

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

DHARMA WORLD

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*Morning prayer during the
6th Assembly of the ACRP
in Yogyakarta, Indonesia*

The 6th Assembly
Asian Conference on Religion and Peace
The 25th Anniversary
"Asia, The Reconciler"

Sheraton Mustika Yogyakarta Resort & Spa, June 24th - 28th, 2002, Indonesia



Buddhist Wisdom for Daily Life

The author of these readable, enlightening guides was the late NIKKYO NIWANO, the founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, whose other publications in English include *Shakyamuni Buddha: A Narrative Biography*; *A Guide to the Threefold Lotus Sutra*; *A Buddhist Approach to Peace*; *Lifetime Beginner: An Autobiography*; and *Invisible Eyelashes: Seeing What Is Closest to Us*.

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Cover photo: Some 300 religious leaders of Asia joined in the historic Indonesian city of Yogyakarta for the Sixth Assembly of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP) held from June 24 through 28 under the main theme "Asia, the Reconciler." Daily sessions began with morning prayer led by participants, representing Asia's major religious traditions.

UNESCO

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

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

On the Founding of the ACRP

The time was prior to 1972, the year in which jurisdiction over Okinawa was returned from the United States to Japan. In discussions about when Okinawa would finally be restored to Japan, at first the expression used was “in the near future.” Well, it was easy to say “in the near future,” but that conveyed no clear understanding of how many more years would have to pass before the island would be returned. A Japanese person like myself would commonly understand “in the near future” to mean within the next two or three years.

However, depending on the person, this may mean five years, or even ten years. I was astonished to hear some non-Japanese say that “in fifty years” would also fall within the definition of “in the near future.”

The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) was convened for the first time in Kyoto in 1970, and a few years later some religious leaders in the Asian region began to actively discuss the idea of setting up an Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP). Many countries in Asia were formerly colonies of Western nations. Because religious leaders of the West were dominant in the WCRP, it was therefore not surprising that some people in Asia were not in full agreement with how the WCRP was being managed.

Asian religious leaders worked with great energy to promote the idea that because Asians are most familiar with their own region, an Asian Conference on Religion and Peace would best serve Asians, and a meeting aimed at setting up the ACRP was held in Singapore. This was in July 1975. For some of the Western religious leaders who were running the WCRP, I suppose this movement was, frankly speaking, not particularly welcome. It is true that strong objections were raised on the basis that this was superfluous, or as we say in Japanese, building an extra roof over an existing roof.

The final result was an agreement that the Asian Conference would be established, but only as an organization “under the umbrella” of the World Conference. My English is far from perfect, and when I listened to the discussions at that time, it seemed strange to me that people should get so excited about being “under the umbrella of

the WCRP.” However, I suppose that for those religious leaders from countries with long colonial histories that had experienced the weight of what it means to be under someone else’s umbrella, it was only natural to feel nervous about that particular expression.

In any event, when I think of how our late founder labored in the gap between East and West, resulting in the formation of the ACRP, I am reminded of how things were at that time. Even at the first meeting of the WCRP, which I mentioned before, I remember people kept talking about “workshops.” The simultaneous inter-

Preparatory committee members meet before the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace held in Singapore in 1975.

preters did not translate “workshop” into Japanese, but merely repeated it as “workshop” with a Japanese pronunciation, throwing me into confusion.

Of course, now we all know that a “workshop” is a meeting where everyone participates on an equal basis and exchanges views to learn together, but at the time it was not listed in the English-Japanese dictionary, and I retain the memory of my consternation. Looking back on those times, and also at the present development of the ACRP, my heart becomes filled with feeling as one of those involved in setting it up at that time. □



Kinzo Takemura

Letters

I read through an article by Mr. Jamshed Fozdar that appeared in your March/April issue. It was educative, inspiring, timely, and revealing. Kosei Publishing Company has to be congratulated for publishing "The Case for Religion."

