

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. Divine power equally helps such people who have thus taken refuge. 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 Rissho Kosei-kai members, Founder Nikkyo Niwano led his life in the spirit of tolerance. Today, every nation’s government has recognized and the United Nations has given an important status to Religions for Peace. 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. In November 2013 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

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

important principle in our daily lives. However, when we reflect on ourselves, we can see that sometimes our egos take over our emotions 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. 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. □

DHARMA WORLD

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

JAN.–MAR. 2015 VOL. 42

FEATURES: Cultivating Hearts That Welcome the Other

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

Publisher: Moriyasu Okabe

Executive Director:

Jun'ichi Nakazawa

Director: Kazumasa Murase

Senior Editor: Kazumasa Osaka

Editor: Katsuyuki Kikuchi

Editorial Advisors:

Miriam Levering, Gene Reeves,

Yoshiaki Sanada,

Dominick Scarangelo,

Michio T. Shinozaki

Copy Editors:

William Feuillan, Gary Hoiby,

DeAnna Satre, Catherine Szolga

Editorial Staff:

Ryuichi Kaneko, Satoe Izawa

Subscription Staff: Kazuyo Okazaki

Layout and Design: Abinitio Design

Cover photos: Shutterstock, PIXTA

Photoshop work by Abinitio Design

1 Welcoming the Other—
Being Tolerant

by Nichiko Niwano

• • • • •

3 Embracing the Joy of Living
with All Who Are Different
by Yoshitaka T. Hatakeyama

4 An Educational Pathway
through the Root Causes of Past
Violence toward Peace Building
by Johnston McMaster

8 The Role of Religion and Peace
Education in Cultivating Hearts
That Welcome the Other
by Kathy R. Matsui

12 Cultivating Hearts
That Welcome the Other
by Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot

14 Buddhism's Modern Challenge
by David R. Loy

• • • • •

17 Kenji Miyazawa's Discombobulated Lotus Literature:
Japanese Literature as Benevolent Guerilla War on Common Sense
by Gerry Iguchi

24 Perspectives on the Lotus Sutra
by Rebecca Mendelson

33 Championing an Equal Voice for Women of Faith, East and West
An Interview with Ms. Dena Merriam,
Recipient of the Thirty-First Niwano Peace Prize

37 Preparing for a Conference of World Religions
by Nikkyo Niwano

42 The Prism of the Lotus Sutra (7)
by Atsushi Kanazawa

THE THREEFOLD LOTUS SUTRA: A MODERN COMMENTARY

44 The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law
Chapter 23: The Former Lives of the Bodhisattva Medicine King (3)

Embracing the Joy of Living with All Who Are Different

by Yoshitaka T. Hatakeyama

The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States shook the world in 2001, the UN-designated Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. Why do there continue to be such threats to peace despite the horrific experience of two world wars and the Cold War in the twentieth century?

The world expected the end of the Cold War to bring freedom and peace. Ironically, however, the collapse of Cold War structures allowed formerly repressed ethnic and religious identities to erupt in Eastern Europe. A rift emerged between people who had been living together in relative peace. Then, all around the world, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 heightened the tendency of people to fear others and, in the worst cases, to try to do away with them.

Facing this worldwide trend, Religions for Peace has engaged religious leaders in dialogue meant to foster harmony and cooperation among different faiths. Its world council, as well as its national affiliates and regional organizations, also cooperate with UN agencies, NGOs, and some national governments to help with conflict resolution, peace education, approaches to environmental problems, and more.

In 2012, Religions for Peace Japan was officially recognized as a public-interest incorporated foundation by the Japanese government. In addition to continuing our work on interreligious cooperation, we are also working with various UN programs and NGOs on humanitarian issues and awareness campaigns. I am also very pleased to say that 2015 marks our twenty-fifth year

of fostering communication between Japanese and Korean youth at biennial meetings. Continuing these exchanges for this amount of time has deepened trust between both sides. Some participants originally felt defensive, but over time the mood of the meetings has become relaxed, and people are able to share their opinions openly as they work toward a brighter future.

Last August I was a panelist in a workshop on reconciling and unifying the Korean Peninsula during the Eighth Assembly of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace, one of Religions for Peace's regional committees, held in Incheon, South Korea. During the workshop a Korean, a Catholic sister, politely asked me, "What do you think about the controversy surrounding Japan's lack of recognition of its colonial history?" I answered, "There are many ways of thinking about that even among Japanese people. What we can do as people of faith is to create as many spaces as we can for open dialogue. If such spaces exist, then more Japanese people will face the suffering that remains in the hearts of Korean and Chinese people. I think that this will lead to people having a correct view of that history." After the workshop the sister came to thank me for my answer. Thanks to that interaction, we bridged a gap and became friends.

I feel that all of the countries of Asia, at their heart, share an openness to diversity. For example, we don't think of the "other" of this issue's theme—"Cultivating Hearts That Welcome the Other"—as an other that exists in simple opposition

Yoshitaka T. Hatakeyama is secretary-general of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace and Religions for Peace Japan.

to the self. Rather, we see the other in an interdependent way: "I" exist only because "you" exist. I think this interdependent way of seeing the other is quite familiar to people with Asian sensibilities. This way of thinking extends to our way of seeing nature. Humans live *with* nature, not opposed to or separate from it. There might be some aspects of polytheistic religions that see gods in all things that are incompatible with monotheistic religions. However, interfaith dialogue is a place where we can accept those differences and still seek out values that we share.

More than anything else, people of faith working for world peace must overcome their own prejudices. Facing real problems such as violent conflict and discrimination, there are times when cultural and religious differences create friction even at meetings of Religions for Peace. As religious people who pray for the peace and happiness of all people on earth, however, I believe that we are able to overcome any friction.

Unlike politics or economics, which only consider the next fifty or one hundred years, at most, I think that religion shows the way for the next thousand years of humanity. I think that it is our duty to maintain such a broad perspective and to use our actions to show future generations how to live a truly humane life. □

An Educational Pathway through the Root Causes of Past Violence toward Peace Building

by Johnston McMaster

Education is personal and political, about social participation and action. Education empowers us to be community participants and is a dynamic source of social reform, transformation, and liberation from injustice, violence, oppressive structures, and a paralyzing past.

Nations and societies can develop a memory addiction. The past becomes an obsession and a dependence on memory, and memorializing becomes absolutely essential for perceived or imagined identity. In the end there is a surplus of memory, much more than is needed. So a people and its political leaders become mired in the past and there is a paralysis of will and action in the present and for the future.

The other end of the problematic spectrum is amnesia—the loss of memory, or forgetfulness. Nations and societies slip into amnesia in relation to their troubled past. Past catastrophes, violence, and suffering are denied, or there is the pretense that things did not really happen. The terrible past is forgotten intentionally, a line is drawn in history, and everyone is expected to move on. The better and more peaceful present and future are not realized because the denied and unresolved past comes back to haunt and bite and paralyzes the imagination and creativity needed to build a just and sustainable peace.

Unless a pathway is found beyond memory addiction or amnesia, the past in a conflict situation will continue to dominate and paralyze. Education can provide a liberating pathway.

Education as a Liberating Process

In its root meaning, *education* means to “lead out.” It is reflection on experience and knowledge, which can lead out from ignorance, prejudice, and fear. Awareness is raised, experience is refined, and knowledge is deepened so as to lead out from all that restricts and imprisons in a narrow world of not knowing or skewed knowing. Reflection on experience is the primary source of learning. Experiential learning is crucial if people are to learn from the knowledge and wisdom of the humanities, sciences, and arts. Put another way, praxis is reflection on action and experience, and in a positive educational process, praxis and knowledge or wisdom are essential. Education is not learning about, but learning through, praxis, experience, and knowledge or wisdom.

For the early Greek philosophers, education was a process of humanization (Thomas H. Groome, *Will There Be Faith?* [HarperOne, 2011], 94). It had to do with becoming more truly human and humane. Again this is more than just learning *about*, learning facts. In itself that does not lead out to liberation. The process of education is a reflective

experience that is about information, formation, and transformation. It is about who we are and how we live, and given that we are only truly ourselves in community as social beings, education is both humanizing and socializing. Education is personal and political, about social participation and action. Education empowers us to be community participants and is a dynamic source of social reform, transformation, and liberation from injustice, violence, oppressive structures, and a paralyzing past.

Such education takes place at many levels. It begins at home and in the nursery and is continued through primary years of education. The process moves on to second-level education and then for some to higher education at university. The foundational ideals of education outlined above are not always realized through educational systems. Education becomes learning about without critical reflection. Sometimes there is little learning for life, and an educational system can even become a dehumanizing process. Praxis can become divorced from knowledge and knowledge from praxis. At its best, and at whatever level, education ought to be engaged in informing, forming, and transforming through critical reflection toward social reform, transformation, and liberation. Of course, politicians and governments may not want that kind of education. Maintaining the status quo and power arrangement may be more important than transformation, and a mass of uncritical learners may be more desirable than students educated in critical reflection.

Johnston McMaster is the Senior Research Writer and Educator with the Ethical and Shared Remembering Programme with the Junction, in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland (www.thejunction-ni.org). His doctorate is in political theology from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, Evanston, Illinois. He directed a community-education program for sixteen years with the Irish School of Ecumenics at Trinity College, Dublin, and remains as an Adjunct Professor with the university. He is also a writer and broadcaster. His main area of interest is in peace building and reconciliation.

A significant dimension to education is community education. This takes the form of local, grassroots programs of education where a cross section of the local community engages in critical reflection and learning focused on community and social experience and on the thematic issues that emerge from the national and community past, present, and future. This is very much an educational model centered on personal and social critical reflection, informing, forming, transforming, and liberating. It is sometimes known as lifelong learning and is a dynamic mechanism by which we can continue education and learning on a lifelong basis. It contributes much to personal and social human development and to a lifetime of maturation, transformation, and social engagement. Too often it is the underestimated, underdeveloped, and underfunded sector of

education, but a sector that is crucial to personal and social change and liberation. In situations of deep conflict, past violence, and serious community divisions, community education offers a dynamic and creative pathway through the root causes of past violence and for current peace building. Such an educational pathway, template, or curriculum may have the following shape.

An Integrated Educational Pathway

Where there is memory addiction or amnesia, paralyzing the imagination and will to understand and deal with the past and build a more just and peaceful present and future, community education offers a way to break out of the obsession or the sleep. It provides empowerment and liberating possibilities. In a

nation or society struggling to deal with its past violence, conflict, and divisions, it is important to engage specifically with root causes of the past violence. The roots are multiple, indivisible, and inseparable, and it is crucial that all of the strands are engaged. The causes of past violence are rooted in *historical, patriarchal, religious, political, militaristic, and cultural* dynamics. To attempt a shared understanding of the past, including its contestedness, is also to begin to envision and build a different future. Past, present, and future, therefore, cannot be put into separate compartments. The following pathway offers an ethical and shared way of opening up critical questions and perspectives that can begin to engage the imagination in visioning a different, more shared, just, and peaceful future. The indivisible strands are the strands of a community educational program and are also a strategic template for dealing with the past.

• Historical

History lies behind all violent conflicts. It is not possible to begin to understand the current crisis in Syria, Israel/Palestine, and Iraq without historical perspective on the Great War of 1914–18 and the mandates from the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–20. The history of colonialism in relation to Muslim states cannot be ignored or denied.

To take the historical strand seriously is also to engage complexity. All history is interpretation, and because it is, all history is contested. There are always critical questions over narrative

supremacy and who is imposing the narrative norm. Memory and memorialization are also in play and may have more to do with psychology than history. What are the motives that drive the need for memory and remembering? All of this needs to be critically engaged under the historical.

• Patriarchal

This is a crucial strand because patriarchy, the rule of the male and the male as norm, is all-pervasive. Roots go back a long way in history, to very ancient Babylonian city-states, in the West, to Greco-Roman culture, and through Western and other cultures. Sacred texts are rooted in patriarchal cultures and unconsciously give expression to them. Women constitute a little more than half of the human race, but are often in a subjugated role and suffer excessively from militarism, militaristic economics, and the earth's poverty. Rape is an often-denied strategy in every war and violent conflict, as is the reality of various other forms of violence against women. Patriarchy and violence against women go hand in hand, and there can be no liberation from or healing of the past without dealing with this strand.

• Religious

Not all the genocides and killing fields of history have had religious roots, but many have. All six empires that

went to war in 1914 believed they were fighting a holy war, and each believed it had God on its side. The causes of war, violence, and genocide are always complex, which is what the multiple, indivisible strands of this community educational curriculum are trying to say. Religion is part of the complexity—often closely wedded to political power and systems, as religion either colluding with power or co-opted by power. Imperialism, colonialism, and mandates have operated divide-and-rule strategies, often on sectarian lines, cobbling together, as in the Middle East a century ago, sectarian states. The legacy lives on with tragic consequences. No religion has escaped political and militaristic corruption. All have shadow sides, which need to be acknowledged and critically examined.

• Political

There is a truism that everything is politics but politics is not everything. The political strand looms large in every war and violent conflict. Politicians take nations into war, and politics shapes and creates violence. Political policies of injustice and oppression lead eventually to unrest and often violent revolution. Revolutions rarely, if ever, resolve the problems. Too often a corrupt and oppressive regime is replaced by an equally corrupt and oppressive regime. The Russian Revolution is a

classic example of those who replace the old system becoming just like the people they replace. James Joyce in his classic book *Ulysses* saw that happening in Ireland in 1920. Politics has to do with power, systems, and arrangements of power. Any educational process needs to engage with critical reflection on the structures of power—past, present, and future—and if politics is not everything, then critical reflection on the ethics of power is essential.

• Militaristic

Militarism is another dominant strand in any dealing with the past and with present and future peace building. In many situations national budgets are largely taken up with military expenditure and defense. Such budgets are at obscene levels, especially when compared with national contributions to world poverty and hunger. The eradication of disease globally and even locally is often trumped by military expenditure. The arms industry is massive, and there is a military service industry. Established food chains and other service industries accompany military presence to other parts of the planet.

Paradomania is a word that seems to have emerged from the Balkans. It means an unhealthy obsession with all things military. This is not only a global obsession but local as well, the Balkans being an example. It is also expressed in the obsession with memorialization, where military memorials and rituals dominate particular nations and even local communities and town centers. Ireland with its violent past and legacy is another example of *paradomania*. The militaristic strand is also crucial to any critical educational reflection on engaging with a past and building a more peaceful future.

• Cultural

All of the above strands go a long way toward shaping identities, mind-sets, and cultures. What is really at the heart

of being American, British, Japanese, Irish, or Chinese? Culture includes the arts and other forms of intellectual achievement, and these can be identified in all of the above peoples. Culture also includes the customs, ideas, and social behavior of a nation or people. All of this is made and remade often. Culture is not static, nor does it drop from the heavens or from the gods. There is no divinely stamped or authorized culture, able to claim, on that basis, a cultural supremacy or hegemony. We all invent and reinvent our cultures, and cultures do collapse. The history of colonialism is a history of cultural supremacy and dominance, often oppressive. Cultures have been destroyed in the name of political and military conquest. Wealth and power also give cultural “rights” to dominate and impose cultural expansionism. How many of us acquiesce or collude with the McDonaldization or Coca-Colaization of the world? Culture wars threaten to tear nations and the planet apart. Is the peace of the planet threatened today by a clash between the “Christian” West and the “Muslim” East (or Middle East)? Past, present, and future require critical reflection and education on culture.

• Toward the Common Good

Engaging the past roots of violence is not enough. The present and future also need to be engaged. The past needs to be critically understood but not to become an obsession or an addiction. Through a critical awareness and understanding of the past, there can be the release of creative imagination to a vision of a more just and peaceful present and future. Education is about informing, forming, and transforming, which is both personal and social. The future is not the past but different, and in all of this, human beings have the capacity and moral energy to make choices and to become agents of change and history makers.

The common good is local, national, and global. It is what makes for total well-being at all of these levels. It is a shared future rooted in just peace and harmony in diversity. There are at least three practical components in the common good. One is the embedding of responsible human rights. We live in a world of still-evolving rights and responsibilities, which have international legal status. They can be an essential part of a humane, shared cultural and legal and moral framework. Gender justice is part of this and also needs to be embedded in practice in societies, creating greater just structures and relationships between women and men. A society of the common good requires ethics, virtues, and values to underpin it, and there are shared human and spiritual ethics, virtues, and values to be recovered from the spiritual and wisdom traditions of humankind.

• Building Pluralist Democracy and Civil Society

The great experiment of our time is the building and embedding of democracy. There is an observable trend that democratic states do not go to war with one another. Since World War II, democracy has begun to flourish on a global scale. Democracy is a work in progress.

It is never perfect but always needs to be carefully nurtured and refined. But pluralist and participative democracy is our best hope, along with human rights, for eliminating violence and war from the planet.

Education on the nature of democracy is therefore important. It is important to become aware that democracy commits us to the rule of law, freedom, pluralism, diversity, and inclusivity. There is educational empowerment to build pluralist democratic societies. This is also about empowering civil society, building a society where all of its institutions, NGOs, and civic bodies are engaged in working and shaping a society characterized by justice, peace, and positive social ethics. This will increasingly be about global society and active global citizenship, if the world is to experience and enjoy peace.

The preceding is an integrated educational pathway, a community educational curriculum with multiple, indivisible, and integrated strands. Leave one strand out and something crucial goes missing. A community-education pathway has potential to lead out of the violent past toward a more just and peaceful future. It is potentially liberating and empowering. It underlines the imperative for education, education, education. □

The Role of Religion and Peace Education in Cultivating Hearts That Welcome the Other

by Kathy R. Matsui

The minds of the leaders of the world are still set in thinking that national security is about being equipped with military arms and strength, that violence can be prevented by violence, and that violence can be resolved by violence. But is that so? . . . How can we change the mind-set of our leaders and our society from the culture of war to the culture of peace?

In the past as well as in our present world, going to war has been glorified as a noble and heroic act, and war movies are glamorized. But what is the truth about war? War dehumanizes us and the presumed enemy. It sets us to think that the “other” is the enemy. Our differences are exaggerated, and that allows prejudice, xenophobia, and scapegoating. Real or invented threats and brainwashing make us willing to sacrifice everything in war, even to the extent of committing genocide and ethnic cleansing. This is the true face of war that has been repeated in history countless of times at the expense of so many lives.

Deaths caused by war are appalling. The death toll of people who were killed in violence in the Iraq war was 176,000 to 189,000, including 134,000 civilians (figures are from the Iraq Body Count project, a Web-based effort to record civilian deaths). The United Nations reported on August 22, 2014, that the death toll from three years of Syria’s civil war had risen to more than 191,000 people. In most cases, more than 90 percent of all casualties are civilians. Millions are displaced, and women make up a higher percentage of both refugees and victims

of war crimes. Children are exposed to fear and cannot live normal lives. Wars also destroy the natural environment.

And yet the minds of the leaders of the world are still set in thinking that national security is about being equipped with military arms and strength, that violence can be prevented by violence, and that violence can be resolved by violence. But is that so? Does it really work that way? I believe that violence cannot be resolved by violence, as it brings more violence. That is what happened

on September 11, 2001. Approximately 3,000 people (including nineteen hijackers) were killed that day, and more than 6,000 were injured. Following the 9/11 attack, it is said that more than 19,600 people have been killed in Pakistan and Afghanistan. How can we change the mind-set of our leaders and our society from the culture of war to the culture of peace?

The Role of Religion

One answer is the role of religion. Religion guides us in what we need to do and should do with the words of wisdom found in the spiritual teachings. As Dr. M. H. Qureshi mentioned in his keynote address at Commission 2 on Human Rights and Well-Being during the Eighth Assembly of the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP), held in Incheon, South Korea, in August 2014:

Kathy R. Matsui, PhD, is Professor of Global Citizenship Studies at Seisen University, Tokyo. She has worked with peace researchers and educators internationally at the International Institute on Peace Education, the Global Partnership for Prevention of Armed Conflict, and the Global Campaign for Peace Education of Hague Appeal for Peace. She is also active in interreligious dialogue and cooperation for world peace as a member of the Women's Executive Committee, the Peace Research Institute, and the Peace Education Task Force of the World Conference of Religions for Peace Japan.

“The most important aspect of all the religions is that they have developed certain common values in spite of their so many differences in their practices. Truth, love, compassion, nonviolence, accommodation and charity are the value systems which are common across the religions.”

