for its teachings by its lax attitude concerning interreligious cooperation? Nichiren Shonin, who chose the Lotus Sutra as the greatest of Shakyamuni's teachings, proselytized it even when his life was threatened by strong opposition from sects whose teachings were based on a different sutra. Despite this, Niwano went around saying that all religions stem from the same root and that their adherents should

cooperate. The time is coming when he will come to understand whether or not religion is such a soft thing.”

However, I considered that Nichiren had risked even his life in order to appeal to those religious groups and believers who thought that only their own sect was right, saying, “If we do not return to the true spirit of Shakyamuni, we will be unable to bring the country or the people to salvation.” In a letter to one of his followers, Shijo Kingo, he clearly stated that “the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra lies in the chapter ‘The Bodhisattva Never Despise.’”

I too think that what we most need in the world today is the spirit of the Bodhisattva Never Despise, and I have long felt that I should try to learn from other Buddhist sects in a flexible way. For example, Shinran Shonin’s single-minded faith, Dogen Zenji’s severity of religious training, and Nichiren Shonin’s passion for learning and his spirit of not sparing body or life are wonderful teachings from which we can learn a great deal.

When I say such things, though, people remark, “Niwano’s religion is just a porridge of ideas.” Nevertheless, I have always continued to believe that the way to make Nichiren’s spirit live in the present is to have the courage to keep calling on those who teach that theirs is the only correct belief to change their exclusivist attitude.

Dr. Yoshiro Tamura, a former professor at the University of Tokyo, has pointed out that Nichiren’s having been seen as intolerant and closed-minded and the impression we receive of his teachings’ being nationalistic seem to be due also to those who followed him after his death.

Unless we see the Nichiren who showed his tenderness as he shared the grief of female followers who had lost a husband or a son, we will tend to over-emphasize him as someone who always repudiated compromise and heroically challenged other sects as well as the state.

I had already, since around 1949, been urging some of the organizations that followed the Lotus Sutra to unify

on the basis of their common interests, with Kuonji, the head temple of the Nichiren sect, as the core. I considered this to be the first step toward practicing the One Vehicle that the Lotus Sutra taught. However, nothing came of it. Things fell to pieces, leaving my hopes unfulfilled.

Soon after that, there was a call for the new religious groups to form Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan). I responded immediately, understanding it to be in accordance with my belief that at root all religions are the same.

Shinshuren was founded in October 1951, under the banners of religious cooperation, faith for every citizen, freedom of faith, and separation of church and state. It started off with twenty-four member organizations and became affiliated with the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations (JAORO, Nihon Shukyo Renmei) the following year. JAORO was organized immediately after the war, in June 1946, and was the only federation of religious groups in Japan. Its stated purpose was “to seek the active development of campaigns to instruct people, through the close cooperation of Shinto, Buddhism, and Christianity, to contribute to the construction of Japan as a cultural state according to moral principles and to promote peace among humankind.” It was composed of the Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honcho), the Japan Buddhist Federation (Zen Nihon Bukkyokai), the Federation of Sectarian Shinto (Kyoha Shinto Rengokai), and the Japan Confederation of Christian Churches (Nihon Kirisutokyo Rengokai). With the addition of Shinshuren, it encompassed virtually all religious organizations in Japan.

In 1944, during World War II, the various religious groups in Japan were organized into the Greater Japan Wartime Patriotic Association of Religions (Dai Nippon Senji Shukyo Hokokukai). This led to serious reflection regarding the

fact that religions had to help with the war effort whether they liked it or not. The religious groups had been unable not only to prevent the outbreak of war but to do anything to mitigate the cruel devastation that war brought to the Japanese people. This experience prompted thought about the mission of people of religion to make religion a means of peace. However, at that time, the idea of interreligious cooperation itself was not widely accepted.

## An Unexpected Invitation

It is a sad fact that, as the history of religion shows us, religious organizations that promote their own interests and exclude others are the ones that have the greatest success. It is extremely easy to preach in a way that boldly attacks all others as being heretical and unable to bring salvation, and it is also very easy for the mass of people to understand that concept. Can we say, though, that

such a religion is a true religion? At some point, such teaching has to prove fatal.

Until 1965 I had the impression that Roman Catholicism was such a religion. Its message was that if you don't believe in Catholicism, you won't go to heaven. Surely, then, this means that people who believe in other religions can go only to hell.

I traveled all over Japan telling people that unless religious organizations overcame their differences and combined their strengths on the basis of what they had in common, we would come to the point when we would be unable to liberate even one person from suffering. To insist that all religions other than your own are false is an offense against the truth. The only way to bring liberation to the modern world and its people is interreligious cooperation. I traveled more than twelve thousand miles appealing to people. And then something completely unexpected happened.

In 1965, thanks, I think, to the good offices of Dr. Joseph J. Spae of the

Oriens Institute for Religious Research in Tokyo, and Paolo Cardinal Marella, a former apostolic delegate to Japan, I was approached by the Apostolic Internunciature in Tokyo about attending the opening ceremony of the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council as a special guest. It was inconceivable that such a person as I would be permitted to take part in a Vatican Council. Though the Vatican is geographically within the city of Rome, it is actually an independent state. A Vatican Council is the highest council of the Roman Catholic Church. It deliberates on important matters to do with doctrine and discipline for the whole Catholic Church and is attended by bishops from all over the world.

It was almost unheard of for a Japanese Buddhist, especially the president of a new and miniscule organization, to be invited to an opening ceremony. All the same, it was I who received the invitation, the only Japanese Buddhist representative.

I felt I knew why I had been invited. The Vatican must have heard about my three years of traveling throughout Japan and criticizing Catholicism. "Perhaps they're going to grill me about my attitude," I thought. Through my secretary I asked what had prompted the invitation. The reply came. "Rissho Kosei-kai is a new religious organization and is extending its membership as a moderate Buddhist organization. Furthermore, only Kosei-kai has its founder currently

active as its president.” I made my decision. I thought, “The gods and buddhas have something to show me through this opportunity. I will humbly accept the invitation, freeing myself from all self-centered concerns.” This too was part of my resolution to accept everything that happened to me without asking whether I wanted to do something or not. As well, it came at a turning point for my life and Risho Kosei-kai, when the organization took a great leap toward a wider stage.

## The Road to the Vatican

I left Haneda Airport in Tokyo to attend the opening ceremony of the fourth session of the Second Vatican Council on September 11, 1965. I flew via Anchorage to Frankfurt, and then changed to an Alitalia flight for Rome. During that flight, I conversed with a European gentleman sitting next to me.

“Where are you going?” he asked.

“I’m going to Rome. I’m a Japanese Buddhist and have been invited to the opening ceremony of the Vatican Council.”

“I’m an Alitalia pilot, and this is a job where the lives of passengers are in my hands. Therefore I have religious faith too. It’s different from yours, but I’m always grateful for it.”

The Italian pilot spoke very sympathetically.

I said, “That is wonderful. I think that although there are many types of religions, they are all one at heart. Though believers may be of different sects and denominations, they should have a rapport with one another.”

The pilot replied, “That is a very good way of looking at things. Since my work involves flying through the sky, I always think how happy I am, to be so close to heaven!”

Two days after arriving in Rome, I visited Cardinal Marella. A cardinal is appointed by the pope from among

bishops from all over the world. He counsels the pope, is responsible for ecclesiastical administration, and, with fellow cardinals, elects a new pope when necessary. Cardinal Marella had been apostolic delegate to Japan from 1933 to 1948. In the spring of 1964 he became the first president of the Secretariat for Non-Christians (renamed the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in 1988).

As befitting a person in charge of public relations, he greeted me warmly. Following a pleasant chat, he supplied me with a pass, and I set out for Saint Peter’s Basilica. A statue of Saint Peter stands beside the steps leading up to the main entrance. Peter, the foremost of the twelve apostles, was a saint and martyr. Following Christ’s crucifixion and ascension, he worked to spread Christianity in Antioch and other places before going to Rome, where, it is said, he was put to death by Emperor Nero. He was crucified upside down at his own request, since he did not deem himself worthy to die in the same way as Christ. Because Peter is said to have been the first bishop of Rome, every pope is considered to be his successor, inheriting the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven that Christ gave Peter.

As I watched people bowing deeply before the statue, touching its feet, and praying, I realized there was not a scrap of difference between them and Risho Kosei-kai members who bow before the focus of devotion in the Great Sacred Hall, the palms of their hands joined reverently together. Truly, the spirit of religious faith is one and the same. And surely the gods’ and buddhas’ responses to people’s sincere appeals are the same.