I totally agree with Mr. Fozdar and I sincerely hope that his effort to clear the eyes of the people on the ground will have the desired results. I am also happy that I have a brother to support me in my efforts to cleanse the unseen but very much existing part of the human body—the mind.

At my invitation 650,000 people gathered at Maha Mevuna Uyana at the sacred city of Anuradhapura and put in an effort to up the spiritual consciousness of people through the process of Peace Samadhi Meditation. The idea was to build inner peace, outer peace, peace on planet earth. After that the next Peace Samadhi Meditation was held in Mahiyangana, where over 10,000 participated. This too was good. On April 26th at Kalutara Bodhi premises we conducted another Peace Samadhi Meditation. Until peace is reestablished in Sri Lanka I shall go on.

I am happy that the "prescription" that Mr. Fozdar has mentioned is directly connected with the technique we apply in our Peace Samadhi Meditation program, where the physicians and the afflicted are one and the same, and the medicine applied is the same, *metta* to oneself and others. At the 12th point Mr. Fozdar has mentioned, may I add *metta*, which then would read "An international language to be chosen or invented, language *metta*."

A.T. Ariyaratne, President
Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement
Moratuwa, Sri Lanka

I appreciate the useful articles in your magazine. Sometimes when I compare the principal elements of different religions, it inspires me to realize that the beginning place of all religions seems to converge upon one focal point, which is the spiritual promotion of humankind and the fostering of peace through the betterment of the soul of man. As I briefly read these articles, I find many similarities and common points between Buddhism and Islam, especially that kind of Islam that is followed by the people of Iran. Thank you for your magazine and for your efforts for world peace.

H.R. Bodaghi
Cultural Section
The Embassy of Iran
Tokyo

I am one of the Christian theologians and a professor of Christian Canon Law and Law in World Religions who definitely admires the late Venerable Nikkyo Niwano's tremendous work and its continuation under the wise guidance and leadership of the very distinguished President Nichiko Niwano. DHARMA WORLD has been helpful in introducing me to lay Buddhism in Japan and always brings to me very important news about your peaceful mission.

It has been very long since I first became acquainted with DHARMA WORLD. It fell into my hands by chance at the Library of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Then I began to read the issues of the journal when and wherever I found them, and slowly I felt my way into learning more about Rishso Kosei-kai.

What a tremendous religious movement! I have taken the opportunity to explain it with great admira-

tion and appreciation to my students both in the Faculty of Christian Orthodox Theology and in the Academy for the Study of History of Culture and World Religions in Bucharest, Romania, where I currently teach, letting the students know that it is through the efforts of Rishso Kosei-kai (since its beginnings in the late 1930s) that lay Buddhism, while remaining sacred, that is, not secularized, has reached the hearts of the faithful in a totally different way in Japan and around the world.



I have never been to Japan, but if I ever have the chance I would love to see things on the spot. Certainly, as a scholar of world religions and a man of interfaith dialogue and sharing, I am thoroughly interested in lay Buddhism, in Rishso Kosei-kai as such. Indeed, I was extremely privileged to see its leader in reality, next to His Holiness Pope John Paul II, together with Dr. William Vendley at the Vatican, at a 1994 meeting prior to the 6th Assembly of the WCRP, which was held at Riva del Garda, and in which Rishso Kosei-kai made an extraordinary contribution.

Alexandru Stan
Bucharest
Romania

Facing Problems

by Nikkyo Niwano

This essay is part of a continuing series of translations from a volume of inspirational writings by the late founder of Rissho Kosei-kai. DHARMA WORLD will continue to publish these essays because of their lasting value as guidance for the practice of one's faith in daily life.

In the past, when faced with serious problems concerning themselves or their families, Rissho Kosei-kai members tended to abandon everything and devote themselves to their religious training. They may well have given themselves completely to their practice, from which came striking evidence of salvation. Although the impressions received upon being granted such divine protection at that time were intense, sometimes some people would say to me: "Since being assigned some duties in a Rissho Kosei-kai branch as part of my religious training, I have devoted myself to fulfilling my responsibilities; but I have done it for such a long time that I would like to give up my duties in the branch for a while to rest." At such a time, I just suggested that it might be better for them to recall the time when they first joined Rissho Kosei-kai. That quickly brought them to an understanding of what I meant, and they replied, "Yes, you are right."