There are various sacred writings of the religions on earth that provide universal value systems. To mention a few, Buddhism has the Lotus Sutra; Christianity has the Bible; Hinduism has the Vedas, Upanishads, and Bhagavad Gita; Judaism has the Torah (mentioned in alphabetical order). They offer very valuable insights and examples as to what we can do to face our sufferings and attain peace, harmony, and happiness.

Religion maintains the spiritual and physical health of the person. Religion tells us to deal with our problems with love and benevolence, tolerance, caring, and empathy. The Christian golden rule is “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” The Islamic version would be “Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you.” Buddhism mentions the importance of transforming the pain inflicted by others and embracing anger and suffering.

The Role of Peace Education

Peace educators pursue a vision of society in which people commit themselves to caring for others instead of exploiting them. People who support this vision believe that it can become a reality

through peace education. The leaders and participants of the Eighth Assembly of the ACRP added the importance of peace education in the Recommendations of the Incheon Declaration: “National chapters work with their educational authorities to ensure that peace education is incorporated at all levels of the curriculum.”

Betty Reardon, former director of Peace Education Center at Columbia University in New York, noted the following in her book *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility*:

The value of citizenship calls on us to educate people to be capable of creating a nonviolent, just social order on this planet, a global civic order offering equity to all Earth's people, offering protection for universal human rights, providing for the resolution of conflict by nonviolent

means, and assuring respect for the planet that produces the life and the well-being of its people. ([Teachers College Press, 1988], 59)

Conflict has both negative and positive aspects. If the attempt to resolve conflict is done in a violent way that disrespects the dignity of others, it promotes destruction and hatred. If a constructive and collaborative method such as dialogue and negotiation is used, it promotes caring and good relationships as well as a healthy social development among individuals, communities, and countries.

Educating the young to negotiate constructively fosters the kind of spiritual health and social competence that is important to improving quality of life. Learning these skills would encourage the development of characteristics such as empathy, sincerity, justice, and caring. Empathy is defined as an

active effort to understand another person's interpersonal event as if one were that other person rather than judging the other person's behavior from one's own perspective.

Peace education is education for change. It serves as a means to empower children and adults alike to become active participants in the transformation of their societies. Changing the mind-sets that cause war to one that is more humane and caring is a challenging mission. Loreta Navarro-Castro and Jasmin Nario-Galace explained in *Peace Education: A Pathway to a Culture of Peace*:

Peace education, or an education that promotes a culture of peace, is essentially transformative. It cultivates the knowledge base, skills, attitudes and values that seek to transform people's mindsets, attitudes and behaviors that, in the first place, have either created or exacerbated violent conflicts. It seeks this transformation by building awareness and understanding, developing concern and challenging personal and social action that will enable people to live, relate and create conditions and systems that actualize nonviolence, justice, environmental care and other peace values. ([Miriam College Center for Peace Education, 2008], 21)

Learning focuses on the values and behaviors that enable individuals to learn to live together in a world characterized by diversity and pluralism. The foremost goal of peace education is preservation of this beautiful planet Earth and all its living beings. So in order to preserve this earth, it is important to work for peace, to nurture peace within ourselves, to bring peace to the environment. The pedagogy of peace education includes the knowledge, skills, and attitude needed to develop appropriate characteristics to conduct reconciliation and peace-building processes.

Practice and Hope

One of the purposes of the United Nations is "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" (Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations).

The scourge and the horrors of war are what I saw and heard about in Nanjing, China, when I was there this past summer to conduct a peace-building training program at the Northeast Asia Regional Peacebuilding Institute (NARPI) as a facilitator of the course "The Theory and Practice of Peace Education." This program was launched in 2011 in Seoul, South Korea, "to promote peace in the region by creating space for learning peace building and building networks among peace-loving people in Northeast Asia.

"Every year, NARPI hosts Summer Training in August and provides a selection of six different courses and a field trip. We offer training programs to practitioners, professionals, activists, students and staff of non-governmental organizations and faith-based groups" (from the NARPI Web site).

We have met four times since the launching of NARPI: in 2011 in Seoul and Inje, South Korea; 2012 in Hiroshima, Japan; 2013 in Inje, South Korea; and 2014 in Nanjing. What I am going to introduce here is not meant to shame my country, Japan. My intentions are to share how peace education has helped the peace-building participants process the terrible incident of the Nanjing Massacre and envision a positive way forward to propose what they can do to change this cycle of violence and hatred.

We heard the lived story of a Nanjing Massacre survivor. The massacre happened in 1937 when the Japanese military committed genocide against fifty thousand to three hundred thousand victims (the lower estimate is according to scholarly research, and the higher estimate is that given by the Chinese

government). The survivor was eight years old at the time. She and her four-year-old sister were the only survivors of her family. Japanese soldiers killed her parents, grandparents, and two older sisters. The younger sister was taken to an orphanage. The older sister was brought up by her uncle and aunt. Both sisters lived a hard life. The older sister withstood all hardship and lived to this day to tell the story.

After hearing her story, some of the Japanese participants broke into tears, especially when they heard the survivor say that it was no fault of the young Japanese people who were there in the room. In fact, when she visited Japan to protest against the Japanese government officials who said that her testimony was a hoax, many Japanese people were kind to her. The Chinese participants stayed close to the Japanese participants and comforted them in as many ways as they could. Some came to me and asked, "What can I do for or say to our Japanese friends?" or said, "I don't know what to do."

The following day we saw the records of the gruesome history at the Nanjing Massacre Museum. I couldn't help but pray and bow with respect before the walls with three hundred thousand names to commemorate the victims. I felt sad that my country committed such inhumane atrocities in Nanjing.

But the participants in the peace-building training—young Chinese, Koreans, Mongolians, and Japanese—having taken peace-education and peace-building courses beforehand for five days, all thought deeply on the matter, and the following are some of the questions and comments that resulted.

One Mongolian participant explained: "Every horrifying photograph and artifact had an explanation that said 'the Japanese military did this' or 'the Japanese government did that.' Can't we change the subject of the sentences to 'war did this' or 'war brought about this horrifying situation? War

changed normal people into beasts and heartless beings.”

One Korean participant said: “No matter what ethnic background we come from, don’t we need to know and predict the possibility that in times of war, we ourselves might build that evil in us and do the beastly things that were done in Nanjing?”

One Chinese participant said: “I feel we have to think what we can do from here. What can we do to make this world a better and safer place to live? What can we do to learn from history and prevent any inhumane activities from happening again? We should never again violate the dignity of others.”

One Japanese participant said, “Such horrifying events still happen to this day. We still hear in the news of one country killing people of another country, of one ethnic group killing another ethnic group or military men raping women of the so-called enemy country or ethnic groups. I want to find ways to stop these frightening things from happening again, and that is why I am here to participate in the NARPI program.”

The Northeast Asian participants posed such questions and shared their thoughts. They responded in solidarity: “What we need to do is to design peace education and peace-building programs that would enable present and future generations to find nonviolent ways to resolve conflict and change the structure of the world from the culture of war to the culture of peace, just as we have taken the peace-building and education sessions, we feel that our attitudes have changed.”

Some Chinese participants said that they had heard many times as they were growing up about the horrible things that the Japanese military had done. Some said that they were a bit nervous in the beginning to meet the Japanese participants. But through the five-day training, all the participants gradually got to know each other, and as they learned about peace building, they were able to

change their mind-set to a more cooperative and accepting attitude. Their change of attitude gave me hope that our young generation can learn how to make decisions and find positive ways to go forward.

In his book *Hidden Horrors: Japanese War Crimes in World War II*, Yuki Tanaka explains that the study of Japanese war crimes offers an opportunity

to learn how easily a person, regardless of nationality, can be trapped by the psychology of brutality when involved in war. Such brutality is often caused by hatred of others, as is clearly illustrated in acts of racism. The most fundamental problem we must address when dealing with any war crime is the profound fear of death that soldiers experience. In order to overcome fear during war, people tend to rely upon violence, which in turn degrades their morals and manifests itself as an outbreak of brutality. ([Westview, 1996], 9–10)

If war causes atrocities that manifest brutality in human beings, then practice of religion and an education to prevent war or even to abolish war would be of significant importance to avoid recurring crimes against human dignity. The Seville Statement, a statement

about violence signed by scientists in May 1986 at Seville, Spain, proved that violent behaviors associated with war are not inborn but something humans have learned. The statement provided scientific evidence that humans are not doomed to perpetual violence; humans have the potential to build peace, and this potential can be educated and nourished.

Conclusion

With widespread teaching of the sacred writings and with comprehensive peace education, individuals would know how to release their bitterness to prevent them from building conditions that would attract violence. Nurturing peaceful characteristics within all humans could eventually lead to the development of a culture of peace. In his article “Forgiveness, Education, Public Policy: The Road Not Yet Taken,” John Rodden notes: “Educators committed to what has become known as ‘character education’ have repeatedly asked: How can we develop people who are more considerate and compassionate, citizens who strive to bring out the best in others and not use or exploit them?” (*Modern Age* [Fall 2004]: 333). The answer is, cultivating hearts that welcome the other through religious teachings and peace education. So be it. □

Cultivating Hearts That Welcome the Other

by Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot

When we speak of “cultivating hearts,” we refer to cultivating human persons themselves, inculcating in them values that will make them more and more humane—loving, generous, compassionate, and merciful—and will help them nurture human relationships whereby they are able to “see others not as enemies or rivals but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced.”

According to Christian belief, the human heart was created for love, and the source of this love is God himself, for he is Love (1 John 4:8). Love is therefore “the fundamental and innate vocation of every human being” (Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, no. 11, 1981), a vocation that needs to be lived in communion both with God and with fellow beings. The vertical and horizontal dimensions of love are thus inseparably interlinked, and as such one cannot be exercised without the other. “If a man says, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar: for he who loves not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” (1 John 4:20). That being so, the Christian concept of fraternal love transcends the boundaries of creed, color, and class to be selflessly at the service of the needy, the poor, and the outcast so eloquently portrayed in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37); it goes beyond loving one’s own friends, equally demanding, “Love your enemies; bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who persecute you” (Matt. 5:44). A genuinely Christian believer therefore has no excuse but to

imitate his master, Jesus, who exemplified all of these and sacrificed himself on the cross for the love of humanity. While exhorting its faithful to cultivate warm and cordial relationships with everyone, Christianity emphasizes purity of heart as well: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). It cautions, “It is not what goes inside your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart” (Mark 7:15), clearly pointing out the need to get rid of all forms of impurity.

The Tripitaka of Buddhism lays stress on cultivating four states of mind to nurture cordial relationships with one another. They are *metta* (loving-kindness), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), *upekkha* (equanimity), and *karuna* (compassion). Of these, *karuna*, which embodies all the qualities associated with compassion in other religions, is the most fundamental tenet in all the strands of Buddhism. In respect to purity and impurity, the Dhammapada says, “Committing no evil / Doing good deeds / Purifying your mind / This is the teaching of all the Buddhas” (XIV, 5 adapted).

Likewise, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Jainism, Sikhism, Shintoism, Taoism,

Zoroastrianism, have their own understanding and interpretations of the concept of fraternal love and of purification of heart. But despite all the religious, ideological, and doctrinal differences among them, all the religions are united on the premise that human beings are all part of a larger humanity, as we share in one origin and destination. All religions exhort their faithful to become kind, tender, and warmhearted, imbibing qualities and virtues such as truthfulness, compassion, mercy, charity, and selfless service for others with no bias, prejudice, or discrimination whatsoever. Needless to say that becoming is always a process; these qualities or virtues, then, are to be nurtured patiently and perseveringly as we journey along the path of life.

The human heart, the wellspring of all emotions, as we know, is the most common and the most recognizable symbol of love. As a matter of fact, the heart of a person reflects his or her own personality, for as the popular saying goes, “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” Therefore, when we speak of “cultivating hearts,” we refer to cultivating human persons themselves, inculcating in them values that will make them more and more humane—loving, generous, compassionate, and merciful—and will help them nurture human relationships whereby they are able to “see others not as enemies or rivals, but as brothers and sisters to be accepted and embraced” (Pope Francis, Message for the World Day of Peace, 2014).

Rev. Miguel Ángel Ayuso Guixot was born in 1952 in Seville, Spain. After joining the Comboni Catholic Missionaries, he was ordained priest in 1980. From 1982 to 2002 he served as a missionary in Egypt and Sudan. From 2005 to 2012 he was director of the Pontifical Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies, where he had been a student. In 2012 Pope Benedict XVI appointed him secretary of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue. Rev. Ayuso speaks Spanish, Arabic, English, French, and Italian.

“Hearts that welcome the other” are purified from all that has contaminated the body and spirit and has thus been detrimental to the good and growth of individuals as well as that of the society. The process of globalization has no doubt interrelated and interconnected human beings like never before, transforming the whole world into a “global village.” But has it truly connected human hearts, as was presumed, so that everyone, irrespective of who he or she is, is rightfully able to participate in and enjoy the fruits of this process and to live in peace with others as befitting a member of the “global family”? The answer, to a large extent, seems to be in the negative. The current spate of unrest and violent clashes in different parts of the globe seem to suggest as much. The increasingly competitive, materialistic, individualistic, and secular tendencies among humans that are the by-products of globalization appear to be driving people away from one another; there has crept in, advertently or inadvertently, in measure big or small, a climate of distrust, suspicion, and fear of the “other,” particularly of the “different other,” among the people.

In this context of rising tensions, hostilities, conflicts, and violence among diverse social groups, including religious communities in various parts of the world, the choice of the subject for this issue of *Dharma World* is quite pertinent. Globalization, sadly, has affected human relationships. Perhaps it is this growing and disturbing phenomenon that prompted Pope Benedict XVI to

remark that “As society becomes even more globalized, it makes us neighbours but does not make us brothers” (Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 19, 2009). Individuals and families may exist side by side; in spite of it, they can still be strangers to one another. There has crept in what Pope Francis would call a “culture of indifference” among the people, a culture that is inured to the cries and sufferings of the poor, the sick, and the needy. While the selfishness and greed of a rich minority have continued to perpetuate the privation of the poor majority, giving rise to rebellion and revolt in many parts of the world, the majority-minority syndrome played out on ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic lines has shaken and shattered the peaceful coexistence of millions and millions of people belonging to different religions and cultures. To combat all of these and to create an environment that fosters cordial relationships among people for the ultimate aim of justice and peace in the world requires nurturing

a culture of solidarity by and among all right-thinking people in the service of the common good. It demands courage, conviction, cooperation, and collaboration from all concerned.

Religions as the bedrock of all spiritual, moral, and ethical values surely are a major force of promoting this culture. While religious leaders have a greater moral responsibility in nurturing this culture by encouraging the faithful to live their lives in mutual love, solidarity, and peace with their neighbors, respecting diversity and differences, believers and people of goodwill must earnestly endeavor to do all that they can to ensure that the spirit of fraternity and friendship prevails and flourishes in their homes, neighborhoods, and communities, where each one, which necessarily includes the “different other,” feels genuinely welcome, appreciated, respected, and cared for, and no one feels ignored and discriminated against. This is the basic foundation for creating lasting peace in the world. □

Buddhism's Modern Challenge

by David R. Loy

Is modern Buddhism opening up new perspectives and possibilities that challenge us to transform ourselves and our societies more profoundly—to seek genuine happiness in a different way, as the Buddha did?

Although Buddhism was the first big missionary religion, it didn't spread by aggressively challenging indigenous religions. Instead, Buddhist teachers and teachings interacted with local traditions, which often led to the development of something new. For example, the resonance between Mahayana and Taoism in China gave birth to Chan/Zen Buddhism, and Indian tantric Buddhism was influenced by the native Bon shamanism of Tibet, leading to the development of Tibetan Buddhism.

This missionary success inevitably raises an important issue, since East Asian and Central Asian forms of Buddhism are often quite different from the teachings and practices found in the earliest Buddhist texts. Are those new traditions necessary adaptations to different places and cultures, or have they misunderstood the essential teachings of the Buddha? For that matter, how true is Theravada to what the Buddha taught? Theravada was only one of a number of early schools that developed in the centuries after the historical Buddha died. Which tradition best preserves his most important teachings, which reveals the path to genuine awakening?

Globalization has brought the various Asian Buddhist traditions into intense contact with each other, so that they cannot ignore each other whether they

want to or not. This new situation offers a special opportunity to pursue basic questions about what is essential (and therefore must be preserved if genuine Buddhism is to flourish) and what is culturally conditioned (and so can be changed to accord better with a new culture).

Such questions are not of interest merely to Asian Buddhists now that Buddhism has come to the West—or rather (since the West is no longer just the West), now that Buddhism encounters the modern world and its globalizing technological and consumerist culture. Modernity's very different worldview and values have spread from America and western Europe to dominate most of the world. In some ways modernity has been very receptive to Buddhist teachings, but in other ways it offers a greater challenge than Buddhism has faced before. The different Asian traditions need to do more than converse only with each other, for it is just as important for them to dialogue with the ways of

understanding and acting that are characteristic of the contemporary, Western-influenced world.

From that perspective, what do we see? First of all, the challenge facing different Buddhisms today—the need to interact and learn from each other—is not restricted to Buddhism. Today the “growing tip” for all religions, if they are to remain alive and relevant, is what they can learn from each other. The growth of fundamentalism in all religious traditions (including Buddhism) reveals how difficult and threatening such a conversation can be. It is much easier to cling to the old ways, believing and acting as (we think) our predecessors did. Yet such a response ignores a wonderful opportunity, because religions can learn something essential from each other.

When Buddhism (or any religion) becomes a marker of cultural identity, however, those who do not identify

David R. Loy is a professor, writer, and Zen teacher in the Sanbo Kyodan tradition of Japanese Zen Buddhism. He is a prolific author whose essays and books have been translated into many languages. A Japanese translation of Loy's book Money Sex War Karma: Notes for a Buddhist Revolution will be published early this year. He teaches nationally and internationally on various topics, focusing primarily on the encounter between Buddhism and modernity and what each can learn from the other. See: www.davidloy.org

themselves as Buddhists become objectified into “others” who are different from “us”—and the true Dharma is lost. Rather than “other religions” being separate and foreign, they become siblings when we appreciate that each religion is a culturally and historically conditioned response to the human condition, another attempt to understand the meaning of our lives on this wondrous Earth. Don't we have something to learn from each of those endeavors?

The metaphor that comes to mind is a tumbling jar that contains many different types of small stones. The jar is attached to a motor that turns it over and over so that the stones will keep rubbing against each other and, eventually, end up polishing each other. If the process is conducted in a nondogmatic way—a big *if*, of course—different religious traditions can help each other discern the distinction between what is truly important about the type of spirituality they offer and what can be revised today because it is culturally conditioned and is no longer so important in a very different time and place.

From a Buddhist perspective, one of the important things we immediately notice is that Buddhism is not the only religious tradition that focuses on awakening or liberation. There are many other types of spirituality that describe contemplative practices and personal transformation, with many similarities (and some differences, of course) to Buddhist descriptions. The most obvious examples begin with other Indian enlightenment traditions, including Advaita Vedanta,

Yoga, Jainism, and Kashmir Shaivism. There are also Chinese Daoism, Islamic Sufism, Jewish and Christian mysticism, and more-earth-based shamanistic traditions. Is it really true that only Buddhist practices promote a genuine awakening?

In the modern world, where science is usually understood to support materialism and reductionism, the fact that different religious traditions, from different parts of the world, may be saying something quite similar to each other is of great importance. To offer another metaphor: if different fingers from different hands seem to be pointing at the same moon, it supports the notion that that moon is not simply the fantasy of one tradition. The similarities with other traditions are very helpful in another way too: if our perpetual problem is that we tend to take the finger for the moon—that we cling to the finger (teachings) and miss the moon (awakening)—then a multiplicity of different fingers (that is, different teachings) can help free us from being attached to any particular one.

Of course, that does not mean accepting everything that all of these different traditions have to say but, rather, engaging in the long-run task of separating the essential teaching from its inessential cultural forms, in all traditions, including Buddhism. That will not be easy, but it may be necessary if Buddhism is to develop its full liberative potential in a modern world so very different from Asian Buddhist societies.

In fact, Buddhism and the West, the modern world, have been engaging in

a mutually transformative interaction for well over a century now. Each has been challenging and learning from the other, and just as happened in China and Tibet, we can expect that their intercourse today will give birth to something new—which will be both similar to and different from its parents.