## Impressions

On September 14 the lobby of the Rome Hilton was crowded with robed cardinals who would be attending the opening ceremony. I left for Saint Peter’s in a car that had been sent for me. The piazza in

front of the basilica was filled to capacity. As I was guided into Saint Peter’s, Peter Cardinal Tatsuo Doi of Japan came up and welcomed me, expressing his appreciation for my efforts. I felt some sort of relief.

On both sides of the broad aisle were seated twenty-five hundred cardinals, bishops, and theologians from all over the world. Mass began at the central altar, celebrated by Pope Paul VI.

The Second Vatican Council had been convened under Pope John XXIII, who issued the encyclical *Pacem in Terris* (Peace on Earth) in April 1963, and continued under Pope Paul VI. It opened in October 1962 and closed in December 1965, running over two months in each of those four years. I was attending the opening ceremony for the fourth session (1965).

I was able to observe the pope from very close quarters. The tableau of the Mass reminded me vividly of the scene in the first chapter of the Lotus Sutra where a vast number of people from many different worlds gather expectantly to hear the Buddha’s discourse.

When I look at my diary entry for that day, on the page for September 14, I find I wrote “Lotus Sutra, chapter 1” and then “The pope spoke in Latin for about an hour. His voice seemed to brim with kindness. The whole building was quiet.” Reading it again now, I feel as if the events of that time happened just yesterday.

After Pope Paul VI declared the session open, he addressed the gathered bishops on the subject of ecumenism. Father Hioki, a Japanese priest sitting beside me, kindly interpreted for me. The pope’s words made a great impact on me. He said, “The popes through the ages have been guilty of causing schisms in the Christian faith. Today there is no place for fragmentation either in Christianity or in other religions. It is time for us to join hands and walk in the direction of peace.” He added, “We must acknowledge that God has given

his love equally to all humankind, all people of religion.”

In the basilica were specially invited representatives of the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Protestant churches, and the Church of England, among others. The Great Schism of 1054 had divided the eastern (Orthodox) and western (Catholic) churches, and in that year both churches excommunicated the members of the other. How brave and decisive were the words of Pope Paul VI that stated that the role of people of religion was to bring peace to the world through cooperation and acknowledged that it had been the fault of the popes that this had formerly been impossible.

I was deeply moved.

The successors of Peter were the representatives of Christ on earth, and it is stated that their authority in spiritual matters is infallible. This dogma of papal infallibility is the basis for the pope’s leadership of 750 million Catholics throughout the world. The Roman Catholic Church has been the most powerful religion in the world for more than a thousand years. Should its absolutism break down, there is a fear that its authority would be overturned. Pope Paul VI, repenting on behalf of his predecessors of this mistake of clinging to infallibility, as if it were his own sin, seemed to me to be questioning himself about the origins of conflict in the world. For a long time I gazed on his modest and serene figure, thinking that I was in the presence of a living saint. Without an absolute faith in God, such repentance would be impossible. Here was a person of true belief. Here was someone who embodied God’s teachings. I was overcome by a powerful emotion.

## My Day of Resolution

The day before the opening ceremony, I met Cardinal Marella and asked him if it would be at all possible to arrange an audience with the pope, to thank him

personally for my invitation. Cardinal Marella told me that it would probably be difficult, since the pope would be very busy during the first few days of the session. As I had then arranged to meet Rev. Pedro Arrupe, superior general of the Society of Jesus, and the bishops who had come from Japan, I more or less gave up the idea of an audience with the pope. Anyway, everything I wanted to ask him had been answered in his address at the opening ceremony, I thought.

The following day, September 15, was a monthly memorial day of Rissho Koseikai’s, commemorating Shakyamuni’s entering nirvana. As usual I was performing morning devotionals with my secretary in the hotel room. Just as we finished the final *o-daimoku*, the phone rang, and my secretary, still wearing his sash, picked up the receiver. The call was from the Curia, to tell me that the pope could meet me at 5 p.m. that same day. I remember feeling very clearly that I had been greatly favored by the gods and buddhas, that something beyond human understanding had occurred.

I recall I was the second person receiving a personal audience that day. When I stood before the pope, I placed

the palms of my hands together and greeted him, thanking him deeply for giving me the opportunity to attend the opening ceremony. The pope’s eyes lit up, and he clasped my hand between his. I also held his hands between mine, and we exchanged a strong handshake. Keeping my hands in his, he welcomed me to Rome and told me he had a particular interest in Japan. “I pray for your future endeavors,” he said. “I know very well how hard you are working for interreligious cooperation,” he went on. “Please continue to promote this movement in the future. In the Vatican, too, our thinking about non-Christian religions has changed. We must recognize each other and pray for each other. There is no way for people of religion to render service to humankind other than for the different religions to walk the way of peace hand in hand.”

My interpreter, Father Spae, seemed rather tense, but my own heart was beating with joy.

I thought how wonderful it was that we were now living in a time when Christians would pray for Buddhists and Buddhists would pray for Christians. All the way back to my hotel, I was filled with the conviction that interreligious

doctrinal differences and their merits or demerits will do nothing to achieve the desired result. Ecumenism will grow only out of consideration of what can be done for the sake of world peace and humankind.

From that time on, I had no hesitation about responding to invitations from Christians, and I lost all of my scruples about cooperation with them. My conviction became firm that if people of religion always asked themselves what the purpose of religion was, cooperation was possible.

## The Move toward Interreligious Dialogue

A year before, in November 1964, Pope Paul VI had proclaimed *Unitatis Redintegratio* (Decree on Ecumenism), which stated:

Christ the Lord founded one Church and one Church only. However, many Christian communions present themselves to men as the true inheritors of Jesus Christ; all indeed profess to be followers of the Lord but differ in mind and go their different ways, as if Christ Himself were divided. Such division openly contradicts the will of Christ, scandalizes the world, and damages the holy cause of preaching the Gospel to every creature.

The pope declared to the Orthodox Church, which had been split from the Church of Rome for more than nine hundred years; to the Protestant churches; and to the Anglican Church that the Catholic attitude toward them would change, and he entered into dialogue with Patriarch Athenagoras I of Constantinople and with the archbishop of Canterbury, strongly promoting the ecumenical movement.

I remember that Professor Fumio Masutani, formerly of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, told me

about the World Council of Churches (WCC), which was inaugurated in 1948 out of a movement that sought a fellowship of churches within the Protestant world that went beyond denominational or sectarian differences. This emerged out of a reflection that there was something wrong about churches preaching the teachings of the same Jesus Christ in disparate ways according to sectarian differences.

However, whether we talk of the WCC or reconciliation between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, it still remains ecumenism only within the Christian world. My hope was that such a world council could be extended to include Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and all the diverse religions and creeds of the world, bringing all to the peace table.

This idea was on too large a scale for its time, and so it was probably inevitable that people thought it a reckless plan.

I returned to Japan on the evening of September 21, after ten days away. A great crowd of Rissho Kosei-kai members met me at Haneda Airport. Following a welcoming reception and a press conference, I went directly to the Great Sacred Hall. I remember that at the press conference I had mentioned that I thought the religious world had at last reached a period of dialogue. From that time, the term *interreligious dialogue* came to be used widely in Japan.

Immediately after I returned from the Second Vatican Council, I combined my reports about the event with a roundtable talk to which both Christian and Buddhist leaders were invited. One of the participants was Dr. Wilhelm Schiffer, SJ, director of the International Institute for the Study of Religions at Sophia University in Tokyo, who spoke about how the Catholic Church had previously had little tolerance for other religions. He said:

In the beginning, the Catholic Church suffered severe persecution. Also, heresies grew up within it, and

cooperation was indeed attainable. In a few words, the pope expressed everything that I had thought about. His ideas corresponded exactly with my understanding of the Lotus Sutra. Buddhism and Christianity are seeking the same thing. Interreligious cooperation is a definite possibility as Christians and Buddhists pursue their common purpose of world peace. I told myself that the time had come when I had to give myself to attaining this, whatever the personal cost.

The pope's words seemed to be a great vow to bring spiritual liberation to all human beings by ridding ourselves of any idea that other religions are no good or mistaken. This too is in accordance with the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

It is by discovering what the various religions of the world have in common rather than emphasizing their differences that cooperation will emerge, and it is through such cooperation that religion will be able to set about fulfilling its mission of bringing liberation to all the people of the world. Discussions of

there was also the Reformation. In a sense, these different problems have made the Catholic Church exclusivistic. However, Catholic thinking completely changed during the time of Pope John XXIII, and the turnabout that started then continues today. The Second Vatican Council discussed religious freedom and the attitude the Catholic Church should take toward other religions. It was clearly shown there that Buddhism, too, is one of the ways to salvation. I have been living in Japan for more than thirty years, and so this was obvious to me, but I must say that it was surprising to me that the Catholic Church showed such an understanding of Buddhism and that this understanding was so clearly stated at the Vatican Council.