Today, however, very few people are driven by the fear of not knowing where the next meal is coming from. Thus they think that it is due to their own efforts, rather than to the mercy of the gods and buddhas, that they are able to live without harm from day to day. "I am indebted to no one," is the general opinion. In a society that is blessed with stability and wealth, it is very difficult to bring people to appreciate that we are indebted to others in many ways and that we all live sustained by a great strength.

Many of us probably have had the experience of holding out a hand to a drunk person lying on the ground and asking if he was all right, only to have him shout at us with angry words, insisting that he was not drunk and asking what business it was of ours anyway. In the same way there are many people in our society today who are drunk with ignorance but who insist on their sobriety.

We are told that we are living in a time when there are no pressing problems, but in fact many people are burdened with various concerns for the imminent future. It is a problem that such concerns just do not appear on the surface of our experience. It is difficult to deal with them because they emerge at such a slow pace. Compared with the past, human relationships—such as those at the workplace, between husbands and wives, or between wives and their mothers-in-law—are not so simple. In addition, the people living in this contemporary society are being faced with new issues such as education for their children, housing, loans, and the graying of society—perhaps the most important of which is the care of the aged. Suffering is hidden and various, and so it cannot be understood quite so decisively as of old. Therefore, we must explain its causes by reasoning patiently with people.

Since, however, it is not easy to have others listen to what we say unless we are able to speak cheerfully in a way that meets the capacity of the masses of people according to their needs, we should strive to be like bodhisattvas, who, after hearing the wonderful Dharma, would preach it to others with an eloquent tongue, enjoying themselves while doing so. I hope that members will expend great efforts to spread the teachings of the Buddha to others. As long, though, as members continue to attend the hoza counseling sessions, where they are given the opportunity to experience the brightness and joy that brings happiness to everyday life, people will continue to gather at the branches of Rissho Kosei-kai without any need for words to be spoken.

As we are reminded by the words in chapter 2 of the Lotus Sutra, "preaching as opportunity served," it is necessary when teaching others to know their capabilities, characters, and desires, and to approach them accordingly. We must be intensely aware of their needs.

The Eightfold Path begins with "right view." If what is wrong is therefore interpreted as being right, then the remaining seven items become distorted. Like Kannon, who perceives all sounds, we must perceive the funda-

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

mental needs of others, and thereby “preach as opportunity serves.”

The Preciousness of Education

Around 1938, when Rissho Kosei-kai was founded, only about three percent of the people went to university. I will not say all, but the greater majority of them pursued their specialized subjects with pride and self-awareness. A common Japanese expression says that “the wise know ten things from hearing one,” or “a word to the wise is sufficient”—indeed, many students had the desire to pursue what they had been taught to the very limits. And although it may have appeared that students were in-

talk together with them directly, and to stir up their motivation. It is a real problem, however, that the number of such worthy teachers is decreasing.

The Parent–Child Relationship

The relationship between parents and children has changed so greatly that today it often seems to be more like that found between classmates. It is, of course, desirable for parents and children to be able to talk over everything together, unlike the one-sided subjugation of children as of old. But all the same, I think that most people have the mistaken impression that a good parent is one who is understanding, who can say to children, “It is your own life.

You are free to do what you want.”

Specialists often say that “Parents wear the mask of an understanding friend.” When confronted by a child’s problems, however, parents may suddenly drop that sympathetic mask and evade dealing with the issues. The children in turn become listless and dispirited, wondering why their parents do not understand their feelings, even when they have opened themselves to them. It appears that a large percentage of fathers in Western countries advise their children when they are troubled, whereas in Japan that percentage is extremely low. Both parents and children must work to find ways of understanding each other.