Some aspects of this forthcoming offspring are becoming apparent. In most ways Buddhism is a very contemporary religion (or spiritual tradition), in the sense that many of its important teachings seem consistent with what modernity has discovered. For example, the *anatta*, nonself, teaching is compatible with modern psychological research into how a child's sense of self is constructed and conditioned. Buddhist emphasis on how our ways of thinking deceive us accords well with much of contemporary philosophy, which has focused on how language misleads us. (As my favorite bumper sticker says: “Don't believe everything you think.”) Buddhist teachings on impermanence and interdependence resonate with what biology has discovered about evolution and ecology. And some physicists compare the concept of *shunyata*, emptiness, with the fundamentals of quantum mechanics.

The biggest challenge is likely to be the traditional Buddhist understanding of karma and rebirth, because so far the discoveries of modern science do not support either doctrine. Should contemporary Buddhists continue to accept them anyway, because they have been fundamental to the Asian Buddhist

worldview? Or should we reject them as part of the mythology of Iron Age India, as cultural constructs no longer believable today? Perhaps there is a third option: we can *interrogate* the original texts, asking what insight such teachings offer that is compatible with a more modern understanding of how the world works. These are difficult questions that will take time—perhaps several generations—to resolve in a way that clarifies Buddhism’s emancipatory potential for the modern world.

Another unavoidable issue is what Buddhism can offer to help us understand and respond to the great challenges of our time—most obviously, the ecological crisis. In my article “Healing Ecology,” I have argued that there are precise and profound parallels between what Buddhism says about our usual individual predicament and our collective human predicament today (<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/files/2010/05/Loy-Healing-Ecology1.pdf>). In both cases, the fundamental problem is our sense of separation from that which is “outside” us. This crucial issue points to an important ambiguity in the Buddhist tradition that needs to be resolved. Does awakening mean *escaping* this world of suffering (*samsara*) and attaining a better place (*nirvana*, or a Pure Land that is somewhere else)? Or does awakening involve letting go of the sense of a separate self whose own well-being is separate from the well-being of everyone else—and from the fate of the earth? Too much emphasis on individual enlightenment may be incompatible with what we most need to realize today: that we’re all in this together because we’re all part of each other. This implies that we need to take responsibility for each other and for the future of the biosphere.

That brings us to the biggest challenge of all for contemporary Buddhism, as it is for other traditional religions. If religion teaches us what is really important about the world, and how to live

in it, then we can see that the modern world has developed its own religion: consumerism, which has already become the most popular religion of all time, winning more converts more quickly than any conventional religion ever has. The basic problem, however, is that consumerism as a way of life is incompatible with Buddhist teachings because it promises a secular salvation: the happiness you seek will be provided by the next thing (it’s always the *next* thing) you buy. Yet as we know, it’s possible to go to a Buddhist temple once a week, or even meditate a few hours a week, and still be caught up in a consumerist mentality the rest of the time.

So here’s the critical question: what role will twenty-first-century Buddhism play in addressing this new worldview, which deceptively promises a happiness that it can never provide? Will Buddhism help us to harmonize with the kind of consumerist lifestyle that our economic system emphasizes, or will Buddhist insights enable us to challenge that lifestyle?

Many modern, educated Buddhists are middle-class, often with demanding jobs, and practices such as *metta* and mindfulness meditation provide much-needed relief from the pressures of day-to-day life. Such practitioners seek quiet time to de-stress and to pursue their own enlightenment.

Without denigrating the importance of such practices, we nevertheless need to ask: does that approach go far enough to help to develop an awakened society that is socially just and ecologically

sustainable, or does it tend to maintain a way of life and a social structure that have become quite problematic? Is Buddhism today being commodified into a self-help, stress-reduction program that does not raise questions about consumerism and our dysfunctional economic system but helps us adapt to them? Or is modern Buddhism opening up new perspectives and possibilities that challenge us to transform ourselves and our societies more profoundly—to seek genuine happiness in a different way, as the Buddha did?

These questions highlight a tension that is becoming more obvious, but it’s not a new one: there are precedents within the history of Buddhism itself.

In the Pali canon, the term *bodhisattva* refers to the earlier lives of Shakyamuni before he became the Buddha. According to a common sectarian account, there was a conspicuous difference between the Buddha and the *arahants* who awakened by following his teaching: unlike the *arahants*, the Buddha was selflessly devoted to helping everyone wake up. This led to the development of a more altruistic model of *how* to live: instead of focusing on one’s own liberation, a bodhisattva vows to follow the example of the Buddha and help everyone become enlightened.

Whether or not that story is historically true, the bodhisattva path is based upon an important distinction between two ways of understanding Buddhist practice: do I follow the path to end my own suffering or to help end the suffering of everyone? Instead of asking “What can I get out of this situation” (or “How can I get out of this situation?”), the bodhisattva asks, “What can be done to make this situation better?” Today that question becomes more urgent than ever as Buddhism begins to establish itself in a globalizing culture much more powerful, and also more individualistic and self-obsessed, than Buddhism has encountered before. □

Kenji Miyazawa's Discombobulated Lotus Literature: Japanese Literature as Benevolent Guerilla War on Common Sense

by Gerry Iguchi

The benevolent guerilla warfare of Miyazawa's literature potentially functioned . . . by discombobulating common sense and disrupting unexamined and unnecessarily fixed assumptions.

In an attempt to deepen understanding of the work of the Japanese poet and children's writer Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933), this paper analyzes Miyazawa's relationship with Nichirenism (Nichirenshugi), a modern Japanese, lay-based Buddhist and nationalist movement that was in particular led by Chigaku Tanaka (1861–1939). It generally supported Japan's imperialism before 1945. Both Miyazawa and Kanji Ishiwara (1889–1949)—one of two Japanese Kwantung Army colonels who instigated the 1931 Mukden Incident—joined Tanaka's Kokuchūkai (National Pillar Society) in 1920. For many, Miyazawa's association with both Ishiwara and Nichirenism may seem contradictory because of Miyazawa's saintly reputation. I argue that there were elements of consistency in these relationships that should cause us to rethink both Miyazawa and Nichirenism.

Modern Japan and Nichirenism arose in a world dominated by the West's imperialism. Western hegemony led to a global common sense entailing acceptance of the supposed developmental superiority of the West. Nichirenism represented various attempts to challenge this common sense, using tools grounded in novel interpretations of the thirteenth-century Buddhist reformer Nichiren's understanding of the Lotus

Sutra. However, whereas the Nichirenism of Ishiwara literally made war, Miyazawa used poetry and a children's literature that eventually became exceedingly popular with adults to attack the scientific and bureaucratic rationality of a planetary modernity that defined the West as the best.

Japanese war making on modernity or the West did not necessarily mean willing the return to a purely Japanese past. To some extent, with Nichirenist ideas, and certainly with Miyazawa's writings, the aim was not only to shatter actually existing modernity. There was

Gerald Iguchi earned a PhD in History at the University of California, San Diego. His doctoral dissertation was on the nationalistic Buddhist movement Nichirenism, spanning the years between the late nineteenth century and 1945. While teaching at the University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, Iguchi has been working on a book manuscript tentatively titled Modernity's Transgressions: Nichirenism, Imperialism, Japan. Iguchi's research straddles the interstices connecting the disciplines of historical interpretation, religious studies, and literary analysis.

also an attempt to imagine and actualize multiple worlds characterized by continuous variation and creativity (my use of the words "continuous variation" is influenced by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's usage at various points in their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [University of Minnesota Press, 1987]). I consider Miyazawa's work to constitute an attack on both the common sense stipulating Western superiority and the binary and hierarchical presuppositions at the foundation of any practice insisting that any entity is inherently or timelessly superior to any other from an ultimate perspective. To me, Miyazawa's literature is a guerilla or irregular form of benevolent force distinct from nation-states, armies, police, and any powers of constraint attempting to impose lasting orderings or to regulate the usefulness of populations.

Background: Modernity's White Noise

After the humiliation of Japan's forced opening to trade and diplomacy by Americans in the 1850s, disgruntled lower-ranking samurai overthrew the ancien régime in 1868. They pretended to stage a restoration or renovation by propping a figurehead boy monarch on the imperial throne. More revolution than restoration, this moment opened the Meiji period (1868–1912), during which Japanese accepted what Tessa Morris-Suzuki has called the “formats” of the modern world, meaning that Japanese leaders adopted, invented, and imposed local versions of globally shared institutions, forms, and practices (Morris-Suzuki, *Re-Inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* [M. E. Sharpe, 1988], 162–71).

A powerful indication of how Japan's leaders embraced the logic of modernity was when, in 1868, the new state passed a law legally separating Shinto and Buddhism. These “religions” were generally combined for centuries. Divinities were commonly understood as indigenous Shinto *kami* from one perspective and as Buddhist *devas*, bodhisattvas, buddhas, and other figures from India from another. Ultimately divinities in Japan were both *kami* and Buddhist deities and neither. (On premodern Japanese religious combinations, see Fabio Rambelli and Mark Teeuwen's introduction to *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* [Routledge, 2002], 1–53.) The Meiji state outlawed this nonmodern way of thinking, signaling embrace of something like Western philosophy's three laws of thought: the law of identity (that each thing is itself and not something else), the law of the excluded middle (that something is true or its negation is true), and the law of noncontradiction (that a proposition and its antithesis cannot be simultaneously true), leading eventually to the supremacy

of the binary and rule-governed thinking characteristic of scientific-bureaucratic rationality.

Despite Japan's “advancing” as its leaders, and then its people more generally, embraced modernity, Japanese faced a larger world in which according to standard common sense, being Asian meant being backward and lesser in terms of developmental scales that hierarchically arranged people. Such hierarchies preserved the West's privileges. In general, this logic also dictated that there was really only one world civilization or culture, so that a Westerner who encountered a cultural difference did not merely regard it as difference but considered other cultures less advanced versions of the Western self (see George Stocking Jr., “Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective,” *American Anthropologist* 68, no. 4 [1966]: 867–82).

This was the conceptual world that post-Meiji Restoration Japanese confronted, and this was the era in which Nichirenism emerged. Chigaku Tanaka, a former novice in the traditional Buddhist sect Nichirenshū, coined the term and

concept Nichirenism in his 1901 *Shūmon no ishin* (The renovation of our sect). Nichirenism appropriated elements of Nichiren's corpus to argue for a special relationship between the Lotus Sutra, as a text particularly appropriate for degraded times known as *mappō*, and Japan. Tanaka and Nichirenism linked Japan as a manifestation of the Lotus Sutra to a sacred mission to lead a pan-Asian unity against Western imperialism and to transform the entire world into a paradisiacal Buddhist Pure Land.

With *Shūmon* Tanaka continually defined the essence of Nichirenism as aggression, the antithesis of Western representations of the Orient and Japan as inferior because they were both feminine and childlike. This aggressive stance led cultural critic Chogyū Takayama (1871–1902) to think of Tanaka as both an incarnation of Nichiren and a Nietzschean superman. It inspired Ishiwa to likewise idolize Tanaka and to literally make war so as to facilitate Japan's putative mission. It inspired Miyazawa to stage what I would call conceptual warfare through art against the common sense of a modernity that defined the West as the world's developmentally superior center.

Kenji Miyazawa, the Lotus Sutra, and Kokuchūkai

Miyazawa took from his reading of the works of Tanaka an understanding of the Lotus Sutra premised on the possibility of revolutionary transformation of the world, with the conviction that this defiled world is immanently and imminently a buddhas' Pure Land, and that we “worldlings” (*shujō*) are fully awakened buddhas even if we do not realize it. This Nichiren-inspired version of what has become more broadly known as *hongaku shisō* in Japanese Mahāyāna centers on the Lotus Sutra's sixteenth chapter, “Fathoming the Life Span” (*Juryō bon*).

The Lotus Sutra was preached by Siddhārtha Gautama Śākyamuni, who was born, achieved awakening, preached, and died on the Indian subcontinent. However, in “Fathoming the Life Span,” Śākyamuni reveals that he exists and has always existed eternally. Similar to how Indian *devas* such as Viṣṇu incarnate temporarily as humans in Hindu thinking, Śākyamuni the man teaches in this chapter that he as a human is only a manifestation of the Eternal Original Buddha (*kuon honbutsu*) who appeared as an expedient means out of compassion to guide those suffering to salvation. The implication is that if Śākyamuni the man is also an eternal buddha even though it was not immediately apparent, the same is by extension true for all worldlings, and ipso facto our apparently defiled material world is a paradisiacal Pure Land. All that remains is to actualize these already true truths.

Miyazawa was from Hanamaki, Iwate Prefecture, in northern Japan. He graduated from Iwate’s Morioka Agriculture and Forestry College in 1918. On a brief visit to Tokyo that same year, he heard Tanaka speak. In 1920, Miyazawa referred to this speech in a letter to a friend, declaring his deep devotion to

Tanaka and exhorting his friend to join Tanaka’s Kokuchūkai, which Miyazawa had already joined by mail (Oh Sunhwa, *Miyazawa Kenji no hokke bungaku: Hōkō suru tamashii* [The Lotus literature of Kenji Miyazawa: The wandering spirit] [Tōkai Daigaku Shuppankai, 2000], 17–18). Miyazawa then led meetings of what became a Hanamaki chapter of the group. Miyazawa read the Kokuchūkai’s organ, the *Tengyō minpō* (People of the heavenly task report), as well as longer works by Tanaka, including *Nichirenshugi no kyōgi* (The doctrine of Nichirenism), *Sekai tōitsu no tengyō* (The heavenly task of world unification), and *Myōshū shikimoku kōgiroku* (Lectures on the systematic formulation of the wondrous sect’s teachings). After having a disagreement with his father, who adhered to another Buddhist sect, Miyazawa left Iwate in 1921, heading for the Kokuchūkai headquarters in Tokyo (Oh, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 17–18; Kōmei Ishikawa, *Nichiren to kindai bungakushatachi* [Nichiren and modern writers] [Pitaka Shuppansha, 1978], 217–18).

Miyazawa spent nine months in Tokyo, where he proselytized for the Kokuchūkai and distributed copies of the *Tengyō minpō*. He himself also made speeches on behalf of the organization in Ueno Park (Ishikawa, *Nichiren*, 217–18). During Miyazawa’s time in Tokyo, he attended talks given by various lecturers at Kokuchūkai’s headquarters, typically centering on Tanaka’s *Myōshū shikimoku kōgiroku* (later published in five volumes as the *Nichirenshugi kyōgaku taikan*, a survey of the teachings of Nichirenism, abbreviated hereafter as *Taikan*). The text profoundly influenced Miyazawa. He completely read the dense 3,308 pages five times according to a cousin (entry on “Myōshū

shikimoku kōgiroku” in *Shin Miyazawa Kenji goi jiten* [New glossarial dictionary of Kenji Miyazawa], ed. Shirō Hara [Tokyo Shoseki, 2000], 691).

Miyazawa’s primary contact with Kokuchūkai leadership was a man named Chiyō Takachio, and in the posthumously discovered notebook that he used to write his most famous poem, “Ame ni mo makezu” (Undaunted by the rain), Miyazawa wrote that Takachio suggested that he write a “Lotus literature” (*Hokke no bungaku*). Takachio later did not remember this at all (Sarah Strong, “The Poetry of Miyazawa Kenji” [PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1984], 70). Nevertheless, Miyazawa’s interaction with Takachio and other Kokuchūkai members while in Tokyo significantly affected his writing, despite the fact that it is unlikely that Miyazawa ever actually met Chigaku Tanaka, an amateur playwright. Miyazawa’s time in Tokyo coincided with intense writing, embryonic manifestations of characteristic elements of his art (Ibid., 71–73; Ishikawa, *Nichiren*, 221–22).

Kenji Miyazawa’s Lotus Literature: *Night of the Milky Way Railway*

In his children’s stories and poetry Miyazawa created semi-imaginary spaces that he sometimes called Īhatovu (or Īhatovo). The fact that Īhatovu sounds like “Iwate” is no accident. In an advertisement for a collection of stories, Miyazawa defined Īhatovu as “dream-land Iwate.” At the same time, he wrote that it was the site of the adventures of Lewis Carroll’s Alice, that it encompassed the fictional Tepantar Desert of Rabindranath Tagore’s poetry, and that it was the site of the kingdom of Ivan in Tolstoy’s “Tale of Ivan the Fool” (*Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* [Kenji Miyazawa collected works], ed. Seiroku Miyazawa et al. [Chikuma Shobō, 1994], vol. 8, 602–3).

One of the more interesting etymological hypotheses regarding Īhatovu/Īhatovo is that the author derived it from the German phrase “Ich weiss nicht wo” (I know not where) (Hara, *Shin Miyazawa Kenji*, entry on “Īhatovo,” 59–60). One can say that Īhatovu exists nowhere, and precisely because of this it exists everywhere as a realm of possibility, despite Miyazawa’s playful identification of it with Iwate. Īhatovu is one name for realms Miyazawa represented; he also sometimes termed them *ikūkan* (other spaces). He depicts the most famous of such spaces in the sophisticated children’s story *Night of the Milky Way Railway* (translated by Sarah Strong [M. E. Sharpe, 1991]; originally published as *Ginga tetsudō no yoru* [Bunpodō, 1934]).

Milky Way Railway is the tale of two Japanese boys from a town for the most part like Miyazawa’s native Hanamaki, but the boys are named Giovanni and Campanella. Miyazawa’s brilliance stemmed from a kind of Lotus Sutra and broader Mahāyāna logic in which, for example, two Japanese boys with Italian names are Japanese, Italian, both Japanese and Italian, and neither Japanese nor Italian. This transgression so offended the conventional thinking of two particular 1990s English-language translators that they changed the boys’ names to Japanese ones (Kenji Miyazawa, *Milky Way Railway*, trans. Joseph Sigrist and D. M. Stroud [Stone Bridge Press, 1996]), missing much of the author’s point and missing the fact that perhaps the names Giovanni and Campanella were references to the Italian renaissance philosopher and astrologer Tommaso Campanella, who was baptized Giovanni Domenico Campanella (Sarah Strong, “The Reader’s Guide,” in *Milky Way Railway*, 83–84).

Milky Way Railway begins with the boys’ science teacher discussing how the Milky Way is a constellation of stars. Later, as evening falls during a festival dedicated to the Centaurus

constellation, Giovanni sits on a hill where a “weather wheel pillar” appears behind a dairy and he suddenly sees a train coming. He hears a conductor calling out, “Milky Way Station,” next finding himself riding on the train with his friend Campanella, whose jacket is wet. The boys soon realize that they are traveling along the Milky Way. Miyazawa represents the galaxy as a river, connecting with the Milky Way’s common names in Japanese, Ginga (Silver River) and Ama-no-gawa (River of Heaven).

The boys make several stops, meeting various characters as they pass places corresponding to constellations and heavenly bodies. Near the Sagittarius (archer) constellation, they pass a place resembling the Colorado plateau where they hear Dvořák’s *New World Symphony* and see a Native American with a bow on horseback. They also meet a passenger whose job is catching wild chocolate geese, blurring distinctions between feathered animals and confections shaped like them. The last set of Giovanni and Campanella’s fellow travelers is three victims of the *Titanic*, who speak about entering cold water after their ship hit an iceberg. Mirroring the European names of Campanella and Giovanni, the *Titanic* victims are Westerners with Japanese names. As Christians, they appropriately disembark at the Southern Cross.

The train then nears a black nebula called the Coalsack, a site of interstellar dust that absorbs light because of its gravity. The Coalsack appears like a window of darkness in the Milky Way (Strong, “Reader’s Guide,” 117). At first the Coalsack seems frighteningly cold and empty, but Giovanni declares that in the interests of “the happiness of everyone” he would not be afraid to be right in the middle of its void. Campanella then sees beautiful fields and his deceased mother in the nebula. Campanella says he wants to go there and disappears, and Giovanni cries out in tears. At this point, Giovanni awakens and realizes

he has been dreaming. After collecting milk from the dairy for his mother, Giovanni sees a commotion near the town’s river and learns that Campanella has drowned.