Rev. Chuzo Yamada, general secretary of the National Christian Council in Japan, also told me that Dr. Willem Visser 't Hooft, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, had said that until then, people of the church had regarded Jesus Christ as the savior of the people connected with the church. However, Jesus Christ is rather the savior also of all of those outside the church facing adversity, he said.

Rev. Yamada continued, "In his address to the UN General Assembly in October 1965, Pope Paul VI stated that peace would not come through weapons, whether offensive or defensive, but only through trust and understanding among people. People of religion must surely have the desire to do something for others rather than for themselves. How wonderful it would be if people of religion could speak together of their hopes, could come together through understanding, could join their strengths."

Dr. Schiffer agreed with this, saying, "Every day we meet believers and gain a thorough knowledge of the sufferings of humankind. Being able to meet

together like this, sharing our experiences and becoming aware of each other's worries, gives us great strength to do something for the world together. It will not be easy, but by doing so we will break down the walls that separate us."

A determination grew within me. The greatest necessity was for religious leaders to change themselves. If this could be achieved, then the way to bring about world peace through interreligious cooperation would be made clear.

## A Greater Sense of Mission

In November 1965 I succeeded Rev. Tokuchika Miki, head of the Church of Perfect Liberty, as the chairman of Shinshuren, a position he had held for fourteen years, since its founding.

When I think about it, I was thirty-one when I founded Rissho Kosei-kai and became its president and guiding parent for members. I had subsequently given my undivided attention to dissemination work. However, from the very beginning I had many times considered giving up the position of president. Who was I to teach people the Way when I could not even ensure a decent living for my wife and children? As I pondered the question, my heart wavered. I also asked myself if I had been carried away by being called upon by everyone to be their teacher.

In the beginning I had not the slightest idea of becoming a religious leader. I just thought of living life to the full in an honest way as an ordinary person. This way of living, however, taught me principles that bring happiness to human beings.

When I looked around, there were many people who were unhappy or suffering in some way. As I spoke about the teachings, wanting somehow or another for them to become happy, I realized that nothing gave my life more purpose than the joy I received from being of use to such people. When I was

immersed in such work, people gathered around me, one after the other seeking salvation, and so Rissho Kosei-kai came into being, and I ended up as its president.

The joy that comes from being of service to others is, I think, like that of cooks making people happy with their food. They first plan their ingredients and lay them in the day before a meal. They put great effort into their work, sometimes simmering a dish for several hours. Consuming the result takes a small fraction of the time it has taken to make the dish. Cooking is long, the eating is very short, but when the eater says how delicious it is, the cook is thrilled beyond measure and all fatigue vanishes. How much greater is the joy of someone who has nourished a person's soul through the teachings. It is so profound that it cannot be compared with the joys of daily life.

It was while I was tasting such joy that at some point I began being treated by the people around me as a religious leader. At the same time, what I might call my mission, what it was I had to achieve, became gradually clearer to me. It was then that I came to feel strongly that some great power was guiding me.

And so Rissho Kosei-kai grew ever larger and joined Shinshuren, of which I was now the chair. When I reflected on the position I had been given, the magnitude of my role bore down on me.

I thought, "I can't just think about my own organization anymore. I have to bear in mind the affairs of religions throughout Japan. To do this, I have to consider how to have good relations with religions all over the world."

Tasks that I had to do followed one after the other, and I had no time to think about my selfish concerns. "If I don't do it now, when can I do it? If I don't do it, who will?" With these words of the sculptor Denchu Hiragushi (with whom I'd had a talk at that time) in my mouth, I braced myself to rise to the occasion.

*To be continued*

# A Votary of the Lotus Sutra Will Meet Ordeals: The Role of Suffering in Nichiren's Thought (2)

by Jacqueline I. Stone

***In addressing the question of why he and his followers had to endure harsh trials, Nichiren did not fix on a single explanation but adopted multiple perspectives. On the one hand, his sufferings were necessary to prove the truth of the Lotus Sutra and to verify his own status as its votary. On the other hand, they were an act of expiation for past slanders of the Dharma.***

This is the concluding part of an article begun in the previous issue, based on a paper presented at the International Lotus Sutra Seminar held May 27–June 1, 2013, near Tokyo by Rishshō Kōseikai on the theme “Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, and human suffering: classical, modern, and contemporary approaches.”

## Suffering and Expiation

Nichiren's second exile, on Sado Island, proved a far worse ordeal than his earlier banishment to Izu, and initially he suffered terribly from cold, hunger, and the hostility of the locals. He also worried about his followers in Kamakura, several of whom had been arrested in his absence. Others had drifted away in the wake of his arrest and banishment. Some, not unreasonably, blamed the persecution on Nichiren's own intransigent stance. Had he been less aggressive and uncompromising, matters might not have come to this pass. Knowing the survival of his community to be at stake, Nichiren struggled to encourage his followers by letter. His writings from the Sado period also show him wrestling with his own doubts. If he was indeed a true votary of the Lotus Sutra, then why did he have to endure such hardships when the Lotus Sutra promises its devotees “security and peace in the present life” (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, *Taishō Tripitaka* [hereafter *T*] 9:19b19–20)? Why were he and his followers not protected by the Buddhist tutelary deities, who vow in the Lotus Sutra to safeguard its practitioners? And why

did their persecutors receive no obvious karmic retribution?

Nichiren detailed his struggles with these doubts in several writings, most notably in his famous *Kaimoku shō* (Opening of the eyes), completed during the first winter of his exile on Sado as a last testament to his followers in the event of his death. In general, he wrote, when people meet with contempt and hostility, it is because they have slighted or abused others in the past, in accordance with the ordinary law of karmic causality. However, Nichiren concluded that his own past sins must have been of

an altogether different magnitude and that he himself, in prior lifetimes, must have committed the very act of maligning the Dharma that he now so implacably opposed. “From the beginningless past I must have been born countless times as an evil ruler who deprived practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, of their clothing and food, paddies and fields, much as the people of Japan in the present day go about destroying temples dedicated to the Lotus Sutra,” he reflected. “In addition, countless times I cut off the heads of Lotus Sutra practitioners” (*Kaimoku shō*, *Shōwa teihon Nichiren Shōnin ibun* [hereafter *Teihon*], ed. Rishshō Daigaku Nichiren Kyōgaku Kenkyūjo, 4 vols. [Minobusan Kuonji, 1952–59; rev. ed. 1988], 1:602; *Selected Writings of Nichiren*, ed. Philip B. Yampolsky, trans. Burton Watson and others [Columbia University Press, 1990], 139 [slightly modified]). Ordinarily, he said, the karmic retribution for such offenses would torment a person over the course of innumerable lifetimes. But thanks to his efforts in denouncing slander of the Dharma, that retribution was being summoned into the present so that it might be eradicated once and for all in his present life:

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“When iron is heated, if it is not strenuously forged, the impurities in it will not become apparent. Only when it is subjected to the tempering process again and again will the flaws appear. . . . It must be that my actions in defending the Dharma in this present life are calling forth retributions for the grave offenses of my past” (*Kaimoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:602–3; *Selected Writings of Nichiren*, 139 [slightly modified]). From this perspective, Nichiren’s sufferings not only validated his mission but were also offered up as an act of repentance, to expiate his own past sins of Dharma slander.

To attribute one’s present suffering to one’s own past deeds is to claim agency; one suffers, not meaninglessly or as the

victim of others, but to repay a debt incurred by one’s own prior acts. By the end of his period of exile on Sado, Nichiren began to represent himself as having deliberately courted his ordeals as an act of expiation:

Now if I, insignificant person that I am, were to go here and there throughout the country of Japan denouncing [slanders of the Dharma], . . . the ruler, allying himself with those monks who disparage the Dharma, would come to hate me and try to have me beheaded or order me into exile. And if this sort of thing were to occur again and again, then the

grave offenses that I have accumulated over countless *kalpas* could be wiped out within the space of a single lifetime. Such, then, was the great plan that I conceived; and it is now proceeding without the slightest deviation. So when I find myself thus sentenced to exile, I can only feel that my wishes are being fulfilled. (“Kashaku hōbō metsuzai shō,” *Teihon* 1:781; *Letters of Nichiren*, trans. Burton Watson and others [Columbia University Press, 1996], 285 [slightly modified])

Banished and despised, Nichiren was in this way able to conceive of and to represent himself, rather than his

tormenters, as the agent of his own tribulations. In the same vein, he expressed gratitude toward the eminent clerics and government officials who had persecuted him, calling them his “best allies” in attaining buddhahood (*Shuju onfurumai goshō*, *Teihon* 2:973).