Today, with the decrease in the birth-rate, many children grow up with few siblings and so never learn the importance of mutual tolerance. Each child has a different character and personality. There may be problems in the way some parents bring up their children.

And today there are also questions about the way schools are educating their students. Empty confrontation, though, is useless. The issue of how we educate our children for the future is not someone else’s problem; it is something that concerns us all.

After a while, parents with the attitude of understanding their children tend to shut their eyes to what they see. In the end, it is easy to let things take their own course. This means, however, that children are growing to adulthood without being trained in perseverance—that is, the training of the mind—and social adaptability, which are surely of vital importance to a mature individual. Lack of such training is the fault of parents, teachers, and all those adult members of society who give a bad example to children. We must all reflect on this. In addition, I believe that politicians who cannot see that the future of Japan lies in its children are not worthy of their calling. □

Founder Niwano greets participants in one of Rissho Kosei-kai’s formal events.

dulging themselves, I think that most of them thought seriously about the meaning of human existence.

Today, by contrast, a large proportion of students study at the university level. This is an excellent development, but I wonder whether their desire to study is so strong, given that so many of them are privileged to be taught in such an excellent academic environment as we find today. After the war, it seemed as though new universities sprang up on every corner, to the derision of many, and yet the numbers of students swelled rapidly. It became natural for students to go on to university, and this caused many people, I think, to take their good fortune for granted. This seems to be linked also to a lessening of a will to study for themselves.

There is also the problem that if the quality of students decreases, there is a greater need for professors who would be willing to thrust themselves among the students, to

Sixth Assembly of the ACRP Held in Indonesia

The Sixth Assembly of the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP) was held at the historic Indonesian city of Yogyakarta from June 24 through 28, the main theme being “Asia, the Reconciler.” Participants included some 300 religionists representing Asia’s major religious traditions—Baha’i, Buddhist, Christian, Confucian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Shinto, Sikh, Taoist, Zoroastrian, and others—and 20 countries in Asia. The participants discussed issues facing Asia, including such pressing matters as the confrontation between India and Pakistan and the division on the Korean peninsula. The participants had animated discussions through the plenary sessions and the five commission meetings, in the shared hope that they might have some reconciliatory power in spite of differences in nationality, ethnicity, and religious faith. The five-day assembly concluded with the unanimous adoption of the Yogyakarta Declaration.

Buddhist representatives lead one of the morning prayers during the course of the ACRP assembly.

On behalf of Rissho Kosei-kai, President Nichiko Niwano took part and served as chairman of a plenary session. Two senior officers from headquarters, who also took part as official delegates, made presentations on peace education and human-rights activities promoted by Rissho Kosei-kai and other

Japanese religionists. Some 50 members also took part as observers from the organization’s branches nationwide.

The ceremony began on June 24 with an opening address by Indonesian President Megawati Sukarnoputri, who said, “Nowadays, many ongoing crises or conflicts are associated with . . . diversity and numerous accompanying differences,” pointing out the reality that “the diversity in our community is often being used by the conflicting parties to justify their standpoint.

“The world today is waiting for concrete action to develop a universal life, which is more democratic, peaceful, and prosperous on the basis of social justice and humanity. The role of intellectuals and religious leaders is of crucial importance in this regard. Of particular significance is the contribution of this Asian Conference on Religion and Peace to the quest of such a noble and common goal,” the Indonesian president said. Participants were then treated to a video message of con-

Summaries of the five commissions’ papers were presented by each of the moderators at the third plenary session on June 26.

gratulations from South Korean President Kim Dae Jung, followed by keynote addresses by Dr. Ahmad Syafii Maarif, a Muslim scholar and president of Muhammadiyah in Indonesia, and Swami Agnivesh, a Hindu leader from India.