Tanaka’s thought informs elements of *Night of the Milky Way Railway*. In a section of *Taikan* on *fushaku shinmyō* (not begrudging one’s bodily life), Tanaka discusses an esoteric interpretation of the Lotus Sutra’s eleventh chapter, “Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa” (*Kenhōtō bon*). In this chapter, while Śākyamuni Buddha preaches the Lotus Sutra to myriad beings, a towering stupa (a reliquary or pagoda) covered with jewels emerges from the earth. Śākyamuni says that this is the stupa of a buddha named Tahō Nyorai (Abundant Treasures), who made a vow in aeons past to reappear whenever a buddha preaches the Lotus Sutra. According to interpretations of the sutra from which Tanaka drew, Tahō and Śākyamuni are ultimately one and the same. Tahō is a past existence of the Buddha, Śākyamuni is the present incarnation of the Buddha, and both Tahō and Śākyamuni are emanations of the Eternal Original Buddha, whose complete identity with Śākyamuni is later revealed in the sixteenth chapter, “Fathoming the Life Span” (Bun’ichi Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji: Yojigenron no tenkai* [Kenji Miyazawa: the development of a four-dimensional theory] [Kokubunsha, 1991], 123).

When Tahō appears in his stupa, Śākyamuni assembles innumerable buddhas that reside in various directions, bringing them to where he is preaching. As he does so, he transforms the relatively normal world of that site into a pure and wondrous place. Śākyamuni then opens the stupa doors, revealing Tahō, who invites Śākyamuni to sit beside him. Śākyamuni agrees, and so that the Lotus sermon’s vast audience can better join the two buddhas, Śākyamuni and Tahō cause the assembly to rise with them into the sky, where the assembly

stays for ten chapters. The assembly of the various buddhas and others in the sky is called the *kokū-e* (assembly in the empty sky).

In *Taikan*, Tanaka cites an apocryphal esoteric oral transmission that had been circulated within medieval circles and attributed to Nichiren:

The “Beholding the Appearance of the Jeweled Stupa” [chapter] states that we are one body. Existing in the middle of emptiness/middle of the sky [*kūchū*] means that we living things pass away and return in the end. Today Nichiren’s fellows worship by chanting *Namu myōhō renga-kyō* and in their true heart and mind they exist in emptiness; they exist in the assembly in the empty sky [*kokū-e*]. (Chigaku Tanaka, *Nichirenshugi kyōgaku taikan* [Kokusho Kankōkai, 1975], 2974; Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 204)

Tanaka explains that there are two kinds of self, one of which lives and then dies as a material being. This first self corresponds with this-worldly emanations of the Eternal Original Buddha. Tanaka writes that if one is willing to offer one’s bodily life (*fushaku shinmyō*) in protecting or adhering to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, then another self perpetually resides in the middle of emptiness, corresponding with the Eternal Original Buddha and abiding in the blessed state of Tahō in his jeweled stupa.

The literary scholar Bun’ichi Saitō suggests that Miyazawa modeled his representation of relationships between the fantastic realm of the Milky Way and the relatively normal reality of Giovanni’s village in *Night of the Milky Way Railway* on Tanaka’s interpretation of the “assembly in the empty sky” (Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 205). In the Lotus Sutra, the original site of Śākyamuni’s sermon, sacred Vulture Peak (Ryōjūsen) in India, is itself already a transformed time and

place. The level of unconventionality or enchantment at Vulture Peak in the sutra corresponds, I would argue, with a Japanese village where children have non-Japanese names. The Milky Way’s even further transformed reality in the story corresponds with the Lotus Sutra’s “assembly in the empty sky.”

Saitō argues that Tanaka’s valorization in *Taikan* of a “dying act” (*rinjū jōrei*) done in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō* that could expiate one of all past wrongdoing also influenced Miyazawa’s story (Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 205; Tanaka, *Taikan*, 2981). As the train passes Scorpio, one of the *Titanic* passengers in *Milky Way Railway* relates the story of a scorpion that, in words later echoed by Giovanni, attempts to atone for his sins of predation by asking God to allow him to use his “body for the true happiness of everyone.” This wish transforms the scorpion’s body into the “beautiful crimson fire” of the Scorpio constellation that brings happiness by lighting “the darkness of the night” (Strong, *Milky Way Railway*, 69; Miyazawa, *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, vol. 7, 286–88).

In *Milky Way Railway* Miyazawa’s understanding of the Eternal Original Buddha seems to be the foundation of Giovanni’s fearless spirit of sacrifice. Miyazawa’s faith in humanity’s ultimate oneness with an eternal buddha also seems connected to the author’s attempts to come to terms with the earlier death of his beloved younger sister, and as many have argued, Campanella’s drowning may symbolize her passing. Miyazawa’s story articulates problematic differences between knowing that the world and oneself are virtually or potentially buddha and the Pure Land, on the one hand, and actualizing this knowledge or faith, on the other. For both Miyazawa and Tanaka, losing oneself, as that self is normally constituted in the spirit of *fushaku shinmyō*, was ethically necessary in actualizing a more permanent transformation of the world, despite suffering.

Milky Way Railway’s Stupa as Entry Point: Rupturing Common Sense

Before he hears the Milky Way Railway’s conductor yelling, “Milky Way Station,” and just before he finds himself aboard the galactic train, Giovanni notices what the text refers to as a weather wheel pillar (*tenkirin no hashira*) flickering “on and off like a firefly” (Strong, *Milky Way Railway*, 69; Miyazawa, *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, vol. 7, 286–88). Saitō suggests that the weather wheel pillar is an allusion to Tahō’s jeweled stupa (Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 205), a suggestion not in its implications contrary to more common theories that the weather wheel pillar is an “Eliadean-style *axis mundi*, a point of convergence between the other world and this” (Strong, “Reader’s Guide,” 93). As something like an *axis mundi*, the jeweled stupa in the Lotus Sutra initiates the “complete rupture in the middle of the everyday world” that “reveals a newly magnificent space-time” (Saitō, *Miyazawa Kenji*, 110).

Miyazawa’s work constructed pathways between an everyday world outside of our immediate control and

transformed worlds of imagination, overthrowing conventional oppositions, but this was not simply inversion of hierarchies. In Miyazawa's conceptual universe, our galaxy *is* stars *and* a flow of milk *and* the River of Heaven *and* the Silver River; Sagittarius *is* a constellation *and* a Native American archer on horseback. Elsewhere in Miyazawa's writings, *Īhatovu is Iwate* *and* Carroll's wonderland *and* Tagore's Tepantar Desert *and* Tolstoy's kingdom of Ivan *and* "I know not where." With this logic, relationships become free-flowingly creative combinations in continuous variation, and any given term is neither superior nor inferior in any binary.

Harry Harootunian and Tetsuo Najita once wrote of the "Japanese revolt against the West," referring to intellectuals, political operatives, militarists, and terrorists who opposed Western hegemony (Harootunian and Najita, "Japanese Revolt against the West: Political and Cultural Criticism in the Twentieth Century," in *The Cambridge History of Japan*, vol. 6 [Cambridge University Press, 1998]). The logic of this revolt is also present in how Miyazawa challenges the common sense that stipulates that there is a "West and the rest," and that in such binary oppositions the term privileged as superior, adult, male, and rational is the West. One might indeed argue that Miyazawa actualized a "Japanese revolt against the West" in literary form, with significant caveats.

First, there were Western revolts against the West as Romanticism that often conflated with Orientalist fascination with the mystical and at times sexually enticing East, along with an indigenous Western culture of avant-garde modernist revolt, which I define as social, political, philosophical, and artistic forces aimed at transgressing the scientific-bureaucratic rationality that arose with Enlightenment thought and strengthened through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

Among such forces I would include the thought of Nietzsche, the poetry of Rimbaud, and the paintings of Van Gogh and Picasso. In literature, for example, one might think of the masochistic scenes of novels by Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (*Venus in Furs*, 1870) and James Joyce (*Ulysses*, 1933), where men figuratively become women. Second, Miyazawa was also attacking the logic of the modern Japanese state itself, with its own incarnation of a planetary scientific-bureaucratic rationality in the Enlightenment's lineage.

Miyazawa was not attacking the West in any simplistic, nationalist, chauvinistic, or xenophobic sense. Miyazawa gave to his poem "Haru to Shura" (Spring and asura, 1924) the subtitle "Mental Sketch Modified" in English, represented phonetically in katakana script. In that poem, he calls cypress trees "Zypressen," writing the German word in roman letters. Furthermore, Miyazawa was an advocate of Esperanto. Esperanto is a made-up and unnatural language that its Lithuanian inventor, Ludwik Lazarus Zamenhof, intended as a new international language. Compared with English—as the de facto international language of Miyazawa's time and our own—as nobody's native language Esperanto privileges nobody. (Regarding Miyazawa and Esperanto, see Hoyt Long, *On Uneven Ground: Miyazawa Kenji and the Making of Place in Modern Japan* [Stanford University Press, 2011], 188.)

I believe Miyazawa's writing went so far as to contest how anyone might define and understand themselves, in national terms, as Japanese or as anything else. If I am correct, his version of *fushaku shinmyō* had little to do with the chauvinistic nationalism of other Nichirenists. Toward the end of his life, Miyazawa's revolt against common sense entailed not self-destruction, which was how the lives of notable other Nichirenists directly or indirectly ended (for example, see Masayasu Hosaka, *Shinōdan jiken: Gunkokushugika no kyōshin to dan'atsu*

[The Let's Die Incident: Fanaticism and oppression under militarism] [Renga Shobō, 1972]), but altruistic activities motivated by concern with "the happiness of everyone" in the context of Great Depression-stricken, early-1930s northern Japan.

Lotus Literature and Practice

Miyazawa returned to Hanamaki in 1921, working as a teacher at an agricultural college and writing the bulk of his poems and stories. He quit teaching in 1926, two years before severe health problems ensued, and at about the same time he penned a short three-part work, the "Nōmin geijutsu gainen ron" (On the general concept of peasant art), "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" (An outline of the elements of peasant art), and "Nōmin geijutsu no kōryū" (The flourishing of peasant art). "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" is the main part of the three (Hara, *Shin Miyazawa Kenji*, entry on "Nōmin geijutsu," 555).

Miyazawa's dissemination of his ideas among Iwate's peasants began soon after he resigned his teaching post, when he gave the lecture "Nōmin no geijutsu ron" (On peasant art) as part of an adult education program. Soon he was hosting meetings of about twenty former students at his residence. Miyazawa's ideal at this time was to foster harmony between agricultural life and cultural fulfillment.

The group that met at Miyazawa's home formed the kernel of the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai (Rasu Peasant Cooperative Association), and his previous writings regarding peasant art formed the group's conceptual basis. The opening section of "Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō" states, "Living properly and strongly means having an awareness of the Milky Way galaxy within oneself. . . . Let us seek the true world's happiness" (Miyazawa, *Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, vol. 10, 15–32). This was a clear reference to the "newly

magnificent space-time” represented in *Night of the Milky Way Railway* and to Miyazawa’s altruistic understanding of *fushaku shinmyō*.

The fact that Miyazawa once said that *rasu* in the group’s name has no meaning has not deterred scholars from conjecturing about the word. One scholar believes, for example, that *rasu* is a Japanese pronunciation of the English word “lath.” A lath is a strip of wood or metal that, when nailed in rows, serves as a substructural support for plaster, shingles, or tiles, just as Miyazawa’s organization would ideally support farmers. Another theory is that *rasu* is a reference to John Ruskin. This follows because the Japanese phonetic transliteration of “Ruskin” in katakana is *rasukin*. Miyazawa also approvingly cites William Morris in “Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō,” and Ruskin and Morris were both proponents of the Arts and Crafts movement in Victorian England. One scholar argues that *rasu* is from the English word *rustic*. Another hypothesis is that *rasu* is an allusion to the *ra* in *mandara* (in Sanskrit and English: “mandala,” meaning Indic pictorial, graphic, or cartographic representations of the cosmos) and the *shu* in *shumidan*, a word referring to a miniature representation of Mount Sumeru (a mountain at the center of Buddhist cosmology) (for the *rasu* debate, see Hara, *Shin Miyazawa Kenji*, entry on “Rasu Chijin Kyōkai,” 743–44).

This last theory makes particular sense because in “Nōmin geijutsu gairon kōyō” Miyazawa specifically mentions Sumeru. Despite the richness of these speculations, reducing *rasu* to a single definition would be unfortunate. The charm of Miyazawa’s thought was its indeterminate quality, inviting readers to creatively engage his texts without fixating upon a single reading of what particular things might mean.

In any case, Miyazawa attempted through the Rasu Chijin Kyōkai to better the lot of poor farming people. This was not in inspiration thoroughly unlike Japanese terrorists and militarists during

the same decade who attempted through self-sacrifice (and the sacrifice of others) to right the wrongs of the world through violent and radical transformations of social, political, and economic actualities. For his part, Miyazawa focused on creatively attacking contemporary common sense. Sadly, Miyazawa died in 1933 of pneumonia at the age of thirty-seven, leaving us, however, with the legacy of his literary output.

Conclusion: Kenji Miyazawa’s Discombobulating, Modernist Literature as Guerilla Warfare against Modern Common Sense

The discourse of the Enlightenment originating in Europe generally presupposed that non-Western people—along with women, children, criminals, and eventually the industrial working class—were relatively undeveloped and uncivilized. The West’s leaders justified imperialism, stimulated by industrialization and the desire to accumulate capital, with reference to the notion that appropriating and expanding colonies brought light to those in the dark. Nichirenism was an ideology of pre-1945 Japan as a fully modern, and yet non-Western, nation-state that sought alternative ways of thinking and an ultimately different situation.

Kanji Ishiwara, for example, joined the Kokuchūkai just as Miyazawa did.

Eventually Ishiwara thought that the degraded age of *mappō* directly corresponded with the time of Western domination. Ishiwara instigated the Mukden Incident, which began fifteen years of war in Asia and the Pacific as a step toward preparation for war with the United States. He did what he did because he thought that Japanese victory in that war would bring an age of peace, prosperity, and unprecedented scientific progress and human development.

If Japan’s challenge to the West had resulted only in replacing people of European ancestry at the top of a global hierarchy with Japanese, fundamental injustices of modernity as a system would have remained unchanged. The benevolent guerilla warfare of Miyazawa’s literature potentially functioned otherwise by discombobulating common sense and disrupting unexamined and unnecessarily fixed assumptions. His imaginative mode of thought was ostensibly intended for children. However, Miyazawa’s enduring popularity among “children of all ages” suggests the ongoing possibility of actualizing a logic in which humanity more generally no longer regards hierarchies and hierarchical binary oppositions as inevitable, natural, or necessary. □

This article is based on a paper presented at the International Lotus Sutra Seminar held May 29–31, 2014, near Tokyo by Rissho Kosei-kai on the theme “Perspectives on the Lotus Sutra.”

Perspectives on the Lotus Sutra

by Rebecca Mendelson

The 2014 International Lotus Sutra Seminar, sponsored by Rissho Kosei-kai, was held near Tokyo on May 29–31, 2014, at the National Women's Education Center of Japan.

Last year's International Lotus Sutra Seminar theme was "Perspectives on the Lotus Sutra." As the theme suggests, the seminar brought forth a *mélange* of methodological approaches and emphases, of geographic regions and eras studied, of networks and sociohistorical contexts that cannot help but challenge conventional categories.

Some papers illuminated particular facets or readings of the Lotus Sutra—for example, practicing its teachings in daily life, or reading it "subversively" (that is, from the perspective of "ordinary" people rather than of an academic or social elite), or bringing light to the understudied yet greatly influential Fayun and his view of the Lotus Sutra. At the same time, other papers considered aspects of Lotus-centered traditions—for example, their material culture and textuality, their intersections with Marxism and modernism, their regional flavors in premodern China, early Tiantai/Tendai doctrine and Tiantai social history in modern China—as well as the role of the Lotus Sutra in the teachings of particular Zen masters (Dōgen and Hakuin). Indeed, the scholars' diverse questions—and the diversity of their perspectives when brought to bear on the same questions—converged to add up to more than the sum of the parts.

While the scholars' subjects and means of inquiry were broad, several

themes and approaches resurfaced throughout the seminar. For example, several scholars reassessed conventional narratives. Along these lines, James Mark Shields, with his paper subtitled "Nichiren, Marx, Seno'o Girō, and Dharmic Materialism," challenged the presumed incompatibility of Buddhism and Marxism, demonstrating their common ground in notions of "materialism" and goals of liberation. Adjacent to Shields's work was Gerald Iguchi's paper on the twentieth-century figure Kenji Miyazawa and his "Discombobulated Lotus Literature." Here, Iguchi reevaluated the relationships between Miyazawa and the nationalist political-religious networks of Nichirenism and Kokuchūkai, and he illuminated the broader significance of Miyazawa's oeuvre. Participant Rongdao Lai also grappled with narratives of "modernity" in her paper, "Tiantai Revival and Buddhist Education in Modern China," in which she challenged the categories of "reform," "revival," "conservative," and "progressive."

Throughout the seminar, premodern East Asian Buddhism was also a site for complicating narratives. For example, Miriam Levering, in her paper, "Dogen, Women, and the Dragon Princess of Lotus Sutra Chapter Twelve," brought a nuanced textual analysis to works spanning Dōgen's career, moving past the

binary of whether Dōgen was sexist or egalitarian vis-à-vis women. Steven Heine, in "Perspectives on the Textuality of the *Lotus Sutra* in Relation to Zen Records," broke sectarian boundaries by creatively juxtaposing the Lotus Sutra and Zen records, demonstrating not only how the Lotus Sutra epistemic functions in Zen records but also how to use the Lotus Sutra as an "interpretive tool" for understanding Zen records. Additionally, Megan Bryson, in her "Regional Forms of a Universal Savior: Perspectives on the *Lotus Sūtra* from the Dali Kingdom," challenged the characterization of Dali Buddhism as "Chinese Buddhism," given the Dali kingdom's (937–1253) eclectic influences, its independence during the period Bryson researched, and the uncertainty of its continued independence.

Another recurring theme in last year's seminar was that of authenticity and authority. This was a key premise of Charlotte Eubanks's paper, "Unearthing Practice: Sutra Interment and the Fantasy of Textual Resuscitation in Medieval and Contemporary Japan," in which she investigated the network of factors undergirding this ritual's efficacy and authority. Bryson also explored issues of authenticity and authority in the Dali kingdom's self-characterization of its Buddhism—for example, in its emphasis of Indian roots in order to claim legitimacy. Further, Lai demonstrated how twentieth-century Tiantai "revival" movements looked back to old models for legitimacy while reformulating their "orthodoxy."

Rebecca Mendelson is a doctoral student in religious studies at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. She specializes in modern Japanese Buddhism and plans to write her dissertation on the development of lay Zen organizations in the Meiji, Taisho, and early Showa periods of Japan.

Questions of intentionality versus activity in Lotus Sutra–related practices constituted another seminar theme. In her paper, “Hakuin, the Lotus Sutra, and Filial Piety,” Gina Cogan considered Hakuin’s assertion that intention is key to ritual efficacy. In many discussions as well, participants deliberated the role of intention in ritual efficacy (for example, in sutra interment). In his paper, “The Lotus Sutra and the Perfect-Sudden Precepts,” Paul Groner presented the wide variety of interpretations of the precepts in medieval Tendai as they pertain to the Lotus Sutra. In this discussion, participants considered whether the essence of the precepts is mental and/or physical and, further, what this means for the role of ordination.

Conceptualizing intentionality and activity more broadly, Heine described how the different elements of Buddhist textuality fall into these two primary categories. He reflected that his paper is oriented more toward the level of intentionality or meaning (for example, pertaining to doctrine), whereas Eubanks’s paper is oriented more toward activity or merit (that is, producing some result).

With regard to social history, the theme of gender was particularly prominent, figuring in Levering’s and Cogan’s theses on Dōgen and Hakuin, respectively, and also resurfacing in many discussion sessions. For example, Gene Reeves brought attention to the marginalization of women’s voices, a significant site for more “subversive” readings of the Lotus Sutra.

Like issues of gender, the theme of lived practice resurfaced in both discussion and papers. Koichi Kawamoto’s paper, “Being Good Friends: A Practice of the Lotus Sutra Teachings in Daily Life,” emphasized the interconnectiveness of being a *kalyāṇamitra* (that is, a good dharma friend), living from one’s buddha-nature, and seeing buddha-nature in oneself and others. Kawamoto’s paper could be read in tandem with Hiroshi Niwano’s query, “The Buddha in the Lotus Sutra: Can We See Him or Not?” Niwano here emphasized living from true openness—grounded in the experiential knowledge of *śūnyatā* (emptiness)—and thus being fully able to “see” the Buddha and the buddha-nature of oneself and others. Both scholars explored fundamental Buddhist notions in the context of the Lotus Sutra and, further, connected these ideals with lived Rissho Koseikai practice. Additionally, with regard to lived practice, Eubanks connected Kamakura-period (1185–1333) sutra practices with an ethnographic study of twentieth- and twenty-first-century sutra practices. Finally, Reeves considered what a “subversive” reading of the Lotus Sutra would look like—in other words, how to view the Lotus tradition from a bottom-up rather than top-down perspective, focusing on lived experience rather than doctrinal ideals or narratives of only the social or monastic elite.