In reading his sufferings as an expiation of his own past offenses against the Dharma, Nichiren identified with another figure in the Lotus Sutra: Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Skt., *Sadāparibhūta*; Jpn., *Jōfukyō*), whose story appears in chapter 20 and who, like Nichiren, had persevered despite opposition in spreading the Dharma. This bodhisattva (eventually revealed to be Śākyamuni Buddha in a prior life) was dubbed “Never Disparaging” because he bowed to everyone he met, saying, “I profoundly revere you all! I dare not hold you in contempt. What is the reason? You are all treading the bodhisattva path, and shall succeed in becoming buddhas!” (*Miaofa lianhua jing*, T 9:50c19–20; Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma*, rev. ed. [Columbia University Press, 2009], 258). People mocked and reviled the bodhisattva, beat him with staves, and pelted him with stones. Nonetheless, as a result of his practice, he was able to encounter the Lotus Sutra and acquire the great supernatural penetrations. Those who mocked him suffered for a thousand *kalpas* in the Avici Hell, but after expiating this sin, they were again able to meet Never Disparaging and were led by him to attain supreme enlightenment.

Nichiren read the story of Never Disparaging in a way that reflected—or perhaps even inspired—his understanding of his own ordeals as redemptive suffering. In his reading, Never Disparaging, like Nichiren himself, had spread by means of *shakubuku* a teaching embodying the essence of the Lotus Sutra and encountered hostility as a result. Those who harassed the bodhisattva fell into hell for many *kalpas*

for having persecuted a practitioner of the Lotus. In the sutra text, the phrase “after expiating this sin” unmistakably refers to those people who mocked and attacked Never Disparaging and who, after eradicating the grave offense of their Dharma slander, were eventually able to reencounter him and achieve supreme awakening through the Lotus Sutra. But Nichiren deliberately read the passage so that the grammatical subject of “after expiating this sin” was not those who persecuted Never Disparaging but the bodhisattva himself. “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was not abused and vilified, stoned and beaten with staves without reason,” he suggested. “He had probably slandered the true Dharma in the past. The phrase ‘after expiating this sin’ means that because he met persecution, he was able to eradicate his sins from prior lifetimes” (“*Tenju kyōju hōmon*,” *Teihon* 1:507; *Letters of Nichiren*, 161 [slightly modified]). In this way, Nichiren interpreted the scriptural account of Never Disparaging in terms that reinforced his understanding of his own experience of persecution as a form of atonement for his past offenses against the Dharma and as a guarantee of future buddhahood.

## Nichiren’s “Nexus for Salvation”

The “Dharma Preacher” chapter of the Lotus Sutra, in praising the merits of those who can uphold the sutra in a future age, represents Śākyamuni Buddha as saying that such a person is his envoy, sent by him to carry out the Buddha’s work: “Let it be known that that person is a great bodhisattva who, having achieved anuttarasamyaksambodhi, [has] taken pity on the living beings, and vowed to be reborn here. . . . [Such a person,] rejecting the reward due his own pure deeds, out of pity for living beings after my passage into extinction shall have been reborn in the evil world, where he shall broadly preach this scripture” (*Miaofa lianhua*

*jing*, T 9:30c21–26; Hurvitz, *Scripture of the Lotus*, 160).

Hiroshi Kanno, in an insightful analysis of this passage, stresses the empowerment to be gained by choosing to regard one’s sufferings as stemming not from one’s past evil deeds but from a vow compassionately undertaken for others’ sake. This passage, Kanno argues, “can cast a light which can change the worldview of persons who really groan under the weight of suffering.” He suggests that the Lotus Sutra aims at converting its followers from “persons to be saved” to those who work actively to save others (Hiroshi Kanno, “The Bodhisattva Way and Valuing the Real World in the *Lotus Sūtra*,” *Journal of Oriental Studies* 17 [2007]: 182–87). Nichiren certainly saw himself and his disciples as those who save others, and he referred to himself and his followers as “envoys of the Tathāgata,” citing this same sutra passage. But—judging from his extant writings—he himself never claimed to be a great bodhisattva who had voluntarily rejected “the reward due his own pure deeds” for others’ sake. Why, when confronted with the need to explain his present sufferings to himself and his disciples, did he not avail himself of so powerful a proof text but instead chose to represent his hardships as expiation for his own prior sins against the Dharma?

One might suggest several reasons for this. First, Nichiren’s claim that his present trials were the result of his own past enmity toward the Lotus Sutra enabled him to use himself as an object lesson in conveying the message that attachment to provisional teachings brings immense suffering. Here he referred to a period in his youth, before his commitment to the Lotus Sutra, when he himself had chanted the *nenbutsu* as his teacher had done: “Since I too slandered the Dharma in the past, I became a *nenbutsu* devotee in this lifetime, and for several years, whenever I saw those who practiced the Lotus Sutra, I mocked them, saying

that not a single person has ever attained buddhahood through that sūtra, or that not even one in a thousand can be saved by it. Awakening from my slander, I am like a man who, while drunk on sake, felt pleasure in striking his parents but regrets it on sobering up” (“Sado gosho,” *Teihon* 1:615).

Second, Nichiren seems to have felt that an awareness of one’s own past acts against the Dharma was necessary to sustain one’s resolve in the face of hardship. To two lay followers, the brothers Ikegami, whose father was threatening to disinherit them on account of their faith, he wrote, “Never doubt but that you slandered the Dharma in past lifetimes. If you doubt that, you will not be able to withstand even the minor sufferings of this life” (“Kyōdai shō,” *Teihon* 1:924–25). Nichiren also occasionally applied this principle to personal tribulations that did not take the form of external opposition and were seemingly unrelated to the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. To another follower, the lay monk Ōta Jōmyō, who was suffering from painful skin lesions, he wrote:

Although you were not in the direct lineage [of *shingon*], you were still a retainer to a patron of that teaching. For many years you lived in a house devoted to a false doctrine, and month after month your mind was influenced by false teachers. . . . Perhaps the relatively light affliction of this skin disease has occurred so that you may expiate [your past offenses] and thus be spared worse suffering in the future. . . . These lesions have arisen from the sole

offense of slandering the Dharma. [But] the wonderful Dharma that you now embrace surpasses the moon-praising *samādhi* [*gatsuai zanmai*] [by which the Buddha cured King Ajātaśatru of the foul sores resulting from his sins]. How could your disease not be cured and your life extended?” (“Ōta Nyūdō-dono gohenji,” *Teihon* 2:1117–18)

Nichiren did not attribute all of his followers’ personal sufferings in blanket fashion to past acts against the Dharma, and why he did so in this particular case is not altogether clear. Perhaps it stemmed from his assessment of what kind of interpretation of Ōta’s illness would best encourage him. Or perhaps the opportunity to take aim at the defects of *shingon* esoteric teachings—an issue then very much on Nichiren’s mind—may have also played a role. In this reading, not only persecution at the hands of others but even the ordinary sufferings of devotees, such as illness, are drawn into the explanatory

framework of why Lotus Sutra practitioners, contrary to the promise of “security and peace in the present life,” should meet with suffering. Nichiren’s argument here is that personal conviction of past wrongdoing, and thus of a debt to be paid, enables one to embrace present suffering, taking it as an opportunity to eradicate that offense in toto. Also, by the power of one’s faith in the Lotus Sutra, one receives these karmic consequences far more lightly and over a much shorter period of time than would otherwise be the case.

Third, in asserting that his present sufferings were the result of maligning the Dharma in the past, Nichiren was able to account for the puzzling fact that his tormentors received no obvious sign of karmic retribution. He argued that were a votary of the Lotus Sutra to be unjustly charged with some crime, even a minor one, his persecutors would incur immediate karmic retribution—as long as that individual himself had not slandered the true Dharma in

prior lifetimes. But because he *had* committed this evil in prior lives, Nichiren maintained, his enemies went unscathed for the present while he himself had to endure their hostility, just as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was attacked “with swords and staves” because he had slandered the Lotus Sutra in the past (*Kaimoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:600).