The Yogyakarta Assembly was originally scheduled for November of last year, but it was postponed because of strong tensions in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. The shock wave of the terrorism, which some claimed was fueled by religious incentives, had deeply worried Asian religious leaders who are now united in their opposition to any act of terror. Such common determination against terrorism was evident throughout the assembly, yet most clearly demonstrated in exchanges of opinions on how religionists should face terrorism in one of the five commission discussions that addressed the theme "Reconciliation for Common Living—Disarmament and Security."

As well as reassuring one another of their united and uncompromising opposition to every terrorist act, the commission participants made it clear that they also oppose violence, including retaliatory military attacks against terrorism perpetrated by national governments. They also agreed that religionists should not be content with only condemning terrorists, stressing that they needed to pay greater attention to the social problems that give rise to terrorism, including economic disparity, oppression of human rights, and social injustices.

Commission participants also addressed the continuing tensions caused by territorial claims over Kashmir by India and Pakistan, both of which are nuclear powers. Several constructive proposals were made by the participants, such as to beseech both governments to find a peaceful solution to the crisis; to promote education about the seriousness of the damage that nuclear arms can cause; and to establish a committee encouraging personal exchanges for religionists of India and Pakistan.

The other four commissions dealt with topics related to the common

notion of "reconciliation": "Reconciliation for Just and Sustainable Development—Economy and Ecology," "Reconciliation for a Culture of Peace—Education and Service for Peace," "Reconciliation for a Life-Respecting Community—Human Dignity and Human Rights," and "Reconciliation for a Harmonious Family—Women, Children, and Partnership."

Participants in the commission discussing "Human Dignity and Human Rights" reported on the realities of discrimination in their respective communities. They urged that religionists should play an ever greater role in reclaiming violated human dignity. It was then suggested that the ACRP

neutral" and "people of religion should stand on the side of the poor, the oppressed, and the deprived." Based on the bitter self-reflection that "Asian spirituality has often led us into the realm of transcendental indifference and escapism from the ground reality of Asia," the spirituality that the declaration claimed abounds in Asia "has to be channeled into saving and serving action on the part of those who are activated by it, and the test of its genuineness is to be found in its renewing power of humanization." The declaration concluded with seven concrete suggestions to tackle conflicts that give rise to violence, tensions, terrorism, and war, which included:

The closing plenary session on June 28, during which the participants unanimously adopted the Yogyakarta Declaration.

should set up a Center for Human Rights to oversee and act against violations of human rights. The commission discussing "Harmonious Family" emphasized the need for education on values among children and suggested that it might be necessary for some passages in holy scriptures to be reinterpreted lest the sacred writings be misused as dogmatic bases for allowing discrimination.

The commission discussions were incorporated into the Yogyakarta Declaration, which was adopted by majority vote during the closing plenary session on June 28. Referring to the existence of many divisions and conflicts in Asia that divide the people, the declaration professed that "religionists cannot be

To establish a Center for the Comparative Study of Religions and Cultures of Asia to promote better understanding among the people of Asia;

To make the ACRP an instrument of reconciliation and rapprochement to reduce or solve tensions in such crucial matters as the Indo-Pakistani conflict, the spread of terrorism, and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the North-South division of Korea; and to organize the ACRP consultations and dialogues with American religious leaders and representatives of the European Conference on Religion and Peace on matters such as the September 11 terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the use of violence on the part of governments, and others. □

Building Dialogue to Establish Genuine Respect for Diversity

Excerpts from the Yogyakarta Declaration of the Sixth Asian Conference on Religion and Peace

There are many divisions and conflicts in Asia that divide the people. As in the previous five Assemblies, . . . we profess that people of religion should stand on the side of the poor, the oppressed, and the deprived. Religionists cannot be neutral.

It is our challenge and our opportunity in this time of polarization and discord to build dialogue, to uphold and establish genuine respect for diversity as the best guarantee of peace, harmony, security, and peaceful co-existence, and so to create a new age of hope and reconciliation.

The Reality of Asia

In Asia, a vicious circle manifests itself in the form of discrimination, disparity, deprivation, and violence. These factors—found intertwined everywhere in Asia—constitute an intolerable social condition that cannot be tackled without, at the same time, dealing with the other interrelated problems.