While many papers and discussions were fueled by interest in social history, last year’s seminar was simultaneously

anchored by new attention to classic Tiantai/Tendai texts. Paul Swanson presented his paper, “Reflections on Translating the *Mo-ho chi-kuan*,” near the culmination of his thirty-year translation of the major Tiantai text comprising Zhiyi’s lectures. Hiroshi Kanno also examined classic Tiantai texts in his latest contribution to the field, a meticulous investigation of Fayun’s view of the Lotus Sutra, per Fayun’s *Fahua yiji*. This text had greatly influenced later exegetes but largely disappeared during the Tang and Song dynasties.

“This Polished Rice Is Life Itself”: Nichiren, Marx, Seno’o Girō, and ‘Dharmic Materialism’”

James Mark Shields, Bucknell University, Lewisburg, Pennsylvania

In his paper, Shields presented one way of rethinking both Buddhism and “secular” Marxism, moving toward a humanistic, “reconstructed Buddhist materialism.” Shields linked early Buddhist notions of liberation from suffering with Marxist notions about social, collective liberation from alienation or social “dis-ease,” which can be understood not only on political and economic levels but also on the broader level of dehumanization. In order to understand the historical connections between Buddhism and Marxism, Shields focused on Girō Seno’o (1889–1962), arguably the most significant Japanese Buddhist Marxist

before the Pacific war, as well as on Marxist revisionists such as Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). According to Shields, Girō Seno’o grappled with how to maintain humanism while advocating progressive ideals concerning “human liberation.” For Seno’o, “Buddhist love—embodied in the way of the bodhisattva—provides the humanist foundation for social revolution.”

Shields highlighted the common ground of Buddhism and Marxism. For example, they share the fundamental question “How are human beings to be reconciled with themselves and the world?” Both traditions are oriented toward radical change and, moreover, insist that practice is necessary to achieve this change. Further, the Mahayanist assertion that the “self” is conditioned by material circumstances can be deemed compatible with historical materialism.

Shields also described conventional resistance to Marxism on the part of many Buddhists—even progressive Buddhists in Japan’s postwar period. They objected both to the potential they saw within Marxism for dehumanization and to reconciling the very notion of “materialism” with an ostensibly world-renouncing tradition. Many secular Marxists, on the other hand, insisted that Buddhism and Marxism are incompatible because Buddhism is a “religion” and Marxism is “antireligious.”

Shields subsequently discussed how to overcome the divide between Marxism and Buddhism, suggesting that parallels in their approaches to “materialism” could be particularly fruitful. For example, many would argue that the notion of “this-worldliness” (*genseshugi*) is fundamental even to early Indian Buddhism. Additionally, both Buddhist and Marxist notions of liberation are not limited to personal liberation but, rather, connote broader social concerns.

“Miyazawa Kenji’s Discombobulated Lotus Literature: Japanese Modernist Art as Benevolent Guerilla War on Common Sense”

Gerald Iguchi, *University of Wisconsin–La Crosse, Wisconsin*

In his paper, Iguchi examined the Lotus Sutra-inspired literature of the poet and children’s writer Kenji Miyazawa (1896–1933). Iguchi investigated the political-religious underpinnings and significance of Miyazawa’s work, placing Miyazawa in the early-twentieth-century context of Western hegemony and the Japanese thinkers who actively contested this hegemony. In particular, Iguchi juxtaposed Miyazawa’s “benevolent textual violence” with the literal violence of nationalist figures such as Kanji Ishiwa (1889–1949), showing how Miyazawa attacked the “common sense stipulating Western superiority and the both binary and hierarchical presuppositions at the foundation of any argument or practice insisting that any entity is inherently or timelessly superior to any other from an ultimate perspective” (emphasis in the original).

Crucial to the narrative was Miyazawa’s relationship with Nichirenism (Nichirenshugi), a lay Buddhist organization formed in 1901 by Chigaku Tanaka (1861–1939) and characterized by an overtly aggressive and nationalistic approach to “reforming” Nichiren ideology. According to Iguchi, Nichirenists sought to challenge “modernity” and to transform the world and consciousness in a revolutionary and thoroughgoing way. For them, the Lotus Sutra played a uniquely salvific role: Lotus Sutra practice (for example, transforming the material world through *odaimoku* practice—that is, chanting praise to the sutra itself) could support Japanese expansion that ostensibly served to protect pan-Asia against Western imperialism,

and thus transform the world into a Buddhist Pure Land.

In his paper, Iguchi elucidated how Lotus teachings suffuse Miyazawa’s writings and contribute to his assault on the common sense. For example, in his famous poem “Spring and Asura,” Miyazawa expresses that delusion is fundamentally no different from awakening, reflecting the Lotus teaching that “ultimately all realms of rebirth are one.” Additionally, the Lotus Sutra’s transformation logic is reflected in a matter-of-fact shifting between different levels of reality—from the mundane to the fantastical—in many of Miyazawa’s writings. In this manner, the story *Night of the Milky Way Railway* exemplifies Miyazawa’s erosion of the common sense.

In the latter story, the scorpion’s self-sacrifice reflects the Lotus teaching *fushaku shinmyō* (not begrudging one’s bodily life), a means of manifesting buddhahood and transforming the world. Unlike for fellow Nichirenists, for Miyazawa *fushaku shinmyō* implied not “chauvinistic nationalism” but, rather, dedicating oneself to altruistic activities and improving the welfare of fellow humans.

“Tiantai Revival and Buddhist Education in Modern China”

Rongdao Lai, *University of Southern California, Los Angeles*

Lai investigated early-twentieth-century Tiantai “revival” in China through the lens of the lives and work of two prominent Tiantai monks and “defenders of the dharma,” Dixian (1858–1932) and his disciple Tanxu (1875–1962). Lai contended that although Dixian and Tanxu were criticized as “conservative” by contemporaneous Buddhist reformers, their innovations in Buddhist education—and sweeping goals of reviving Buddhism in China—significantly contributed to and reflected Buddhist

“modernization” and invigoration. In Buddhist academies, “orthodoxy” was reformulated and modern Buddhist identity was forged.

Lai noted the pressures Buddhism faced in Republican China through, for example, the state’s “Build Schools with Temple Property” initiative and broader efforts to separate, forcefully, the state from religion. In the Buddhist context, the “Build Schools” policy spurred various factions to promote their respective visions of reform, especially with regard to education. Both Dixian and Tanxu sought to revive the “traditional” Song-dynasty-style public monastic training model, and they succeeded in establishing, in total, dozens of monasteries, branch temples, and seminaries. Their models, however, were not only “traditional.” For example, one of Tanxu’s innovations was “transmission without succession”: in other words, separating “dharma transmission”—and the question of leaders’ spiritual capacity—from administrative succession.

Lai explained that simplistically characterizing movements and figures as “progressive” or “conservative”—and conceptualizing Buddhism’s “decline” and “revival”—masked complex Buddhist factionalism, which was accompanied by competing visions of Buddhist identity, revitalization, and specific roles in the modern world. On the other hand,

despite the range of sectarian visions, these Buddhist factions shared a broader “vision in which Buddhism would serve as a unifying moral force” during the process of modernization.

“Dōgen, Women, and the Dragon Princess of Lotus Sutra Chapter Twelve: Issues of Context and Interpretation”

Miriam Levering, Professor Emerita, University of Tennessee; International Advisor, Rissho Kosei-kai, Tokyo

In her paper, Levering addressed Dōgen’s (1200–1253) attitudes toward women, questioning the conventional binary that asserted either that Dōgen was egalitarian with regard to gender or that he was increasingly androcentric and sexist, presuming women’s inherent limitations in their pursuit of awakening. She analyzed Dōgen’s writings from different stages in his life, which seemingly contradict each other with regard to women and laypeople. For example, in his early *Bendōwa* (1231), Dōgen affirmed Hongzhi’s view that “distinctions of monastic and lay, male and female” are irrelevant to the functioning of buddha-nature, the practice of zazen, and the attainment of awakening. However, in his later work, *Shukke*

kudoku, Dōgen repudiated as inauthentic the teaching that someone in a female body can attain buddhahood.

Levering used as a reference point Dōgen’s essay *Raihai tokuzui* (1240), in which he exhorted practitioners to regard all things and people as dharma teachers. Here, he explicitly “proclaimed awakened women to be fully equal to awakened men as teachers for those not yet awakened,” despite women’s lower social status. Central to this discussion was the Lotus Sutra’s “dragon (*naga*) girl” story, in which a young girl attains buddhahood.

Ultimately, Levering demonstrated how the binary (whether Dōgen is egalitarian or sexist) is neither productive nor accurate. The paucity of extant materials means that some of Dōgen’s stances are clear, while some remain ambiguous. For example, in *Shukke kudoku*, Dōgen unequivocally affirmed the Buddha’s support of home-leaving and full ordination for women, while repudiating his earlier affirmation of full awakening for practitioners with lay status.

Unlike Dōgen’s increasing critique of “lay Buddhism,” however, his later stances on women were not clear. Even his apparent repudiation in *Shukke kudoku* of females’ ability to attain buddhahood could simply indicate the lack of female-bodied buddhas per the Buddha’s (ostensible) words,

or it could signal a discourse prevalent in Dōgen's time—that of the Five Hindrances, professing female bodies' inherent pollution and thus women's inability (in their current physical form) to become buddhas. Thus, the lingering ambiguity reminds present-day readers to approach Dōgen's stated views in a nuanced way and to abstain from easy bifurcation.

"Perspectives on the Textuality of the Lotus Sutra in Relation to Zen Records"

Steven Heine, Florida International University, Miami

In his paper, Heine juxtaposed the Lotus Sutra and Zen records, comparing their meanings and purposes and offering different methods of juxtaposing the two genres. He took four chief approaches, first demonstrating how the Lotus Sutra contributed to a new episteme—in other words, to a "foundational worldview shaping pre-modern East Asian Buddhism." Here, he provided several examples of Zen records' appropriation of Lotus Sutra imagery and themes (including, for example, the notion that seemingly contradictory notions can coexist)—sometimes altered through Zen's worldview but undeniably from the Lotus Sutra. Second, Heine explained a couple of significant ways in which the Lotus Sutra influenced Dōgen, yet how Dōgen integrated his own perspective and thus changed the emphasis of these notions.

Third, Heine elucidated how the Lotus Sutra can serve as an interpretive tool for decoding a pair of "typically obscure, opaque and ambiguous *Blue Cliff Record* cases" centered on Yunmen, despite a lack of explicit Lotus Sutra allusions. Heine advocated here a "One Voice" approach, which holds that the Buddha's voice "can be understood instantly by all hearers regardless

of class or ethnic, geographical, cultural or linguistic background, yet can and must be adapted to many different suitable levels and pedagogical components depending on the needs and outlooks of those being addressed."

Finally, Heine compared different components of Buddhist textuality as a means of "clarify[ing] how and why Zen Records more or less came to emulate and complement, or perhaps even usurp and replace, some of the conceptual and symbolic roles played by the *Lotus Sutra*, especially in medieval religious expressions." In other words, Heine described a shifting worldview, as the basis of ritual efficacy seemed to shift away from miracles and toward ritual performance centered on the master and his teaching.

Heine further examined the functional components of textuality in relation to efficacy, categorizing them on the levels of merit (that is, producing some result) and meaning (that is, establishing and commenting on doctrine and establishing a tradition based on analysis). On the level of merit are the "transformative (magical), performative (ritual), and deformative (visual) functional components of textuality," and on the level of meaning are the "formative (establishment), informative (doctrinal), and reformative (experiential) components."

"Regional Forms of a Universal Savior: Perspectives on the Lotus Sūtra from the Dali Kingdom"

Megan Bryson, University of Tennessee, Knoxville

In her paper, Bryson explored the connections between Guanyin devotionism and the Lotus Sutra in the Dali kingdom (937–1253), located in what is now Southwest China. She analyzed extant Lotus Sutra texts and related

visual culture from the period, asking how Dali rulers used different depictions of Guanyin to assert their political-religious identities and establish authority. Bryson described the complex balance between regional Guanyin devotionism (with distinct narratives, pantheon, and ritual texts) and universal depictions of this bodhisattva. With regard to the Lotus Sutra, Bryson noted that it "provided a paradigm for the Dali court to claim Guanyin's universal authority in a regionally and politically specific context."

Bryson studied, for example, Acuoye (invincible, all-victorious) Guanyin, thought by devotees to have brought Buddhism to the region and founded the Nanzhao kingdom (649–903; occupying roughly the same geographic region as the Dali kingdom) and subsequently the Dali kingdom. Iconography of Acuoye Guanyin, along with certain esoteric and Lotus Sutra-related forms of Guanyin, is distinct to the Dali region. Scholars debate whether its provenance lies in India or Southeast Asia; in this guise, however, Acuoye Guanyin is clearly depicted as Indian. In other words, devotees claimed legitimacy via a connection closer to Indian Buddhism than to Tang or Song Chinese Buddhism. On the other hand, as Bryson explained, "Dali-kingdom materials related to the *Lotus Sūtra* also show the close ties between Dali-kingdom Buddhism and Chinese Buddhism that challenge the *Nanzhao tuzhuan's* image of Buddhism entering Dali directly from India."

Bryson particularly challenged narratives that identify Dali-kingdom Buddhism as "Chinese Buddhism" on the grounds of the kingdom's eclectic influences—from Tang and Song China, India, Tibet, and Southeast Asia—and, moreover, on its independence from China during this period.

Still, there was ample motivation for claiming (or not claiming) Chinese identity. Bryson explained what was at stake: "If its Buddhism is not 'Chinese,'

it becomes stateless and runs the risk of going unexamined. If its Buddhism is 'Chinese,' it risks losing the distinctiveness borne from its separate political structure."

"Unearthing Practice: Sutra Interment and the Fantasy of Textual Resuscitation in Medieval and Contemporary Japan"

Charlotte Eubanks, Pennsylvania State University, University Park

In her paper, Eubanks explored the production of authenticity and authority in sutra interment rituals at the northern Kyūshū temple Buzōji. Eubanks investigated the rituals' original eleventh- and twelfth-century context, as well as contemporary interment and excavation practices, "revived" in 1968 by Buzōji's head priest, Ryōhan Inoue (d. 2008). Here, Eubanks integrated literary and archeological approaches: approaches that have tended to focus either on semantic meaning or on material culture, respectively, but not both. She questioned the notion of authenticity and efficacy as coming from a single source and offered a creative "model of networked authenticity, in which six elements—sutra text, philosophical grounding, natural landscape, built environment, ritual structure, and charismatic leadership—are all integral to the mutual constitution of religious authenticity." The Lotus Sutra was at the heart of her discussion primarily because it provides a "useful taxonomy of sutra devotion," as well as having been a popular text for copying and interment in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

In the Buzōji sutra-interment-ritual context, the first element undergirding ritual efficacy is the sutra text. We read in the Lotus Sutra that "sutras are the essence of buddhas" and that storing the sutras in the earth "anticipates the resuscitation of a buddha" upon the

sutras' later excavation. Gaining merit through sutra interment is grounded philosophically in, for example, the notion of *tenbōrin* (turning of the wheel of dharma), which anticipates the future Buddha, Miroku, who is associated with these mountain peaks. The significance of the natural landscape (the mountain, associated with regional deities and religiosity) and the built environment is intertwined and, together, they constitute sacralized space.

Following a looting incident in the early 1960s that, interestingly, validated the power of the interment rites and drew attention to the practices, the "charismatic leader" Ryōhan Inoue re-created the ritual structure in 1968. The Buzōji community performed the sutra-copying ritual monthly and the interment ritual annually, using the same ground as their medieval forebears and complying with the prescribed ritual actions in *Dokkyō yōjin* (Essentials for reading the sutras), sometimes attributed to Genshin. These prescriptions concerned the material aspects of sutra reading, which was understood as tantamount to embodying buddhahood. Parishioners believed this ritual to have a healing function, efficacious in both physical healing and coping with the process of aging.

While Eubanks problematizes each of these six intersecting elements assumed to underlie ritual authenticity and efficacy, her multivalent approach is compelling and evokes performative approaches to ritual theory.

"Hakuin, the Lotus Sutra, and Filial Piety"

Gina Cogan, Boston University, Boston

Cogan examined the relationship, per Rinzai Zen monk Hakuin Ekaku (1686–1768), between the Lotus Sutra, the emotional and behavioral dimensions of filial piety, and the functioning of karma. Cogan concentrated on one

of Hakuin's letters written late in his career (1759) to four orphaned sisters, who were urged by their grandfather to copy sutras in order to save their deceased parents from hell. This letter appears to have been part of the "Dharma discourse" genre and thus written for a broader Buddhist audience than simply the four sisters.

For Hakuin, the Lotus Sutra had varying degrees of significance throughout his life, first playing a central role in his childhood notions of karmic retribution. In his letter to the "filial sisters," Hakuin dedicates a substantial portion to demonstrating the "reality" of hells and karmic retribution. Hakuin emphasizes that the critical point of sutra copying is not understanding the text's content but, rather, performing the act with the "right intention" and thereby saving the girls' parents from hell. Further, he contends, the Lotus Sutra (as a text to be copied) is uniquely suited for this salvific role given that sutra copying establishes karmic affinity between the practitioner and the text's wisdom, in this case enabling progression on the bodhisattva's path of saving oneself and all sentient beings.

Filial piety, for Hakuin, thus seems to have dual functions: the immediate benefits of saving one's parents from hell and the long-term benefits of transforming harmful emotional states like grief into the bodhisattva path. Ultimately, Hakuin indicates that it is the unification of right intention, right understanding (for example, of the reality of hells), and right action that ensures salvific efficacy.

In this session, Cogan and other participants wrestled with how to define filial piety (is it, for example, a duty, burden, ritual, or simply a form of action?), how Hakuin's insistence on "right attitude" points to discerning between intention and emotions, and how problematic it can be to impose contemporary Western psychological notions onto premodern Buddhist concepts.

“A Practice of the Lotus Sutra Teachings in Daily Life”

Koichi Kawamoto, Chuo Academic Research Institute, Rissho Kosei-kai, Tokyo

The starting point and core of Kawamoto’s paper was the notion of “good friend” (*kalyāṇamitra*), implying, in the context of the Lotus Sutra, the bodhisattva. This “model who creates open relations” is characterized by true openness of mind and heart and the ability to see others’ buddha-nature without preconceptions or hierarchy. Per the Lotus Sutra, such openness is based on the realization of the Buddhist principles of dependent origination and the fundamental equality of the realms of “emptiness” and discrimination: wisdom that is made accessible through “skillful means” (*upāya*).

In daily life, Kawamoto explained, it is crucial to practice nonself and nonattachment as embodied by the Lotus Sutra’s “Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva,” who functions without hierarchy, regards people without preconceptions, and exemplifies the “dynamism of compassion.” It means seeing clearly and consequently acting with compassion, in turn guiding people toward Buddha-wisdom and “causing them to open their eyes to it.” According to Kawamoto, this is the purpose served by the Lotus Sutra and why the Buddha was born into this world.

On a concrete level, Kawamoto discussed the bodhisattva way in the context of Rissho Kosei-kai activities: viewing others as *kalyāṇamitra*; being service oriented; bearing in mind the motto of “getting rid of pain or suffering and giving peace of mind and hope” (in other words, a form of skillful means); and aspiring to embody Buddhist principles such as right seeing, the Four Noble Truths, and dependent origination.

“The Lotus Sutra and the Perfect-Sudden Precepts”

Paul Groner, University of Virginia, Charlottesville

In his paper, Groner explored various interpretations of the role of the Lotus Sutra in precepts and ordinations in medieval Tendai. While the Lotus Sutra did not contain precepts in the sense of specific guidelines for monastic discipline, it figured prominently into various monks’ worldviews and interpretation of the precepts. Groner noted that the conventional narrative about Saichō’s ordination-ceremony reforms—for example, the assertion that the *Fanwang jing* (Jpn., *Bonmō-kyō*) precepts were simply substituted for *vinaya*—simplifies what was a complex and varied discourse concerning the precepts. Particularly because Saichō died before clarifying his views on such matters, there is wide variation among Tendai lineages regarding interpretation of the precepts (for example, in terms of strictness) and also regarding treatment of texts viewed as authoritative for ordinations. This could be seen in, for example, the relative priority given to the Lotus Sutra and the *Fanwang jing*.