Fourth and most important, in regarding his present sufferings as expiation for past slanders of the Dharma, Nichiren in effect placed himself on the same level as the people he was attempting to save and identified a karmic bond between them. We see this especially in his reading of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging as meeting abuse because of the Dharma slander that he himself had committed in prior lifetimes. Nichiren wrote:

The past events described in the “Never Disparaging” chapter I am now experiencing, as predicted in the “Fortitude” chapter; thus the present foretold in the “Fortitude” chapter corresponds to the past of the “Never Disparaging” chapter. The “Fortitude” chapter of the present will be the “Never Disparaging” chapter of the future, and at that time I, Nichiren, will be its Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. (“Teradomari gosho,” *Teihon* 1:515; *Letters of Nichiren*, 170 [slightly modified])

The “Never Disparaging” chapter tells of a Lotus practitioner who met great trials in spreading the sutra in the past, while the “Fortitude” chapter predicts the trials of practitioners who will spread it in the future. Based on his reading of these two chapters, Nichiren saw himself and his opponents as linked together by the Lotus Sutra in a vast soteriological drama of sin, expiation, and the realization of buddhahood. Those who malign a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra must undergo repeated rebirth in the Avīci

Hell for countless *kalpas*. But because they have formed a “reverse connection” (*gyakuen*) to the Lotus Sutra by slandering its votary, after expiating this sin they will eventually encounter the Lotus Sutra again and be able to become buddhas. By a similar logic, the practitioner who suffers their harassment must encounter this ordeal precisely because he maligned the Lotus Sutra in the past, just as his tormenters do in the present. But because of his efforts to protect the Lotus by opposing Dharma slander in the present, his own past offenses will be wiped out, and he will not only attain buddhahood himself in the future but also enable his persecutors to do so. The Lotus practitioner and those who oppose him are thus inseparably linked via the sutra in the same “nexus for salvation,” or web of causes and conditions, that will ultimately enable both to realize buddhahood. The term *nexus for salvation* has been used in reference to the Pure Land movements of Japan’s Heian (794–1185) and Kamakura (1185–1333) periods, in which all who placed faith in Amida Buddha were thought to be connected, and forming a karmic tie to anyone deemed certain to achieve birth in Amida’s Pure Land was believed to assist one’s own realization of that goal (Frederic Kotas, “Ōjōden: Accounts of Rebirth in the Pure Land” [PhD diss., University of Washington, 1987], 35, 303). We find something similar in Nichiren’s teaching, in his idea that all of those who form a bond with the Lotus Sutra are karmically connected and that whether they embrace the Lotus or oppose it, they shall by virtue of that bond eventually “succeed in becoming buddhas” (Nichiren characterized the *mappō* era as a time when people were most likely to form a karmic bond with the Lotus Sutra through “reverse connection,” that is, by slandering it).

To shift one’s perspective—using Professor Kanno’s terms—from “someone needing to be saved” to “someone who saves others” restores agency to the

individual involved; he or she is no longer the passive victim of events but actively embraces adversity to benefit others. Nonetheless, there exists the potential for a false sense of superiority, even spiritual arrogance, in defining oneself as “one who saves others.” Whether deliberately or not, in identifying himself as someone guilty of slandering the Dharma in the past, Nichiren rejected this possibility, placing himself on the same level as those who opposed him and representing himself, together with them, as sharing in the same causal nexus. In that spirit, he wrote: “The *Nirvāṇa Sūtra* says: ‘The various individual sufferings of all living beings are all the Tathāgata’s own sufferings.’ I say: This one common suffering of all living beings [resulting from slander of the Dharma] is entirely my own suffering” (*Kangyō Hachiman shō*, *Teihon* 2:1847).

Nichiren did not claim that he could take upon himself all individual sufferings of all beings, something perhaps only the Buddha could do. But he did see himself as participating in the suffering that arises from having rejected the true Dharma, and he committed his life to the task of freeing others from the consequences of that same error.

## Conclusion

In addressing the question of why he and his followers had to endure harsh trials, Nichiren did not fix on a single explanation but adopted multiple perspectives. On the one hand, his sufferings were necessary to prove the truth of the Lotus Sutra and to verify his own status as its votary. On the other hand, they were an act of expiation for past slanders of the Dharma, an expiation made possible within a radically reduced time frame by his efforts to defend the sutra. Nichiren similarly advanced multiple explanations for related questions, such as why he and his disciples were not protected by the gods and why their enemies incurred no obvious karmic

backlash. For example, he argued, as he had in the *Risshō ankoku ron*, that the protective deities, unable to hear the true Dharma of the Lotus Sutra on which they rely for sustenance, had abandoned the country, or that when people perform acts so evil as to merit rebirth in the Avīci Hell, they will not necessarily exhibit any sign of retribution in this lifetime (*Kaimoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:600, 601). Some passages in his writings suggest a deep conviction that, appearances to the contrary, he was indeed under the protection of the buddhas:

Practitioners born in the Final Dharma age who spread the Lotus Sutra will encounter the three kinds of enemies and be exiled, perhaps even put to death. But Śākyamuni Buddha will enfold in his robe those who persevere in propagation. . . . Śākyamuni Buddha, Many Jewels, and the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions will praise them as persons of great good roots and as teachers for all living beings. . . . Thus praised, I have been able to withstand immeasurable ordeals. (“Shohō jissō shō,” *Teihon* 1:726. Nichiren probably refers to the “robe of the Tathāgata” mentioned in the “Dharma Preacher” chapter of the Lotus Sutra [T 9:31c24, 26], which represents great forbearance.)

Yet in other passages, he voices a conviction that seeks no guarantee of protection, simply a resolve to carry on with his mission, no matter what may happen. “Let Heaven forsake me. Let ordeals confront me. I will not begrudge bodily life. . . . Although I and my disciples must endure many trials, so long as we do not have a mind of doubt, we will naturally arrive at the state of buddhahood” (*Kaimoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:601, 604).

This plurality of perspectives speaks perhaps to the fact that no single explanation will adequately account, at every

juncture, for one’s own suffering. What these multiple explanations all share, however, is Nichiren’s absolute refusal to regard his ordeals as arbitrary or meaningless, or himself as their hapless victim. Whether as an inevitable part of his sacred task or as an act of expiation, he actively embraced them not only for his own sake but for others’. This attitude enabled him to find happiness, purpose, and at times even an awed sense of privilege amid the harshest adversity. It prompted him to describe himself during the first winter of his exile to Sado—cold, hungry, isolated, and in danger for his life—as “the richest man in Japan today” (*ibid.*, 589).

Nichiren’s Lotus exclusivism rested on an interlocking set of hermeneutical premises concerning the soteriological powers inherent in the Lotus Sutra; the distinction between “true” and “provisional” teachings as something grounded in metaphysical reality; and the workings of karmic causality over past, present, and future lifetimes. This essay has attempted, as an act of historical imagination, to enter into these premises in order to understand Nichiren’s view of suffering—his own and that of the people around him. But today, apart from the more literalist contingent among his followers, there are many people, including some Lotus practitioners, for whom such assumptions no longer resonate, making Nichiren’s view of suffering hard to translate into a contemporary idiom. His attributing of major disasters to rejection of the Lotus Sutra and attachment to other teachings runs counter to modern pluralistic sensibilities and is apt to appear naive and distasteful, even dangerous, in an age when the brutal consequences of religious strife are sharply evident. His elevated sense of personal mission, too, easily appears as delusive self-righteousness, and his attributing of one’s present trials to past slanders of the Dharma can seem to be a potentially insidious form of victim blaming. Viewed from outside

Nichiren’s own hermeneutical framework, is there anything more broadly applicable to be drawn from his attitude toward suffering?

Nichiren has long been admired, even outside his own following, for his perseverance in the face of opposition and his defiance of worldly authority. But there is more to his stance than mere courage or perseverance. The suffering that Nichiren addressed was, in his understanding, not something remediable by wealth, technology, or political power. In confronting unavoidable suffering, he demonstrated an attitude that wastes little energy in railing against it but unflinchingly embraces it, interpreting it in whatever way appears meaningful at the moment so as to use that suffering for one’s own development and to offer it on behalf of others. In Mahayana terms, this is the commitment of the bodhisattva. To quote again from Professor Kanno’s analysis of the “Dharma Preacher” chapter: “Followers of the Lotus Sutra do not seek to attain enlightenment through their own efforts, nor do they seek to be saved by an absolute savior. They strongly bear in mind their true identity that they have been born into this evil world of their own will to propagate the Lotus Sutra for the sake of all living beings, and thus feel satisfied by fulfilling their mission” (Kanno, “Bodhisattva Way,” 186). This well describes the stance that Nichiren adopted. In so doing, he also showed the value of abandoning the false and ultimately frustrating expectation that happiness should mean an absence of suffering. “Don’t doubt because heaven does not lend you protection,” he told his followers. “Don’t lament that your present life is not ‘secure and peaceful’” (*Kaimoku shō*, *Teihon* 1:604). For him, the Lotus Sutra’s promise of “security and peace in this life” came to mean, not freedom from suffering, but a happiness to be found even in the midst of it, because of the commitment he had made. □

# The Prism of the Lotus Sutra (4)

by Atsushi Kanazawa

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## The Ox

Śākyamuni's family name, Gotama, means literally "best ox" or "best cow." Although not necessarily for this reason, the ox, an animal with which we are all familiar, has close connections with Buddhism. In the "Faith Discernment" chapter of the Lotus Sutra we read: "Very rich is his house, with abundance of gold and silver, moonstones and agates, pearls and lapis lazuli; elephants, horses, oxen, and sheep; palanquins, litters, carriages; husbandmen, young slaves, and a multitude of people." This shows quite clearly that in India the ox, a useful domestic animal, was regarded as a valuable asset along with elephants, horses, and sheep. This means that it was clearly distinguished from the many insect pests and from wild birds and snakes, as well as from loathsome beasts such as foxes, wolves, jackals, and wild dogs, all of which are harmful to humans.