Given the range of interpretations, Groner defined certain terms. For example, “Mahayana ordination” indicated either the “Perfect Precepts” (*enkai*),

suggesting that the precepts were universal and reflected the highest teaching, or the “Perfect-Sudden Precepts” (*endonkai*), meaning that the person taking the precepts experiences a sudden realization. “Mahayana” precepts (also called bodhisattva precepts) also typically referred to the *Fanwang* precepts (Jpn., *Bonmōkai*), which are the ten major precepts and forty-eight minor precepts.

Clarifying the relationship between the Lotus Sutra and the *Fanwang jing*, Groner asserted, first of all, that the range of interpretations signals an ongoing and inconclusive discussion. At the same time, however, we can generalize that the *Fanwang jing* tended to be used to control practitioners’ physical and mental behavior. As for the relative valuation of authoritative texts, Groner explained that the Eshin lineage of Tendai prioritized the Lotus Sutra, while the prominent Tendai priest Jitsudō Ninkū (1307–88) gave more weight to the *Fanwang jing*.

For Groner, a central factor concerned the essence of the precepts—whether it is mental and/or physical. Seminar participants discussed both the precepts’ essence and how it relates to ordination. For example, if intention were foremost, would the physical and verbal aspects of the ordination ceremony be necessary? Groner also clarified that the *Fanwang jing* precepts are both physical and mental.

Kawamoto also drew a broad parallel with Christianity, noting that in both religions, openness and acceptance are vital, and realizing buddha-hood (or experiencing the presence of Jesus or God) is contingent on being completely empty, in a state without preconceptions.

“The Buddha in the Lotus Sutra: Can We See Him or Not?”

Hiroshi M. Niwano, Rissho Kosei-kai Gakurin Seminary, Tokyo

In his paper, Niwano explored what it means to “see” the Buddha in the context of the Buddha’s appearance and central teachings in the Lotus Sutra. These teachings include the core truths arising from the Buddha Śākyamuni’s enlightenment: namely, nonself (in this context, abandoning one’s sense of possession) and dependent coarising based on the true character of all things. Niwano particularly examined the Buddha’s skillful means for guiding human beings toward enlightenment, pointing to the teaching *kaijigonyū*: “to open, to demonstrate, to understand, and to enter the path.” In other words, this was the Buddha’s intention for appearing in the world as expressed in the Lotus Sutra: to open and indicate truth, and for sentient beings to awaken and actualize the truth in the world.

Niwano concluded that “seeing the Buddha” occurs not “with our physical eyes but instead through recognizing or feeling his intention or compassion, with our heart or mind becoming one with the Buddha.” Furthermore, this “seeing” (more like a “sensing” or “feeling”) is founded on faith in the Buddha’s truth and thus faith in one’s own buddha-nature.

Grounding his approach in the realm of practice, Niwano connected Lotus teachings to actualization of the teachings in practitioners’ daily lives.

He touched on various facets of practice, such as the religiosity of the state of longing for the Buddha: in itself a means for becoming one with the Buddha.

Participants further connected Niwano’s themes to Rissho Kosei-kai practice. For example, Levering pointed out that Rissho Kosei-kai offers practitioners a communal sangha experience, in which sangha members gradually help each other “see the Buddha” and thus experience their own buddha-nature.

“The Lotus Sutra from Below”

Gene Reeves, International Advisor, Rissho Kosei-kai, Tokyo

Reeves offered a subversive reading of the Lotus Sutra based on the worldview and lived experience of “ordinary” people rather than oriented toward “elite” Buddhist perspectives. Reeves defined his perspective as one “that would advocate dramatic change in society and inevitable overturn of powerful elites, both secular and monastic.” In sum, he concluded that seeing the Lotus Sutra “from below” means to see the potential of all beings to become buddhas—even those who are the most socially marginalized and seemingly powerless. He also correlated the distinction between elite and ordinary with a distinction between a mental and physical orientation—between, for example, compassion-based meditation and compassionate acts in the world.

First, Reeves recounted subversive readings of the Lotus Sutra historically, in pre-Republican China (for example, in Guanyin devotion and growing emphasis on compassionate acts), in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Japan (in, for example, the cross-dressing—pointing to gender as a social construction—at an Oeshiki celebration at a Tokyo temple), and in contemporary North America (in Lotus Sutra-centered

new religious movements, such as Soka Gakkai International, which is more racially and socioeconomically diverse than most religious groups in North America).

Subsequently, Reeves examined the Lotus Sutra stories that he considers to be most conducive to a subversive reading: for example, the “Never Disrespectful Bodhisattva” and the “Dragon Girl” (indicating that everyone has the potential to become a buddha), and the “Dharma Teachers” (instructing that anyone can become a teacher of dharma). Finally, he highlighted the teachings of Kenji Miyazawa, asserting that Miyazawa sought—particularly later in his life—to embody a vision of the Lotus Sutra and “connect the heavens and the earth for the sake of poor people.”

“Reflections on Translating the *Mo-ho chih-kuan*”

Paul Swanson, Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, Nagoya

Swanson, through his paper and presentation, offered a rare glimpse into the decades-long process of translating a single, prodigious text: in this case, the *Mohe zhiguan* (*Mo-ho chih-kuan*; Jpn., *Maka shikan*), comprising lectures by the Tiantai master Zhiyi that were recorded by his disciple, which has played a significant role in the development of Lotus Sutra Buddhism in East Asia. In his paper, Swanson reflected on the translation process by introducing various dimensions of the text as well as its usage and translation historically. Kanno (see below), as respondent, brought his keen philological eye and expertise in Tiantai exegesis to bear on Swanson’s remarks.

First, Swanson appreciated the *Mohe zhiguan* as “not ‘just a meditation manual’ but a superb outline of Buddhist doctrine which covers the full scope of Buddhist practice and teachings.”

Given its presentation of both doctrine and practice, he affirmed its “appropriateness” as the core text for Tendai monks training in the exoteric meditation course.

Second, Swanson reflected on the transformation of the research process through the emergence and development of online databases, such as the Digital Dictionary of Buddhism and the SAT and CBETA databases, since he embarked on the project.

Swanson also shared some specific discoveries he made through the translation process. For example, he encountered allusions that could point to the possible existence of an “old” (that is, pre-edited) version of the *Ta chih tu lun* (*Dazhidu lun*). Also, Swanson’s investigation of Zhiyi’s “quote” from Xuanzang’s translation of the Heart Sutra supported Jan Nattier’s assertion of the apocryphal nature of the Heart Sutra. Additionally, pertaining to the long-standing issue of whether to shut one’s eyes or keep them open during meditation, Swanson noted that in this text, Zhiyi described lightly shutting the eyes, though this instruction was modified over the years, and keeping one’s eyes slightly open became the norm.

Kanno, as respondent, brought his keen eye to bear on translation of

various phrases, and Swanson pointed to the translator’s issue of how literally to translate, particularly in the case of metaphor and other literary devices. Swanson noted that while he maintained a glossary, he deliberately chose to be inconsistent in translating certain multivalent terms, given how greatly meaning can vary with context.

“Fayun’s View of the *Lotus Sūtra*”

Hiroshi Kanno, Soka University, Tokyo

Kanno brought his meticulous analysis to Fayun’s (467–529) view of the Lotus Sutra as expressed in the *Fahua yiji* (Jpn., *Hokke giki*), Fayun’s lectures pertaining to the Lotus Sutra as recorded by his disciple. The *Fahua yiji* had declined in popularity following the Tiantai masters Zhiyi’s and Jizang’s criticisms of Fayun, despite its influence on these exegetes, and it seems largely to have disappeared during the Tang and Song dynasties.

Kanno focused first on Fayun’s view with regard to analytic division, explaining Fayun’s breakdown of the Lotus Sutra and concluding that Fayun’s analytic division in the *Fahua yiji* particularly influenced later exegeses, including those of Zhiyi and Jizang. Second, Kanno investigated

Fayun’s doctrinal classification, affirming that Fayun seems to have adopted the five-period classification schema, locating the Lotus Sutra in status below the Nirvana Sutra, despite the paucity of direct references to the Nirvana Sutra.

Third, Kanno addressed Fayun’s interpretation of the One Vehicle, a teaching both expounded in the “Skillful Means” chapter and pervading the Lotus Sutra in its entirety. He explained that the two key components to understanding this framework are the theories of provisional and real wisdom and of cause and effect. To elaborate further, Fayun’s theory of real and provisional wisdom means that through provisional wisdom (in other words, through skillful means), sentient beings are capable of attaining real wisdom and thus transforming into a bodhisattva; his theory of cause and effect correlates to Buddhist practice (cause) and the “religious ideal” (effect).

Finally, Kanno addressed Fayun’s view, per the Lotus Sutra, of the impermanent existence of the Buddha-body, highlighting differences with the latter’s characteristics per the Nirvana Sutra. He noted that “the *dharma-kāya* expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* is different from the eternal abiding *dharma-kāya* in the *Nirvāna Sūtra*” and that “Fayun did not regard the age-old Śākyamuni Buddha expounded in the ‘Lifespan’ chapter as the true eternal abiding expounded in the *Nirvāna Sūtra*.”

Concluding Remarks

From textuality to social history, from new philological analysis of classic texts to creative melding of methodologies in premodern and contemporary contexts, participants’ range of perspectives stimulated rich discussion throughout the three-day seminar. Participants expressed gratitude to one another and particularly to Rissho Kosei-kai for creating this dynamic environment and enhancing their own perspectives of the Lotus Sutra. □

Championing an Equal Voice for Women of Faith, East and West

An Interview with Ms. Dena Merriam,
Recipient of the Thirty-First Niwano Peace Prize

The Niwano Peace Foundation awarded the thirty-first Niwano Peace Prize on May 16, 2014, to Ms. Dena Merriam of the United States for her leadership of the Global Peace Initiative of Women (GPIW). On May 19, Dr. Hiroshi M. Niwano, chair of the foundation, interviewed Ms. Merriam at the International House of Japan, in Tokyo. The interview highlighted the importance of interfaith dialogue and partnership between men and women in building harmony between people as well as between humanity and nature.

Niwano: I am very much impressed by your rich, diverse set of endeavors for peace through the Global Peace Initiative of Women, which started with a need for women leaders to become more visible at international conferences. I am also impressed that your activities have

led you to recognize the importance of balance between men and women and between the religious traditions of East and West.

Merriam: When I heard that I was to receive the Niwano Peace Prize, it was

Dena Merriam graduated from Barnard College, affiliated with Columbia University, and received an MA from Columbia University. As the founder and convener of GPIW, she has been engaged in reducing international tensions and fostering reconciliation by taking advantage of women's qualities. She has also served on the boards of the Harvard University Center for the Study of World Religions and the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy.

most touching to me because it was coming from Japan. I have a deep spiritual as well as cultural connection to Japan.

And it's in part because I have known about the tremendous support for interfaith activities that has come from Rissho Kosei-kai and from some of the other Buddhist organizations without expecting anything in return. Their goal was not to control the dialogue or to spread Buddhism; it was simply because it was the dharmic thing to do.

I have also known many people who have been on the selection committee of the Niwano Peace Prize. I have great respect for them, and I see how the foundation seeks to be balanced: gender balance, balance among the religions, and even geographical balance, making sure there is always representation from Africa. That's something unusual, and I have great admiration for that.

I have always sought to include those who have been left out, because I think the time we are living in is demanding that we move toward human unity.

Merriam: It was my first experience in organizing such a big summit. My background had been more academic and involved in writing and studying.

But I saw that there were a lot of political negotiations behind the scenes. The goal was a peace summit: how can the religions work together for ways to peace. But there was a lot of competitiveness, and the women really had no voice at all. The stronger institutions were the ones that had a stronger say in how the program was going to develop.

So the women came together. They felt that what took place in the UN, which is devoted to women's issues, was not consistent with the UN goals and decided to organize a follow-up.

There were a lot of questions about what kind of follow-up would come out of this summit. UN secretary-general Kofi Annan liked the idea of creating a platform where women could take greater leadership. The women were eager, but most of them didn't have the training in speaking, or the confidence. I understood that because I myself did not like public speaking at the time. So this was a challenge: how to give women the opportunity to develop their leadership abilities.

So when we did a follow-up summit of women religious and spiritual leaders in Geneva in 2002, these women had to come onto the UN stage and deliver a talk to seven hundred to eight hundred people. It was very challenging for them. This developed our commitment to create a platform where women could have the opportunities to gain more confidence and to feel more comfortable speaking out on a global platform.

Niwano: What were your feelings and thoughts about bringing about the birth of GPIW?

Merriam: Well, I believe, and I have always believed, that partnerships between men and women are very important. So I have always looked for men who understand that partnership means respecting both sides, so everybody respects others' opinions. In the early days only a few men thought this was a very good idea.

Initially, I was very accepting of collaboration, but I began to see that a few of the men who were working with me wanted to dominate, and it created tension with some of the other women. It's a very difficult thing to define a true balance.

Niwano: I understand that you served as the vice chair of the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders, which was held in 2000 at the UN General Assembly Hall in New York. You have recalled how shocked you were that women's voices were inaudible at that time.

When we organize a dialogue, we try to have an equal number of men and women. It's still a challenge, but that's what we seek to do. And this is where the Eastern traditions have been very helpful, actually, because in the Abrahamic traditions there were many women who were very angry at religious authority that was often dominated by men. But we have always sought a response that doesn't come from a place of anger but one of wisdom and compassion.

Niwano: How do you view the transformation that took place through your initiatives among women religious leaders?

Merriam: What I found in this fourteen-year period is that there is much greater awareness of the need for gender balance. Many interfaith groups now have women's chapters. I have tried to do the same thing to build a network with Eastern traditions, because most of the interfaith dialogues have taken place in the West, within the Abrahamic traditions.

Niwano: My question, based upon this response from you, is whether you still think Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—see a religious hierarchy in which they are superior to other religious traditions, especially of the East.

Merriam: This is, I think, one of the main challenges of deep interfaith dialogue, and I think it comes from a lack of understanding of other faiths, in some cases a lack of understanding of one's own faith. In the United States we have focused a lot in the interfaith gatherings on overcoming the sense that there is only one path to truth, because it not only creates imbalance but is an insult to other cultures.

Niwano: I have studied Christianity in Rome. In one of the theology courses I took, a professor told the students that

Buddhism is not a religion but a philosophy of life. I was very much shocked and actually demoralized, because in his theological construct, Buddhism had no part.

Merriam: Increasingly when I speak, I say, "What you call God may be called something else in another culture. It may be called the ultimate reality." We are fighting about language and words. I also say, "Who is the judge of what's a religion?" It's fear of what's not understood and not known.

Niwano: Do you sometimes feel that religion triggers conflict in parts of the world?

Merriam: I do. Because a religion that teaches people to be separate and look at the other suspiciously, is creating divisions. Religions should say, "No, we are all brothers and sisters. Yes, I have my preferences and I prefer my religion, but you are also my brother." So I see a difference between the highest ideals of a religion and the way it's practiced by officials or institutional leaders who have their own purposes, their own agendas.

Niwano: How do you characterize your own thinking or ideology that has sustained your many years of advocacy in conflict resolution?

Merriam: I would say, when I go into a conflict area or a postconflict area, or an area of tension, I do a lot of talking to people on the ground and a lot of listening. I ask, what are the hopeful signs here? Where is the possibility for change? Rather than sticking with a dynamic that's not working, I look for where the change might come.

I'll give you an example. For a number of years, I did dialogues in Israel and Palestine, between rabbis, imams, and ministers—all Abrahamic. Our group was always very mixed, but the people on the ground were the same people who had been involved in interfaith dialogue for a long time. I saw that the organized religions there were very set in their beliefs. As I began to meet people, I discovered that Buddhism was growing very rapidly in Israel and that there are some very good Buddhist teachers there. When the Buddhist from Israel comes together with the Buddhist from Palestine, they have a lot to share. They don't care for the history so much. They are not controlled by the past. What they want to learn is how to cope with life's

tensions. So this has the possibility to really change the dynamic. That's how my thinking has changed.

Niwano: You have been engaging GPIW in environmental-protection initiatives as well. In 2011 we had a great earthquake and tsunami in northeastern Japan, which triggered the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident, which has inflicted irreparable damage on the environment.

I would like to ask you how you think we should be able to coexist with nature.

Merriam: That's one of the most important questions. And it's something we do a lot of thinking about and talking about too, because the global economy is so complex.

I began to watch Germany very closely because Germany has a big economy. It announced it is phasing out its reliance on nuclear power and decentralizing its energy grid. And it has involved its universities in research on what the type of future energy supply would look like.

But I think the changes have to come at a local level. I think this is where

religious communities like Rissho Kosei-kai, which has many members and where women make up a large part of the membership, can play a big role. And I think just looking at local initiatives, local food, nonchemical agriculture, more riding of bicycles, and also passing these values on to children. But we continue—whenever we have dialogues—to talk about how we can provide local models. Next year we are organizing a dialogue between spiritual leaders and leaders of tech firms in the Silicon Valley.

Niwano: That is a magnificent idea.

Merriam: It will be a kind of think tank including spiritual teachers who have some understanding of technology and some executives from the technology world. Some people view technology as the enemy, but technology has to be a part of a solution. So I think we have to envision what kind of world we want twenty years from now for our children.

So, in a way, our organization has moved from just peace talk to being part of the envisioning of the future. I think that for too long our spiritual

communities have isolated themselves. We have to get involved in thinking about all of these things that we didn't in the past—economics, technology, the environment—all of these things that affect the life on our planet.

Niwano: Finally, I'd like to ask you to give a personal message to members of Rissho Kosei-kai, who have been devoting their lives to recognizing and developing their buddha-nature.

Merriam: I think the main practice is the chanting of the Lotus Sutra. Chanting is a very powerful practice, and sometimes we tend to think that our spiritual practice is just for our own benefit. But this is not the case. Chanting sends vibrations throughout the whole planet and helps elevate the whole energy field of the planet, especially when it's done as a collective, with more than one person.

I would say that the chanting that's done here is doing as much to help the world as dialogues and conferences and anything else, perhaps even more. I benefit from all the chanting done here, and my work benefits as well. I am enormously grateful for both, for all the support for interfaith work, but equally for all the spiritual practice that takes place here. So my message is perhaps for us to become more aware of the benefits that the whole world is receiving from the chanting of the sutras here. That's perhaps the greatest contribution you can make, so please continue.

I will try to feel those vibrations that are coming from the chanting, becoming more conscious of them. I am very happy because I feel that a spiritual link has been made. Even though I am working in different parts of the world and I am based in America, at a spiritual level we are continuing to have exchanges and support each other.

Niwano: I feel the same way. Thank you for giving me this wonderful time. ≥

Preparing for a Conference of World Religions

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.

The temple Kongobuji, on Mount Koya in northern Wakayama Prefecture, is the headquarters of the Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism. The sect was founded and promoted by the ninth-century priest Kukai, also known as Kobo Daishi. Kongobuji lies deep within the mountains, far from the bustle of everyday life. It was in May 1969, a month when new leaves were fragrant on the trees, that I visited Rev. Shinkai Hotta, the head of the Shingon sect, on Mount Koya.

I first greeted him in my capacity as the newly appointed chairman of the Japan Religions League [now the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations]. I then took the opportunity to speak to him about my ideas for the World Conference of Religion and Peace [now Religions for Peace]. “I will be working as chairman of the Japan Religions League over the coming year,” I told him, “and it so happens that an international conference of religionists from around the world will be held in autumn next year in Kyoto. I hope

we can make it a success through the combined efforts of religious circles in Japan. I have resolved to undertake the work needed to ensure this.”

I outlined the conference. Rev. Hotta replied, gifting me undeservedly with inspiring words, “There seems to be an atmosphere of cooperation around us now, with the religious leaders around the world, including the pope, coming together. Rissho Kosei-kai always seems to be working in cooperation with other religious organizations. If you can lead the way in promoting the world conference, I am sure very few will be against it. We will give you our full support. Please do your best to achieve this task.”