The usefulness of the ox in ancient India, where a technical civilization had not yet developed, can be readily imagined when one considers that it not only supplied people with a precious source of protein in the form of meat (and from the cow, nutritious milk as well) but also provided valuable power for farming and transport. But what merits our greatest attention in the Lotus Sutra is the ox that draws a comfortable carriage beautifully decorated with jewels that, in the eyes of its owner, could be described as a plaything for travel. I would now like to consider the well-known parable of the three carts and the

burning house, which provides perfect material for elucidating the Lotus Sutra's important doctrine of the One Vehicle for going beyond the doctrine of Three Vehicles. It appears in the "Parable" chapter, where a goat cart, a deer cart, and an oxcart are brilliantly contrasted with a great white-ox carriage.

In this parable, the Buddha is likened to a supremely wealthy man who lacks nothing in his state of great contentment. One day a fire breaks out in his house, but his children, unaware of their situation, are so absorbed in their play that they are unwilling to listen to their father's cries of warning. So in order to rescue his foolish children from the fire, he skillfully uses an expedient means to induce them to come out, saying that outside there are carts pulled by a goat, a deer, and an ox, even though this is not really the case.

Having safely escaped the burning house, the children complain that

the three kinds of carts that they had been expecting are nowhere to be seen, whereupon the wealthy father gives them each a magnificent carriage drawn by a great white ox. It goes without saying that in this parable the burning house represents the world in which we live, and the three carts drawn by a goat, a deer, and an ox correspond to the Three Vehicles of the *śrāvaka*, the *pratyekabuddha*, and the bodhisattva respectively. The great white-ox carriages that were actually given to the children symbolize the Buddha vehicle. □

## Monkeys

The monkey is an animal with which the Japanese are familiar. Even today, when our everyday lives have receded from forests and mountains, for some reason we feel a strange sense of affinity with monkeys. The situation was similar in India, the birthplace of Buddhism.

Long before Darwin's theory of evolution, there already seems to have been a sound understanding of the similarities between humans and monkeys. Humans resemble monkeys, and monkeys seem somehow similar to humans. It is well known that monkeys play an important role in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, a world-famous Indian tale. Monkeys also make an appearance in various Buddhist scriptures.

Those of us who are familiar with the Lotus Sutra should call to mind the following passage from the Sutra of Meditation on the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue, the epilogue to the Lotus Sutra: "His ear organ hears disordered sounds and disturbs the principle of harmony. This produces in him a demented mind, like [that of] a foolish monkey. . . . His organ of thought is like [that of] a monkey, never resting even for a little while. Should one desire to subdue this organ, he must zealously recite the Great Vehicle, reflecting on the Buddha's greatly enlightened body, the completion of his power, and his fearlessness."

Here two negative characteristics of the human-like monkey are at issue. One is its foolishness, and the other is that monkeys are constantly on the move, "never resting even for a little while."

The organ of thought, also known as the mind organ, is one of the six sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind—with which we perceive the six kinds of sense objects, namely, form, sound, smell, taste, tangible objects, and mental objects, and it controls the other five sense organs. If these six sense organs do not function properly, it is naturally impossible to acquire correct knowledge. This means that it is our duty as Buddhists to free ourselves from the state of the foolish monkey; always keep our six sense organs pure; and subdue, discipline, and train our minds, which are liable to become restless and unstable like that of a monkey. It is worth recalling the following words from the "Merits of the Preacher" chapter in the Lotus Sutra: "The thought of this man is pure, lucid, acute, unturbid; by this mystic organ of thought he knows all laws, high, low, and mean; on hearing a single verse he penetrates its infinite meanings. . . . A keeper of the Law-Flower Sutra has an organ of thought like this." □

## Sand

According to the death poem of Ishikawa Goemon, a famous Japanese outlaw of the sixteenth century, there will always be thieves no matter what, "even if the sands on the seashore run out." As can be seen in that statement, commonplace grains of sand, be they on the seashore or in some other similarly delimited area, have since ancient times often been used as an analogy for large numbers or for extremely large quantities that are beyond computation.

In Buddhist scriptures, sand has been associated with the Ganges, India's best-known river, and we find the expression "sands of the Ganges" frequently in the Lotus Sutra. For example, in the "Preaching" chapter of the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings we read: "All the buddhas, . . . though having one body, reveal bodies innumerable and numberless as the sands of the Ganges

of a hundred thousand myriad *koṭis nayutas*; in each body, display various forms countless as the sands of some hundred thousand myriad *koṭis nayutas asamkhyeya* Ganges." Again, in the "Introductory" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find: "These things so numerous let me now briefly describe. I see in those lands bodhisattvas like the sands of the Ganges, who in various degrees seek after the Buddha Way."

In the first example, the bodies and forms of the buddhas are said to be equal in number to the sands of the Ganges, which number in the hundreds, thousands, myriads, *koṭis*, and *nayutas*—all large numbers—or are innumerable, numberless, and countless (*asamkhyeya*) and cannot be easily measured, counted, or calculated. Similarly, in the second example the enormous number of bodhisattvas is again likened to the sands of the Ganges.

As is evident from the frequent use of such expressions for incalculably large numbers, in the Lotus Sutra there are described enormous numbers of worlds, enormous numbers of humans and bodhisattvas, and enormous numbers of buddhas employing enormous numbers of skillful means throughout time without end, or during "aeons as numerous as the sands of the Ganges." Is this not something to encourage and inspire us as, aspiring to enlightenment, we apply ourselves to our daily religious practice? □

# The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

## Chapter 22

### The Final Commission

*This is the 116th installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra by the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.*

**INTRODUCTION** As mentioned in the previous chapter, “The Divine Power of the Tathagata,” the word *commission* here means “asking someone to take care of something” or “entrusting someone with a difficult task.” Here it means commissioning others to disseminate the Lotus Sutra. Since this word is in the title of the chapter, it is easy to perceive what its contents are. Let us look at the text straightaway.

**TEXT** At that time Shakyamuni Buddha rose from his Dharma seat, manifesting supernatural powers, laid his right hand on the heads of the innumerable bodhisattva-mahasattvas, and spoke thus: “I, for incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of asamkhyeyas of kalpas, have practiced this rare Dharma of Perfect Enlightenment. Now I entrust it to you. Do you wholeheartedly promulgate this Dharma and make it increase and prosper far and wide.”

**COMMENTARY** In Japan, patting someone on the head is a gesture of praise, but in India it signified trust and encouragement, as if to say, “I leave it to you. Do your best.”

It is said that Suryasoma, who bestowed the Lotus Sutra on his favorite disciple, Kumarajiva, laid his hand on Kumarajiva’s head and said to him, “The sun of the Buddha has set in the west; its remaining radiance is about to reach the east. This sutra has a special connection with the northeast. Reverently propagate the sutra there.” As I mentioned in the preface to volume one, Suryasoma’s gesture expressed his special trust in Kumarajiva.

The Buddha manifested his supernatural powers and showed his deep trust in innumerable bodhisattvas by laying his right hand on their heads. They must have been moved beyond words by the Buddha’s act.

The World-honored One not only perceived that he

would become extinct before long, but also predicted it to his disciples. A profound emotion must have filled both the World-honored One and his disciples. In the face of his approaching extinction, he taught nothing but the Dharma. Every Buddhist must bow before the pure, lofty, and beneficent mind of the Buddha.