The temple Enryakuji, on Mount Hiei, was founded by Saicho, also known as Dengyo Daishi, who sailed to China [in 804] in a ship carrying a Japanese diplomatic mission and later transmitted the Tiantai (Tendai) school of Buddhism to Japan. The words of Enryakuji’s current chief priest, Rev. Shutan Tsukuma, likewise heartened me. “Great priests like Honen, Shinran, Nichiren, Dogen,

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.

and Yosai all studied here on Mount Hiei. We can probably call our temple the mother of Japanese Buddhism. The great merit of Mount Hiei is that here there is no conflict, no matter who comes from other sects.”

I nodded in firm agreement and told him, “The various denominations of Christianity are now looking for ways to come together. If here on this mountain, Buddhism can do the same, and if two religions can be of one spirit, I believe they have the potential to contribute greatly to world peace.”

Rev. Tsukuma replied, “That is very true. Mount Hiei has always been a site of both practice and learning, and it has a great many halls specifically constructed for religious training. I think it is an excellent place to foster leaders able to contribute to peace both in Japan and around the world. Please consider this whole mountain at your disposal when carrying out your planned activities.”

The time had come at last.

I thought deeply about what Rev. Tsukuma had said.

I did not meet just senior members of Buddhist circles. I will never forget my

visit to Rev. Muneyoshi Tokugawa, the chief priest of Ise Grand Shrine, a sanctuary greatly revered by Japan's imperial family. Rev. Tokugawa shared my opinions and kindly listened as I spoke about my own general understanding of Shinto. "The Japanese are called the Yamato [Great Peace] race. I think that they possess an essential harmony of mind that is the spirit of 'great peace.' They are cheerful and honest at heart, which is close to what Buddhism calls the spirit of Mahayana. With this spiritual harmony as their basis, they possess a tolerance that allows them to absorb and digest any teaching. A lot of other foreign cultures and religions, besides Buddhism, have been able to take root in Japan because of this tolerant spirit. It is, I believe, our task to spread this Japanese way of thinking throughout the world."

"You are right," Rev. Tokugawa told me. "Today we can no longer cling to our own sectarian perceptions. Unless we are ready to share with all people of religion the task of bringing liberation to all, our very existence as a religion is called into question."

I also spoke to Rev. Nichijo Fujii, the superior of the Nichiren sect and head priest of Kuonji on Mount Minobu, a temple founded by Nichiren, soon after the conference of the Japan Religious Committee for World Federation and the Promotion of Peace had been held there. Rev. Fujii, already in his ninety-first year, felt a sense of impending crisis in the current global situation.

I was deeply grateful for the support my "peace pilgrimage" received, both directly and indirectly, from the newly established International Affairs Committee of the Japan Religions League.

Japanese Religious Circles on the Move

I visited the top leaders of the various sects of Japanese Buddhism, asking for their support and engaging in

informal talks. The list was long: Rev. Sogen Asahina, head of the Engakuji school of Rinzai Zen at Engakuji in Kamakura; Rev. Kosan Fujii, head of the Buttsuji school of Rinzai Zen; Rev. Kosho Otani, head priest-designate of the Otani sect of Shin Buddhism; Rev. Shoshun Iwamoto, head priest of the Soto Zen temple Sojiji; Rev. Zen'e Nakayama, spiritual and administrative head of Tenrikyo; Rev. Ryohei Onishi, chief priest of Kiyomizudera of the Kita Hosso sect; Rev. Kosho Otani [unrelated to the Rev. Otani mentioned above], head of the Hongwanji branch of the Jodo Shin sect; and Rev. Gyojin Hashimoto, the former head of Yakushiji.

At first there were misgivings even within the Japan Religions League about holding the world conference and about what it might achieve. Some said that interreligious cooperation would prove difficult, and there was also concern about the connection of religion with politics and about the financial burden the conference would impose.

On May 27, 1969, three months after the Istanbul meeting [of religious leaders proposing the world conference, described in the previous installment], the executive board of the Japan Religions League decided that the league would formally sponsor the conference. The following July, it set up an International Affairs Committee to deal with the actual planning and

management. Japan was prepared to take on the challenge.

The chairmanship of the Japan Religions League was supposed to rotate each year, but there was concern about rotation before such a large and unprecedented event for Japanese religious circles. People said, "Mr. Niwano has led the discussion down to this point and he is also on friendly terms with the foreign committee members. It would be best if he continued as chairman until the conference." It was decided that I should chair the International Affairs Committee.

Up till that point I had thought of Japan's acceptance of the world conference as the work of the Japan Religions League, since after all it was the organization that had brought together all the various religious groups that existed in Japan and so might well be called their "manager." Now, though, it seemed that the task of getting it underway had fallen squarely on my shoulders.

I encouraged myself by asking myself, "Someone has to assume the role of bringing the religionists of the world together. Nothing will happen if that someone is not decided. Of course, one person alone cannot do anything, but at the same time everything has to start from one person."

Perhaps it might have sounded more modest if I had said, "Nothing of the sort! I can't take on the responsibility." But this would not be true modesty, I

believe. Isn't true modesty being able to say, "Lord Buddha, I am just a nobody and I'm not equipped for such a role, but please, use me for what is good. If you give me your strength, even I can achieve what is required of me."

The single seed that had been planted at the Japanese-American Inter-Religious Consultation on Peace in Kyoto had sprouted and was extending its foliage.

The members of the International Affairs Committee included five directors from the Japan Religions League: Rev. Nenka Inada, president of the Japan Buddhist Federation; Rev. Eiji Hayashi, secretary-general of the Association of Shinto Shrines; Rev. Yasuyoshi Sakata, chairman of the Federation of Sectarian Shinto; Rev. Toru Takakura, chairman of the Japan Confederation of Christian Churches; and Professor Fumio Masutani, chairman of the International Institute for the Study of Religions. There were in addition three auditors, as well as a number of other interested persons, including Rev. Riri Nakayama; Rev. Toshio Miyake; Archbishop Seiichi Shirayanagi, of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Tokyo; and Rev. Yasusaburo Tazawa, leader of Shoroku Shinto Yamatoyama. Some people with academic backgrounds also took part, including Professor Kinhide Mushakoji of Sophia University; Professor Yoshiaki Iizaka of Gakushuin University; Rev. Nobusada Nishitakatsuji, chief priest of Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine; and Mr. Takanobu Senge, a board director of Kokugakuin University. To them were added Rev. Shuten Oishi as chief secretary, together with seven secretaries appointed from the five member organizations of the Japan Religions League and assigned to office duties. We had readied ourselves with the full support of literally the entire Japanese religious world.

Such a diverse group was the first of its kind in the history of Japanese religion.

The International Affairs Committee, which met monthly, was charged with all the business of preparation, from choosing Japan's official representatives to making approaches to each of the member organizations of the Japan Religions League and making preliminary arrangements for consultations with religionists from abroad. I attended those monthly meetings, where I received reports on how the preparations were progressing and presentations by the secretaries on various topics and also gave directions to them.

One person could not possibly do all that was necessary for such a large event as the world conference. The cooperation of top religious leaders was vital, as was the involvement of the whole Japan Religions League. Just as a cart needs two wheels to be drawn successfully, our success needed the efforts of both an individual and that group. The selfless work of all the committee members was a powerful support to my own approaches to religious leaders.

The Warmth of Shared Concerns

In the United States, preparatory work for the world conference was proceeding apace, centered on the efforts of Dr. Dana McLean Greeley and Dr. Homer Jack. Its Executive Committee was set up there in July 1969 and met at the Endicott House, the conference center of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, situated in a suburb of Boston. I remained ensconced there for three days as discussions took place.

It was the height of summer when I arrived in Boston; a hot wind blew constantly, and I felt as if submerged in hot water. However, when my car arrived at the conference center, I found myself in a clubhouse in the middle of a thick wood, as cool as a summer house in Hakone, one of the famous highlands in Japan. An expansive lawn spread out beyond the windows.

Eighteen people took part in the discussions. Besides me, in my role as chairman of the Japan Religions League, representatives from Japan included Rev. Toshio Miyake, Rev. Riri Nakayama, Rev. Shuten Oishi, Rev. Kiyoshi Takizawa (a permanent secretary of the Japan Confederation of Christian Churches), and two others. The remaining members included Dr. Greeley, Dr. Jack, and leaders from religious communities in the United States and other countries.

Here the Japanese delegation announced that the Japan Religions League would host the world conference.

The Executive Committee meeting determined that the conference would take place October 16–21, 1970, at the Kyoto International Conference Center. It also decided to enlist the support of the pope. Our first day, the discussions continued past ten at night as we talked about how to choose delegates and conferred about the conference program.

On the morning of the second day, I felt there was something wrong with my stomach and found blood in my stool. I was sure that this was related to an operation I had had the previous year for a stomach ulcer and that it had been brought on by continuing stress. I mentioned it only to my secretary, but he reacted strongly, insisting I should rest. But that was not a possibility. This meeting was far too important, and the Japanese delegation, as representatives of the host nation, had to play a leading part in discussions about site, budget, and the choice of delegates.

But when my secretary pleaded with me to stay in bed and promised to keep me informed about the progress of the discussion, I acquiesced. He came to my bedside to tell me each thing that was happening one by one. I then had him relay my thoughts about what had been reported. The Japanese delegates also came to consult me when there was a particularly important decision to be made.

Many of the non-Japanese delegates also came to my room, concerned about

Because I was in such poor physical condition, I was absorbing almost nothing other than milk. Though I had only a small amount of consommé and crackers for supper, I still slept soundly without interruption.

Rev. Takizawa continued to give me shiatsu massages morning and afternoon for the rest of the journey. I remember fondly the warmth of his expression as he laughingly commented, “This is certainly the meaning of interreligious cooperation.”

my health. Dr. Greeley and Dr. Jack were very worried and wanted to call a doctor. They said I should return home if necessary.

I was truly grateful for their warm friendship, but I refused their offer.

After the Boston meeting ended, we were to fly to London, Geneva, and Rome, where I had planned to meet with leading figures in European religious circles. Unless we had their support, our proposed event could hardly be called a “world” conference. However, when it had come to the point of identifying which prominent religious leaders in Europe might sympathize with our aims, the non-Japanese delegates in Boston were hesitant to make any approach, perhaps knowing the situation in Europe too well. But, I thought, perhaps a Buddhist like me would have more power of persuasion. When I told them I would try, they looked relieved.

I had thus taken it upon myself to act as spokesman in Europe; yet I knew that if I consulted a doctor here, I would be told to rest in bed and not fly. At that point, Rev. Takizawa, who had studied a unique form of shiatsu massage, offered to give me one. He massaged me until sweat poured from his body. Warmth from his fingertips flowed into my body. Entrusting my body to his treatment, I felt the joy of being with those who shared my aspirations and who walked the same path. My heart was calm and at ease.

Travels in Europe

The meeting in Boston ended without incident on July 23. On that day the Japanese delegation called on Edwin O. Reischauer, the former U.S. ambassador to Japan [1961–66], who had built a house in the woods nearby. Professor Reischauer had long been on friendly terms with Dr. Greeley. A great Japanophile, he was as delighted as if it were his own affair that such a landmark event as a gathering of religionists from around the world would be held in Japan.

That evening we left by Pan American for London.

When we had discussed whom to invite as the keynote speaker and as special guests, we could not come to any agreement. People doubted that those suggested would be supportive of our aims. I decided inwardly that there was nothing else for it but to persuade someone myself.

In Britain we hoped to meet the archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsey, at Canterbury Cathedral, the headquarters of the Church of England. After that we were to fly on to Switzerland to meet Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, secretary-general of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and then on to Rome, to meet Pope Paul VI at the Vatican, in the hope of securing his support for our endeavor.

I continued to be careful about my diet, having only bread, milk, and

consommé, as I had in Boston. A diary entry from that time reads: “The weather is perfect for our visit to London. . . . I still have a little blood in my stool. I myself am not at all worried about it, though I don’t feel physically strong.” At that time I keenly felt that it was not my own power that was sustaining me in my travels.

I wrote in my diary immediately after arriving in Switzerland, “Water from the peaks falls into the valleys. The greatest teaching brings liberation to the lowest.” I think they are the words of Master Tiantai. I wonder why I deliberately noted them down when I was abroad. I don’t remember exactly what made me do so, but while I was traveling, I was constantly thinking about how I had to teach that which truly brings people to liberation, in a way they could easily understand.

On July 24 we went to Canterbury Cathedral at short notice and found that Dr. Ramsey was away. Instead we met Canon R. J. Hammer and spoke for about an hour about the plans for the world conference. Canon Hammer told us that the archbishop would be returning in two days, but we were unable to arrange a meeting, since we would be flying to Geneva, via Paris and Zurich, at that time.

Geneva is where John Calvin, the sixteenth-century French religious reformer, was based. Calvin followed in the footsteps of Martin Luther, demanding that the pope allow the simplification of ritual and an unimpeded religious life. Geneva went on to become the center of Protestantism in Europe. It is now also the headquarters of the WCC, a federation of Protestant churches around the world. Protestantism consists of many independent denominations, and the WCC was established to unite them. In fact, the WCC is the Protestant equivalent of the Vatican for the Roman Catholic Church. We had come to Geneva to seek the support of its leader for the first world conference of religionists.

"We will definitely work with you." This was not an empty promise given just for courtesy's sake; the following year both Dr. Blake and Dr. Samartha attended the first World Conference on Religion and Peace in Kyoto, and Dr. Blake gave a wonderful keynote address on the theme "Development, Peace, and Religion."

Meeting Pope Paul VI Again

We flew to Rome the same evening. The following morning we visited the Vatican and met with cardinals Paolo Marella and John Wright. I had previously met Cardinal Marella at the Second Vatican Council. Cardinal Wright had been at the meetings in Istanbul earlier that year and had pledged himself to work for the solidarity of people of religion around the world. He had recently been elevated to cardinal and had moved to the Vatican.

When we expressed our great hope that the pope might attend the conference in Kyoto, the two cardinals, having heard about the progress of preparations and the decisions made at the meeting in Boston, promised they would do whatever they could.

The pope was about to depart on a trip to Africa, and a meeting with him seemed impossible. We received a message through the Japanese Embassy in Rome, however, that we would be granted an audience the following morning at the pope's summer residence, the Pontifical Palace of Castel Gandolfo, about fifteen miles from Rome. It was July 30. I had awoken that morning at two o'clock and could not get back to sleep. I got up, composed what I wanted to say when I met the pope, and returned to bed. I got up again at 7 a.m. and performed morning devotionals, praying for a good result from the meeting, the final one of our European itinerary. At 9:40 a.m. I met the other members of our group and we left the hotel. Around an hour later, we arrived at the Pontifical Palace,

an elegantly beautiful building on a hill. Italy produces a lot of marble, and the walls and corridors were all constructed of this material.

Pope Paul VI greeted us with a smile. I mentioned how happy I was to be meeting him again. He replied, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the extraordinary contribution you are all making to peace and justice for humankind. I don't know whether or not it is possible, but I would like to go to Japan."

When I look back on it now, I realize how pushy I had been, turning up without warning to visit leading representatives of the world's religions and pressing upon them the need for interreligious cooperation. But I had to ensure the success of the world conference, so I did all I could for it. Is there any greater contradiction than that people of religion should be antagonistic toward one another and yet talk about peace?

My pilgrimage, drawing attention to bringing about world peace through interreligious cooperation, bore very important fruit for me. I had come to the firm conviction that the principal religious leaders around the world all shared the same aspiration.

At the end of November 1969, Nikodim, the Russian Orthodox metropolitan of Leningrad, and his party visited Risho Kosei-kai headquarters in Tokyo. It so happened that at the beginning of December a preparatory meeting was to be held in Kyoto attended by forty-four people from twelve countries, including delegates, staff members, and observers, to finally determine the theme of the world conference. I warmly invited the metropolitan to attend. He responded by sending one of his party, Alexey Bouevsky, as an observer, and as a result the Soviet Union decided to participate in the first World Conference on Religion and Peace.

I truly felt that one by one, the opportunities I had grasped were coming to fruition.

To be continued

Some people were anxious about this visit, saying, "Even if you go to Geneva, there is little likelihood that the WCC will take part in the world conference." But I replied, "If we always start off with preconceived ideas, we will never be able to hold a conference where religious leaders from around the world will sit together under one roof. We are promoting the spirit of a peace conference simply by traveling around and trying to persuade people who are negative about the idea of a global meeting of religionists to take part."

The WCC headquarters is in a beautiful, five-story building on a small hill overlooking Lake Geneva. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake, secretary-general of the council, met with us despite his heavy schedule. He asked us interested questions about the world conference and spoke strongly about how people of religion can contribute to world peace. Later we met Dr. Stanley Samartha, associate secretary of the council, and answered his detailed questions about our concrete plans for the world conference. "We will keep in close contact," he promised.

The Prism of the Lotus Sutra (7)

by Atsushi Kanazawa

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

The Elephant

The elephant, it has to be said, is an animal best seen in a zoo. Even today, when pets are so popular, no one is likely to have a pet elephant, because elephants, whatever their charms, are too big for private homes. Also, as an endangered species, an elephant would be too expensive for an individual to buy.

In chapter 12 of the Lotus Sutra, “Devadatta,” we read: “Desiring to fulfill the Six Pāramitās, I earnestly bestowed alms with an unsparing mind—elephants, horses, the rare seven, countries, cities, wives, children, male and female slaves, servants and followers, head, eyes, marrow, brain, the flesh of my body, hands, and feet, unsparing of body and life.” (All excerpts from the Lotus Sutra are from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra* [Kosei Publishing Company, 1975], with slight revisions.) It should be clear from this passage that even in the India of Shakyamuni Buddha’s time an elephant was regarded as an important asset that was, moreover, used in the Buddhist practice of giving alms.

An elephant also figures in the all-too-famous episode of the white elephant that appeared in a dream to Shakyamuni’s mother, Māyā, before his birth. We cannot forget that in the Lotus Sutra a “six-tusked white elephant” is the standard means of transport for the bodhisattva Samantabhadra (Universal Virtue). He frequently appears before ardent devotees of the Lotus Sutra to instruct, inspire, and encourage them, benefit them in other ways, and even confer

on them *dhāraṇīs*, or spells. In chapter 28, “Encouragement of the Bodhisattva Universal Virtue,” Samantabhadra proclaims to Shakyamuni Buddha: “I will mount the six-tusked white elephant and, together with countless bodhisattvas surrounding me, appear before those people in the form all the living delight to see, and preach to them, revealing, instructing, benefiting, and rejoicing them. Moreover, I will give them *dhāraṇīs*, and obtaining these *dhāraṇīs*, no nonhuman being can injure them, nor any woman beguile them. I myself also will ever protect them. Be pleased, World-honored One, to permit me to announce these *dhāraṇī* spells.”

It goes without saying that in response to this request the World-honored One promptly granted his permission: “It is well, it is well, Universal Virtue, that you are able to protect and assist this sutra [i.e., the Lotus Sutra] and bring happiness and weal to the living in many places.” This interesting episode concerning the conferral of *dhāraṇīs*, I believe, shows clearly that the Lotus Sutra and belief in it had entered a decisively new stage in the history of Buddhism. □

The Stupa

“After the extinction of buddhas, those who worshipped their relics and built many *koṭis* of sorts of stupas, with gold, silver, and crystal, with moonstone and agate, with jasper and lapis lazuli, clearly and broadly decorated, handsomely displayed on every stupa; or those who built

stone shrines of sandalwood and aloes, eaglewood and other woods, of brick, tiles, and clay; or those who in the wilds raised earth for buddhas’ shrines; even children, in their play, who gathered sand for a buddha’s stupa: all such beings as these have attained the Buddha Way.”

This is a passage from chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, “Skillful Means,” in which Shakyamuni and other buddhas figure together with followers of Buddhism like ourselves, and it is set sometime after the Buddha’s death. The Chinese equivalent of *relics* (*sheli*) corresponds to the Sanskrit *śarīra* and refers to the important constituent elements of the living Buddha’s body. It usually signifies the remains of the Buddha that survive after his death, and in the first instance it refers to the physical remains, or ashes. Here it need not, however, necessarily

be understood in this sense, and it can be taken to mean the all-important elements that make a buddha what he is.