**TEXT** In like manner three times he laid his hand upon the heads of the bodhisattva-mahasattvas and spoke thus: “I, for incalculable hundreds of thousands of myriads of kotis of asamkhyeyas of kalpas, have practiced this rare Dharma of Perfect Enlightenment. Now I entrust it to you. Do you receive and keep, read, recite, and proclaim this Dharma abroad that all living beings universally may hear and know it.

**COMMENTARY** Three times Shakyamuni Buddha laid his hand upon the heads of the bodhisattva-mahasattvas and repeated words with practically the same meaning. From this repetition we can easily judge the importance of his declaration.

**TEXT** Wherefore? The Tathagata is most benevolent and compassionate, not mean and stingy, and is able fearlessly to give the Buddha wisdom, the Tathagata wisdom, and innate wisdom to all living beings.

**COMMENTARY** *Wherefore?* In other words, why did the Buddha unsparingly give the many bodhisattvas the wisdom for the enlightenment he finally attained after an infinite period of time?

To understand the reason, we must consider the words “not mean and stingy” alongside the words “rare Dharma” in the previous passage beginning “In like manner.”

Students of the Lotus Sutra thus far would well understand that we cannot attain buddhahood without extraordinary effort. Leaving aside his long period of practice in former lives, the Buddha experienced many sufferings and made strenuous efforts for a long time in this world before finally attaining Perfect Enlightenment.

He freely taught all living beings the path to Perfect Enlightenment, which is rare and hard to attain, without the slightest meanness. Moreover, he used various teaching devices as skillful means with thoughtful consideration so that all living beings might attain Perfect Enlightenment as soon as possible, without being sidetracked.

When we compare this attitude with the usual way of the world, we must acknowledge how much we owe to Shakyamuni Buddha’s compassion. Very few experienced teachers take the trouble to educate their pupils so successfully that a pupil can master a subject in half the time it took a teacher to do so. Experienced teachers may take the attitude that pupils do not deserve to learn the secrets of a

branch of knowledge, or a pupil should struggle as much as the teacher did to master the subject. Among Buddhists, an attitude of “begrudging the Dharma” arises from a false and petty mind and is a great obstacle to social progress.

Needless to say, the World-honored One does not begrudge the Dharma, but since he clearly expresses his attitude here, we must take this passage as a firm admonition against being mean ourselves.

Teachers should not only share generously and unstintingly what they have learned but help pupils in various ways to master a subject even more quickly than the teacher did. If it took a teacher ten years to master a subject, the teacher should consider how to help others master it more quickly, whether in eight years, five years, or whatever. This is a sign of a truly benevolent and compassionate mind.

This should be the aim of teachers not only of the Dharma and enlightenment but also of secular learning—whenever the experienced teach those without experience. This is the lesson we should take to heart from this passage of the Lotus Sutra.

- *Fearlessly.* “Fearlessly” here is slightly different from the ordinary sense of not being afraid of anything and implies rather not being hesitant or nervous about doing something. In this interpretation, being “afraid” of something means that the mind is not free to act of its own accord.

Being hesitant implies that someone who preaches the Dharma is afraid of being disliked, derided, or treated as a fool.

Being nervous or swayed by something refers to people who preach the Dharma because they hope to be rewarded and esteemed for it, but they are afraid their self-serving attitude will show. So people who are nervous with these impure thoughts cannot be free to act as they would like.

Since the Tathagata preaches the Dharma out of great, completely pure benevolence and compassion, he preaches it perfectly and calmly, without the slightest meanness, fearing and being swayed by nothing. We ordinary unenlightened people cannot easily attain such a state, but we must consciously try as hard as we can to approach the mental state of the Tathagata.

The sutra says that the Tathagata, preaching thus, fearlessly imparts the Buddha wisdom, the Tathagata wisdom, and innate wisdom to all living beings. These three wisdoms are extremely important because they summarize the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, but so far they have not been well understood by many people.

- *The Buddha wisdom.* A buddha is someone who is enlightened to the truth of all things in the universe. Accordingly, the Buddha wisdom is the wisdom by which the Buddha has been enlightened to the universal truths and discerns the real aspect, or ultimate reality, of all things. In short, it is the wisdom of the truth.

- *The Tathagata wisdom.* A tathagata is one who has come from Thusness, or absolute Truth.

The Tathagata, the Buddha, awakened to the truth as a human being, but he also came from the absolute Truth, judging from the deeper meaning of his appearance in this world. The place to which he has come is naturally the world of living beings. He came into this world because in his benevolence and compassion he wanted to cause all living beings to discover the absolute Truth and live correctly according to it.

Therefore, the Tathagata wisdom is the wisdom based on the Buddha’s great benevolence and compassion. Because it is wisdom that teaches all living beings benevolence and compassion, it also can be called the wisdom of benevolence and compassion.

- *Innate wisdom.* This is the most difficult of the three wisdoms to understand. Some people might mistakenly think it means knowledge of nature, such as natural science.

Innate wisdom is based on essential human nature, and since essential human nature is the buddha-nature, any wisdom based on the essential nature of human beings is the wisdom that comes from their buddha-nature.

There is profundity in this notion. This wisdom is not acquired after birth, but long before birth. It is what Zen Buddhists call one’s original aspect, or self, that existed before the birth of one’s parents. It is the manifestation of our buddha-nature. According to this teaching, all human beings have this wisdom. It is often hidden by the delusions or defilements of the mind, but sometimes it suddenly inspires us.

People’s spontaneous, heartening good deeds, kind words, and encouragement of others spring directly from their inherent buddha-nature. The kind of mind that prompts those acts of kindness is inspired by the buddha-nature and communicates directly with the mind of the Buddha, or the Eternal Original Buddha.

Therefore, if those who have fully developed that kind of mind hear the Buddha, who awakened to the universal truth, teach how human beings should live, they will completely accept his teaching. If they hear him speak about liberation by the Eternal Original Buddha, they will awaken to his teaching in a flash.

In other words, this kind of wisdom is innate wisdom. It is only natural that this wisdom, which springs from the buddha-nature, the essential nature of human beings, would instantly accord with the Buddha’s mind. Religious faith is this kind of wisdom in practice.

If you try to force yourself to believe in what you have been taught, you will not have true faith. But if you selflessly and simply accept the teachings with gratitude, innate wisdom will manifest itself before you know it, and out

of it will grow true faith. That is how true faith emerges.

That is why innate wisdom can be called the wisdom of faith.

Someone who achieves ultimate perfection of character is called a buddha. Such a buddha must have both the wisdom of the truth, which can discern the ultimate reality of all things, and the wisdom of benevolence and compassion, which liberates all living beings. For unenlightened people to achieve that state, they need the wisdom of faith, which responds to the wisdom of truth and the wisdom of benevolence and compassion. Therefore, Shakyamuni Buddha declared that he would grant all bodhisattvas, that is, all people, these three wisdoms.

Those of us who study the Lotus Sutra are about to receive these wisdoms from Shakyamuni Buddha, so we should not study the Lotus Sutra haphazardly. While continually seeking the truth (Buddha wisdom), fully cultivating benevolence and compassion (Tathagata wisdom), and then aiming for true faith (innate wisdom), we must endeavor through our practice to bring our buddha-nature into full play in accordance with the mind of the Buddha.

**TEXT** The Tathagata is the great lord of giving to all living beings. Do you also follow and learn from the Tathagata's example, not being mean and stingy.

**COMMENTARY** *The Tathagata is the great lord of giving to all living beings.* None is a greater lord of giving than Shakyamuni Buddha, because he can give all three wisdoms—the Buddha wisdom, the Tathagata wisdom, and innate wisdom—to all living beings. Giving alms and offerings pales beside this.

- *Do you also follow.* We must follow the mind of the Tathagata, who gives these three wisdoms to all living beings.
- *Learn from the Tathagata's example.* This does not mean simply that we are to learn the teachings of the Tathagata, but that we are to understand his spirit well and walk the path he did. We must never be mean and stingy with the Dharma, but follow the path of constantly imparting to others the teachings we have awakened to, leading them to liberation.

**TEXT** If good sons or good daughters in ages to come believe in the Tathagata wisdom, do you proclaim this Dharma Flower Sutra to them that they may hear and know it, in order that they may obtain the Buddha wisdom.

**COMMENTARY** The reason we preach the Dharma and spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is to help all people obtain the Buddha wisdom.

The phrase “in order that they may obtain the Buddha wisdom” is profoundly significant and expresses most concisely the purpose of Buddhism. They are words worth remembering.

It is not enough merely to cause people to change and find happiness superficially. By drawing out and cultivating their inherent buddha-nature and its concomitant Buddha wisdom, we guide them so that through their own efforts they can attain happiness—a deep happiness welling up from the depths of their beings. This is the true purpose of the Buddha Dharma and also the proper way to teach.

**TEXT** If there be living beings who do not accept it on faith, you should show, teach, benefit, and gladden them with the other [skillful] profound teachings of the Tathagata. If you are able thus to act, then you will have repaid the grace of the buddhas.”

**COMMENTARY** *Show, teach, benefit, and gladden.* This is the rational order and way that the Buddha teaches us for leading inexperienced people to the true Dharma.

First, we “show” them the general meaning of the teachings.

Then, seeing that they have been affected by it, we “teach” them their deeper meaning.

Next, when we realize that they appear to understand the teachings, we lead them to actually practice them to obtain their benefits (both internal and external merits).

Having done this, they will be “gladdened” and have a sense of purpose in believing in the teachings, keeping them in mind, and practicing them in the way they have been taught. After they reach this stage, the teachings will have firmly taken root in their minds, and few people will abandon them.

That is the basic order for bringing inexperienced people to the true Dharma. Of course, in matters of faith, some people can achieve a profound understanding at a single bound. But with few exceptions, this is the right order for most people.

If we feel so deeply about the superb teachings of the Buddha that we abruptly try to force them on inexperienced people, they will be baffled and not understand them at all. If we preach only the worldly benefits of the teachings but fail to bring people to a full understanding of them, they will have weak faith, and may abandon it in adversity. It is because of this risk that we are provided with the basics for guiding others: showing, teaching, benefiting, and gladdening.

The Buddha's main teaching method was adapting the Dharma to the hearer. He decided what to teach according to each person's capacity and the occasion. In the course of some forty years, he taught innumerable people, and when

we take an overview of all the teachings, there seem to be patterns for adapting them to all people and occasions.

Therefore, he clearly says in this passage that if one suddenly preaches the Lotus Sutra to people but fails to convince them of its truth and they refuse to take it on faith, there is no reason to insist on teaching them the Lotus Sutra. Instead, one can begin “with the other [skillful] profound teachings of the Tathagata.”

There is no doubt that the Lotus Sutra is the summation, the quintessence, the crystallization, of all the Buddha’s teachings. But we must not fall into thinking self-righteously that the Lotus Sutra is the only precious teaching. Even Nichiren, its greatest extoller, believer, and practitioner in history, did not adhere only to the Lotus Sutra, but freely quoted many other sutras to deepen people’s faith in and understanding of the Lotus Sutra.

Still more so in our day, when there is an admirable trend toward searching out the common ground among the basic principles of all religions and sects, it would be highly anachronistic to uphold only one sutra and dismiss all the rest. Such an attitude would be more mistaken than anachronistic. Thus, Shakyamuni Buddha himself in the Lotus Sutra tells us clearly, “You should show, teach, benefit, and gladden them with the other [skillful] profound teachings of the Tathagata.”

Given this, I believe this passage is extremely significant.

In the conclusion of this passage, we read the comment that those of us who make modest, persevering efforts to lead others to the true Dharma “will have repaid the grace of the buddhas.” This is the best possible way for us to repay our debt for the buddhas’ blessing. This is something we must meditate carefully upon. If we were to devote ourselves to spreading the teachings in a flashy way, it would not accord with and please the mind of the Buddha.

**TEXT** Thereupon all the bodhisattva-mahasattvas, having heard the Buddha give this address, were all filled with great joy and paid him added reverence, bowing themselves, bending their heads, and with folded hands saluting the Buddha, crying with united voice: “We will do all as the World-honored One has commanded. Yea, World-honored One! Have no anxiety.”

**COMMENTARY** *Do.* In this instance, this means to perform reverently all those things that the Buddha instructed the bodhisattvas to do.

• *All.* This means completely, perfectly, trying every means in one’s power.

We then read that the bodhisattva-mahasattvas “were all filled with great joy” when Shakyamuni commissioned them to carry out the extremely difficult task of preaching

and spreading the Lotus Sutra in ages to come after the Buddha’s extinction (in the age of the Decay of the Dharma).

The joy of confronting difficulties is of a kind that is appropriate to the bodhisattvas. It is a joy of mahasattvas, that is, of brave men with great aspirations. This joy comes from being entrusted with a difficult task and being encouraged to carry it out. Their whole beings are filled with high spirits and courage as a result.

People today seem to have grown up in a constantly placid environment, and there are fewer brave men than in the past who delight in facing and overcoming difficulties. A spirit of bravery in any generation is essential for human progress, and it is especially important among young people. Let us hope that mentors will try in a broad sense to cultivate just that sort of energy and vigor in the young.

Education methods are important. If you peremptorily order someone to do something, they may only shrink from carrying it out. Certainly it is essential to measure their capability. One must have faith that if someone is using only 80 percent of their strength, they can be aroused to use 100 percent.

Someone with only limited strength cannot be expected to do work that requires twice their strength. The effort may only nip the bud of their development before it can grow. Instead, if you let someone who uses half their strength do a job that requires 60 or 70 percent of their strength, you can first help them develop another 10 or 20 percent of their potential strength. Once they have reached that level, you can raise them up to the next level. This is the truly considerate way to lead others.

Leaders must sense their followers’ potential, evaluate it properly, awaken them to it, and encourage them to use it. If leaders do this, their followers will feel inexpressible joy in the knowledge that someone has appreciated their worth.

Now, the joy of the bodhisattvas on this occasion is the kind of joy that comes with confidence in facing difficulties. When people feel this joy, they are not worried about the difficulties and hardships they face.

I come from a farming household, and when I was young I used to help in the fields. As a child, for example, during the rice-planting season, all I could do was to help pull up the seedlings from the nursery plot, put them in a box, and carry them out to the field for planting. You had to be at least fifteen or sixteen years old to lead a horse in plowing the fields.

However, I wanted very much to do the job of taking the horse by the bridle and leading it around the fields, and I often asked to be allowed to do it. Finally my chance came and I was told, “*You* just might be able to handle it.” I remember being all of twelve at the time. Before long, even the neighbors were asking me to do the job.

I will never forget my elation then at being entrusted with the job, and it brought out strength within me that I did not know I had. Though it may have been a small matter, I was deeply moved by the show of trust. However significant the task was, I was really grateful to my parents and our neighbors for their kindness, and I still am.

At any rate, I believe when people trust others with difficult tasks, and those who are thus trusted cheerfully face hardship, it improves their character and contributes to human progress.

**TEXT** Three times in such manner did all the host of bodhisattva-mahasattvas cry with united voice: “We will do all as the World-honored One has commanded. Yea, World-honored One! Have no anxiety.”

**COMMENTARY** The World-honored One repeated his commission three times and all of the bodhisattvas repeated their reply three times. This threefold repetition indicates the sincerity of the bodhisattvas’ firm promise to do all that the Buddha had commanded.

Hearing this, the World-honored One repeatedly nods his head in contentment and decides to bring to a close this assembly in the sky.

**TEXT** Thereupon Shakyamuni Buddha caused all the buddhas separately embodying him, who had come from all directions, each to return to his own land, saying: “Buddhas! Peace be unto you. Let the stupa of the Buddha Abundant Treasures be restored as before.”

**COMMENTARY** The Buddha then tells all the buddhas separately embodying him to return to their own lands and has the Buddha Abundant Treasures restore the stupa as it was. Shakyamuni realized that his teachings would be received, kept, and propagated in future ages, including the period of the Decay of the Dharma. The Tathagata Abundant Treasures and the buddhas embodying Shakyamuni, who came from the ten directions to bear witness to the truth of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and its infinite value, have achieved their present purpose.

**TEXT** As these words were spoken, the innumerable buddhas separately embodying Shakyamuni, from all directions, who were seated on lion thrones under the jewel trees, as well as the Buddha Abundant Treasures, the host of infinite asamkhyeyas of bodhisattvas, Eminent Conduct and others, also the four groups of shravakas, including Shariputra and others, and the gods, human beings, asuras, and so on of all the worlds, hearing the preaching of the Buddha, all rejoiced greatly.

**COMMENTARY** *The preaching of the Buddha.* This means specifically the conclusion of his teaching that through the teachings of the Lotus Sutra human beings can obtain the Buddha wisdom and that the *saha* world will surely become the Land of Tranquil Light.

With this, the Buddha’s preaching in the Lotus Sutra completes a major stage. With the close of this chapter, the sutra’s most significant part, which describes the Eternal Original Buddha and his great benevolence and compassion, is concluded. A curtain has been drawn on the portion of the Lotus Sutra played out on the stage of an ideal scene (the sky), and the drama once again returns to the scene of reality (Divine Eagle Peak).

*To be continued*

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