The “many *kotis* of sorts of stupas”—stone shrines, buddha shrines, and buddha stupas—all refer to burial mounds, called stupas in India. But there is no need to dwell overly on the stupa itself, for it does no more than give symbolic expression to the act of revering and never forgetting something of great value. When considered in this light, the gist of the above passage, which may at first seem difficult to understand, should become clear. It becomes possible to understand it in the following way: we “beings” (that is, Buddhists or bodhisattvas) must never forget to venerate what might be described as the Buddha’s essence, what he left behind. Setting aside self-conceit and pride, we approach it with humility. If we do this, we will most certainly be able to accomplish the Buddha Way, become buddhas, and find happiness.

That being the case, what then is this all-important relic of the Buddha? We invariably tend to think of his remains, or a stupa or some other structure in which they are enshrined, or a statue of the Buddha. But could it not be said that the right way to interpret this passage from the Lotus Sutra, which expounds the One Buddha Vehicle, is to think of that relic as the Buddha Dharma, or teachings, which are based on the knowledge for becoming a buddha that the Buddha discovered (the Buddha-wisdom), or even as the Lotus Sutra itself? □

The Kalavinka

In India, the birthplace of Buddhism, the climate is quite different from Japan’s, and in Buddhist texts one often comes across the names of plants and animals that people outside India might neither have seen nor heard of. In Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures, their names are written in unfamiliar characters.

If we read about strange creatures that do not inhabit our world and live only in the Pure Land, we may have no choice but to accept their existence without argument. Birds’ charm is in their singing. For example, in Japan the call of the bush warbler is said

to resemble the Japanese name for the Lotus Sutra, while the Japanese scops owl is believed to call out the Japanese equivalent of “Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.”

The most famous bird in Buddhist scriptures is perhaps the kalavinka, said to live in the Himalayas, although the truth of this is unclear. As can be inferred from its Chinese names, meaning “bird with an exquisite voice” or “bird with a fine voice,” the kalavinka prides itself for its melodious voice. In chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra, “Parable of the Magic City,” we read: “Holy lord, king among gods, with voice [as sweet as] the kalavinka’s, who has compassion for all living beings! We now respectfully salute thee. Rarely does a world-honored one appear, but once in long ages; one hundred and eighty *kalpas* have passed away empty, with never a buddha.” Shakyamuni Buddha’s voice is said to have been like the kalavinka’s, so this naturally piques our interest in this bird. At the same time, we try to imagine just how beautiful and captivating its song might be. We look forward with great eagerness to the time of the Buddha’s sermon and are filled with a keen desire not to miss a single word of the wonderful teachings borne by the Buddha’s exquisite voice.

But we are prone to focus too much on the Buddha’s voice as he taught. During a sermon, one person preaches and others like ourselves listen. The Buddha is the supreme being, but the

concerns and voices of the hearers of his exceedingly difficult teachings are of infinite variety. The Buddha expounds with thoughts of compassion teachings indispensable for our happiness, and when doing so he displays his forte of “skillful means,” taking into account the individual circumstances of each of his listeners. A requisite for the Buddha is perhaps the ability to differentiate various voices. The ability to clearly distinguish the individual voices of beings seeking liberation from suffering is presumably required of the Buddha in his capacity as a preacher of the Dharma. □

This 1972 Japanese commemorative stamp depicts a kalavinka. The original artwork is a stylized garland, cast in low-relief on a pendant-like ornament, used for architectural decoration at the Buddhist temple Chusonji in Iwate Prefecture. Gilt bronze. Twelfth century.

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 23

The Former Lives of the Bodhisattva Medicine King (3)

*This is the 119th installment of a detailed commentary on the Threefold Lotus Sutra
by the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Nikkyo Niwano.*

TEXT “Star Constellation King Flower! If there be anyone who hears this chapter of the former lives of the Medicine King Bodhisattva, he will also obtain infinite and boundless merits. If there be any woman who hears this chapter of the former lives of the Medicine King Bodhisattva and is able to receive and keep it, she, after the end of her present woman’s body, will not again receive [one].

COMMENTARY I have often pointed out that in accordance with commonly accepted ideas in ancient India, the true meaning of phrases such as “she, after the end of her present woman’s body, will not again receive [one]” ought to be interpreted to mean that the Dharma does not discriminate between men and women. This is stated quite clearly in the Vimalakirti-nirdesha-sutra: “Therefore, the Buddha has explained that *dharma*s are neither male nor female.” This expresses the Buddha’s thinking straightforwardly.

TEXT If, after the extinction of the Tathagata, in the last five hundred years, there be any woman who hears this sutra and practices the teachings it preaches, at the close of this life she will go to the Happy World, where Amita Buddha

dwells, encompassed by his host of great bodhisattvas, and will [there] be born in the middle of a lotus flower upon a jeweled throne.

COMMENTARY About five hundred years after the Buddha’s extinction, faith in Amita Buddha spread from western India. Its believers sought rebirth in the Pure Land of Utmost Bliss (Sukhavati), the western paradise of Amita, by relying solely on the power of this buddha. The compilers of the Lotus Sutra who are thoroughly imbued with the true spirit of the Lotus Sutra, will seem to have very quickly “opened and revealed” the core of faith in Amita.

Amita is also called Amitayus (infinite life) and Amitabha (infinite light). The Buddha of infinite life is the Eternal Original Buddha, and the Buddha of infinite light is the compassion arising from the oneness of the self with others, which shines the same light on everything in the universe. Therefore this did not originally conflict with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Rather, it matches perfectly.

So the phrase “practices the teachings it preaches” is shown to be a major requisite for attaining that ideal. That is to say, this passage should not be taken as suggesting that

one can be liberated simply by relying on Amita Buddha. After all is said and done, it is impossible for living beings to achieve rebirth in the Land of Amita Buddha unless they realize the universal truth and endeavor to live by it. Liberation by this buddha is possible for people who seek true wisdom and practice the way to self-perfection.

That is to say, we must note that the phrase “practices the teachings it preaches” is of great importance in that it clearly indicates that faith in Amita Buddha, too, displays its true power and brings liberation through the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

We must be sure to fully understand the phrase “after the extinction of the Tathagata, in the last five hundred years.”

Shakyamuni Buddha explained that after his extinction Buddhism would pass through five five-hundred-year periods. According to the Great Collection of Sutras (*Mahā-samnipāta-sūtra*), in the first such period after his extinction, or parinirvana, bhikshus would seek liberation through his Dharma. In the second period they would remain in a constant state of samadhi meditation on his true Dharma. In the third period they would diligently read, hear, and chant most of the sutras. In the fourth period, in their devotion to his Dharma, they would build many stupas and temples. In the fifth period, as they would dispute interpretation of the White (or true) Dharma, they would see it wane and disappear.

The chart below makes this easier to understand.

The five stages of Buddhism as prophesied by Shakyamuni can be described as follows.

The period of perfect liberation. In the first five hundred years, people practice the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and are sure to be freed of their defilements. After the Buddha’s demise, the afterglow of his exceptional character constantly inspires people to keep his teachings, and this enables them to live virtuous, peaceful lives.

Put simply, it is an easy period in which people need not think about attaining enlightenment by themselves, but merely practice the teachings as they have received them. They are indebted to the personal virtues of Shakyamuni, the trace Buddha. From then on, although the teachings survive in their correct form, they are interpreted differently.

The period of constant meditation. In the second five hundred years, people devote themselves to meditation and contemplating the teachings. The Righteous (true) Dharma is correctly transmitted, but the Buddha’s personal influence gradually wanes, so that people seek enlightenment like the Buddha’s through their own practice, based on the Dharma of meditation taught by the Buddha. Thus, in this period samadhi meditation flourishes.

Social conditions also change immensely, so people must contemplate how to interpret the Buddha’s teachings and apply them in community life. People can no longer achieve perfect results simply by practicing the teachings word for word. Those who receive and keep the teachings contemplate how to apply them in this age.

Through their practices they are compensated adequately for the gradual waning of Shakyamuni Buddha’s personal influence, and the true Dharma still remains alive.

The period of concentration on the teachings. The third period of five hundred years is one of diligent study of the teachings. People have come to regard the Buddha as a great historical figure rather than as their teacher. Since they feel at a great psychological distance from the Buddha, they inevitably long for him less, though they continue to revere him.

At the same time, as material civilization advances and societies become more complex, Buddhism, which had originally been received as a living teaching, gradually becomes an object of purely academic study. However, because there is still strong interest in the Buddha’s teachings, the study of them flourishes, which is why this is called the period of concentration on the teachings.

Ordinary believers gradually shift from study and practice of the teachings in daily life to seeking liberation through formal reading and chanting of the sutras. In other words, this is also a period of reading and chanting the sutras.

The period of building stupas and temples. In this period, even the desire to study the Dharma diminishes, and people hope the Buddha will grant them benefits if they merely build stupas and temples for the enshrinement of his relics and images. In other words, Buddhism becomes a matter of ritual.

First five hundred years	—	Period of perfect liberation	}	The Righteous Dharma
Second five hundred years	—	Period of constant meditation		
Third five hundred years	—	Period of concentration on the teachings	}	The Counterfeit Dharma
Fourth five hundred years	—	Period of building stupas and temples		
Fifth five hundred years	—	Period of continual doctrinal disputes	—	The Latter Days of the Dharma

The nobility and other men of influence believe that building grand temples would make their families more prosperous. Under the protection of these nobles and powerful men, Buddhist monks live extravagantly. Ordinary people fall into the easy belief that they can be liberated merely by visiting temples and folding their hands before buddha images. In this period, the construction of many stupas and temples flourishes.

The period of continual doctrinal disputes. In this fifth period, even purely formal religion is largely disregarded. In Buddhism the White (or true) Dharma disappears. Sectarian strife worsens, and soon develops into political conflicts, litigation, and unending social unrest.

The Buddha Dharma, however, can never be extinguished, though it can sometimes be lost sight of.

Distinguishing between the disappearance of the White Dharma and the extinction of the Buddha Dharma may seem like splitting hairs, but this is not the case, since the distinction has great significance. There is all the difference in the world between the White Dharma's disappearance and its total extinction. It is like the difference between black and white.

Be that as it may, the Buddha Dharma cannot cease to exist. The disappearance of the White Dharma means its disappearance from the minds of ordinary people.

In the fifth period, disputes are not only over Buddhist doctrine, but social issues. People have become entirely self-centered and pursue profit only for themselves and their family, group, social class, or country. As a result, there is constant strife over conflicts of interest.

Arguments over ideas, as in the political arena, and litigation constantly affect the lives of everyone, provoking acrimony and even bloodshed. On an international level, this has led to world wars, with great loss of life. This period is the present time.

The first two five-hundred-year periods is known as the millennium of the Righteous Dharma, since the Buddha's teachings are kept and practiced correctly.

The next millennium is known as that of the Counterfeit Dharma, because the teachings survive in form only. With the arrival of the last period of continual doctrinal disputes, people lose sight of the teachings, even though the teachings are imperishable. People are deceived by false views. Everyone is self-centered and greedily pursues their own interests at the expense of others. People are irritable and uneasy, and there are endless conflicts, great and small. This period of five hundred years is also known as the Latter Days of the Dharma. (In reference to Righteous Dharma, Counterfeit Dharma, and the Latter Days of the Dharma, see the October–December 2012 issue of *Dharma World*.)

As I have just noted, however, during this period people lose sight of the Dharma, although the Buddha Dharma is

eternal. However, it is precisely in this period of the Latter Days of the Dharma that the teachings of the Buddha are most needed and their true value is manifested.

Among the teachings, the Lotus Sutra is the Great Vehicle among the Great Vehicles in teaching people to cultivate their buddha-nature, to value human life, and to be aware that everyone is at one with other people. Because its teachings show their true value most clearly in the present age, Shakyamuni preached again and again the sacred duty of receiving, keeping, practicing, proclaiming, and spreading the Lotus Sutra in the period of the Latter Days of the Dharma.

TEXT Never again will she be harassed by covetousness, nor be harassed by anger and foolishness, nor again be harassed by pride, envy, or uncleanness,

COMMENTARY Covetousness, anger, and foolishness are considered in Buddhism to be the three poisons that lead people astray.

- *Covetousness.* This is insatiable craving and greed beyond all necessity for such things as material possessions, honor, status, and affection. It is excessive desire that can never be satisfied, and because the mind is constantly dissatisfied it is impatient and never at peace. Covetousness leads to conflicts of interest and growing strife.

- *Anger.* Anger often arises from self-centeredness but is not always bad. Public indignation spurs social reform, and without it the world would not improve.

However, willful, self-centered anger poisons the mind and harms the body. People who are always angry do not live long. Needless to say, anger between people is the greatest cause of discord. Anger is to be avoided.

- *Foolishness.* This is stupidity and thinking only of immediate desires. Foolish people take a narrow view and cannot see things as a whole. Even when they do things they think are entirely natural, they are not in harmony with others and their surroundings, but relate awkwardly to them.

Foolishness does not mean an inability to learn or remember, but shortcomings in terms of human nature or individuals. Many intelligent people are foolish in some ways, while many others with little education are fine human beings.

Foolishness can always be overcome by study, belief, and practice of the Buddha's teachings.

The three poisons cause a variety of "uncleanliness" (delusions), such as "pride" and "envy" that are mentioned at the end of the above passage of the sutra.

TEXT [but] will attain transcendent [powers] of a bodhi-sattva and the assurance of no [re]birth; and having obtained this assurance, his organ of the eye will be serene, by which serene organ of the eye he will see seven million two thousand

kotis of nayutas of buddha-tathagatas equal to the sands of the Ganges river,

COMMENTARY *The assurance of no [re]birth.* This is the state where one comprehends that everything in this world is originally empty, neither arising nor perishing, and where one is no longer swayed by the changes around one.

- *Assurance.* This is a stage beyond the possibility of backsliding.

- *By which serene organ of the eye he will see . . . buddha-tathagatas equal to the sands of the Ganges river.* “Organ of the eye” here refers to the spiritual eye.

TEXT when these buddhas from afar will unite in lauding him, saying: ‘Excellent, excellent! Good son! You have been able to receive and keep, read, recite, and ponder this sutra in the Dharma of Shakyamuni Buddha and to expound it to others. The blessed merit you have obtained is infinite and boundless; fire cannot burn it, water cannot wash it away.

COMMENTARY One who receives and keeps this sutra will not only see buddha-tathagatas but be praised by them. Their praise continues as follows.

TEXT Your merit is beyond the powers of a thousand buddhas to explain. You have now been able to destroy the Mara marauders, to overthrow the [hostile] forces of birth and death, and to crush all other enemies. Good son!

Hundreds of thousands of buddhas, with their transcendent powers, together guard and protect you.

COMMENTARY *Mara marauders.* The Sanskrit word *mara* means “murderer,” and it also means someone who causes trouble. In short, *mara* means everything that threatens people’s lives or keeps them from doing good. The worst thing is obstructing practice of the Buddha Way, and persecuting or tempting those who follow it.

- *Forces of birth and death.* We have already noted that birth and death are the cycle of repeated transmigration and, in another sense, all the changes around us. People alternate between joy and sorrow because their minds are led astray by birth and death, or change. Truly, they can hardly overcome the great forces of change.

TEXT Among the gods and men of all worlds none can equal you except the Tathagata. The wisdom and meditation of shravakas, pratyekabuddhas, or even bodhisattvas does not equal yours.’

COMMENTARY Here end the words of praise of various buddhas.

TEXT Star Constellation King Flower! Such is the power of the merit and wisdom attained by this bodhisattva.

“If there be anyone who, hearing this chapter of the former lives of the Medicine King Bodhisattva, is able joyfully to receive and applaud it, that man during his present life will ever breathe out the fragrance of the blue lotus flower, and from the pores of his body will ever emit the fragrance of ox-head sandalwood; and his merit will be as above stated.

COMMENTARY *Will ever breathe out the fragrance of the blue lotus flower.* A fragrance is something we can smell, and “a lingering fragrance” is like a perfume. Here, a perfume is compared to a natural influence on us.

Exhaling a refreshing fragrance like that of a blue lotus flower means speaking words that will automatically purify all who hear them. This simile is quite beautiful.

- *From the pores of his body will ever emit the fragrance of ox-head sandalwood.* That such an excellent fragrance as ox-head sandalwood pours forth from every pore of his body signifies that the merits which that person possesses naturally spread to those nearby, spontaneously turning them into good people. Even if he remains silent, his influence will have unnoticed effects on those around him. This is the kind of person we earnestly hope to become.

TEXT Therefore, Star Constellation King Flower, I commit to you this chapter of the former lives of Medicine King.

In the last five hundred years, after my extinction, proclaim and spread it abroad in Jambudvīpa, lest it be lost and Mara the Evil [One], his Mara people, gods, dragons, yakshas, kumbhandas, and others gain their opportunity.

COMMENTARY It was generally believed that dragons, yakshas, and other mythical creatures could help or harm people. If they did harm, they would not be welcomed. Needless to say, the kumbhandas, which were mentioned in chapter 3, “A Parable,” are devils of pure evil.

It is interesting that this passage mentions gods. Gods may benefit people but never harm them. Still, it would be distressing if humanity relied solely on gods for progress. Humanity must progress through its own efforts.

TEXT Star Constellation King Flower! Guard and protect this sutra by your transcendent powers. Wherefore? [Because] this sutra is good medicine for the diseases of the Jambudvīpa people. If a man be sick, on hearing this sutra his sickness will instantly disappear and he will neither grow old nor die.

COMMENTARY In regard to “diseases,” we should recall the Buddha’s statement in chapter 16, “Revelation of the [Eternal] Life of the Tathagata,” when he says, “This excellent medicine I now leave here. You may take it and have no fear of not being better.” In reference to “his sickness will instantly disappear and he will neither grow old nor die,” the same chapter tells us in verse:

“When all the living see, at the kalpa’s end,
The conflagration when it is burning,
Tranquil is this realm of mine,
Ever filled with heavenly beings.”

TEXT Star Constellation King Flower! If you see anyone who receives and keeps this sutra, you should strew upon him blue lotus flowers full of sandal powder, and after strewing them thus reflect: “This man ere long will accept the bundle of grass and take his seat on the throne of enlightenment; he will break the Mara host, and blowing the conch of the Dharma and beating the drum of the Great Dharma, he will deliver all living beings from the sea of old age, disease, and death.”

COMMENTARY From the point of view of a great bodhisattva like Star Constellation King Flower, someone who has merely received and kept the teachings of “The Former Lives of the Bodhisattva Medicine King” may seem to be lacking in practice, yet the Buddha says, “You should strew upon him blue lotus flowers full of sandal powder.” These

words show well that people who have firmly grasped the value of self-sacrifice are the world’s precious jewels.

- *Accept the bundle of grass and take his seat on the throne of enlightenment.* A young man called Auspiciousness is said to have cut “auspicious grass” (Skt., *kusha*) and spread it under the Bodhi tree at Buddhagaya for the Buddha to sit on before he began his final meditation and attained supreme enlightenment.

- *He will break the Mara host.* It is said that when the Buddha began meditating in the middle of the night, all sorts of demons besieged him, trying to torment and tempt him, but he turned them all back. In the light of the stars at daybreak, he finally achieved supreme enlightenment. Therefore, “he will break the Mara host” means “will achieve the Buddha Way.”

- *He will deliver all living beings from the sea of old age, disease, and death.* All people experience the sufferings of old age, disease, and death. They are inescapable. However, an enlightened person directly confronts these trials and does not succumb to them, but calmly transcends them. This is the meaning of liberation from suffering (Skt., *pratimoksha*). The enlightened one guides us over the seas of human suffering to “the other shore,” the realm of enlightenment, so “deliver” means “liberate.”

TEXT Therefore he who seeks the Buddha Way, on seeing a man who receives and keeps this sutra, should thus beget a reverent mind.”

While this chapter about the former lives of the Medicine King Bodhisattva was being preached, eighty-four thousand bodhisattvas attained the *dharani* of interpreting the utterances of all the living. The Tathagata Abundant Treasures in the Precious Stupa extolled the Bodhisattva Star Constellation King Flower, saying: “Excellent, excellent, Star Constellation King Flower! You have accomplished inconceivable merits, for you have been able to ask Shakyamuni Buddha such things as these and have infinitely benefited all the living.”

COMMENTARY The meaning here is sufficiently clear and there is little need for further explanation.

“The Former Lives of the Bodhisattva Medicine King” now draws to a close. We may summarize its teachings in two major points. First, there is no greater human quality than self-sacrifice. Second, the greatest offering we can make on behalf of the teachings is actual practice.

To be continued

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