The Spirituality of Asia

Asia is the cradle of all the great religions of the world. Spirituality, which animates the higher nature of humanity, abounds in Asia. It is a force that makes us one in spite of our diversity in the way of expressing it.

Asian spirituality has often led us into transcendental indifference and escapism from the ground reality of Asia. Spirituality, which we are trying to revive, through our common prayer and witness, is a source of strength in the midst of weakness, of hope in the midst of despair, and of love in the midst of hatred. It has to be channeled into saving and serving action on the part of those who are activated by it, and the test of its genuineness is to be found in its renewing power of humanization.

In this context, the theme of the Sixth Assembly, namely “Asia, the Reconciler” demonstrates a newly added appropriateness and significance.

The Commissions made recommendations for the removal of the difficulties and problems arising from violation of human rights, denial of human dignity, economic problems emanating from capitalist or socialist systems, oppression of women and children, and anomalies in the education system, . . . as well as for the promotion of education, protection of the environment, development of “natural capital,” and internationalization of civil society networks.

Education for a Culture of Peace

Education for peace is more urgent than ever before. As religious men and women, we pledge ourselves to stressing this and raising to public consciousness the foundations of peacemaking within our own religious traditions, through education in temples, churches, mosques, synagogues, and homes.

Essential to peace education is learning about and coming to understand those of different religions, ideologies, and cultures with whom we share our communities, our nations, and our world. In many cases, the opposite of conflict and violence is knowledge, and so educational efforts must be made that fear may begin to give way to trust. We must strengthen and deepen mutual understanding by sustained dialogue, and by undertaking common work together.

The Mass Media

With the explosion of communication technology, mass media has become a beneficial and powerful instrument of expanding knowledge and information. At the same time, mass media can be a baneful tool of moral degradation. To assure a humane use of mass media, it is the responsibility of religion to imbue it with ethical standards.

In the light of the recommendations made by the Commissions, Women's Meetings, Youth Groups, and the im-

portant leaders who participated in the Conference, it is suggested that appropriate and suitable measures be taken to control the numerous problems, including conflicts resulting in violence, tensions, terrorism, and war.

The following suggestions are made to tackle the situation:

1. To establish a “Center for Comparative Study of Religions and Cultures of Asia” to promote better understanding among the people of Asia. This will be an independent institution directly under the control and supervision of the ACRP Secretariat.

2. To launch youth exchange programs.

3. To show concern for the issue of human rights, especially people's right to livelihood and development, and facilitate study on the promoting of human rights.

4. To collect information affecting women and children and to deal with the question of their discrimination and oppression in many countries as well to protect their interests.

5. To study the problems of victims of discrimination and ethnic minorities in Asian countries.

6. To make the ACRP an instrument of reconciliation and rapprochement to reduce or solve tensions in such crucial matters as the Indo-Pakistan conflict, the spread of terrorism and ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka and Nepal, and the North-South division of Korea.

7. To organize ACRP consultations and dialogues with American religious leaders and representatives of the European Conference on Religion and Peace on matters such as the September 11 terrorism, nuclear proliferation, the use of violence on the part of governments, and so on.

In all humility, we call upon the power from above to render us worthy and more useful to our fellow beings.

May our hopes and prayers for peace be realized, and the unity and commitment shown here be deepened. □

Four Sri Lankan Theravadin Prelates Issue a Joint Statement for Peace

On June 3 at a Tokyo hotel, the four senior Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhist leaders held a press conference to issue their joint statement to plead for peace and reconciliation in their country. Their declaration was designated as "The Tokyo Statement," and marked the first time that the leaders of four different sects of the majority Sinhalese Buddhists joined to make a declaration for peace in Sri Lanka. The statement is expected to serve to mold the public opinion among their followers and have a good effect on the upcoming peace negotiations after nearly 20 years of bloody ethnic conflict that has ravaged their country. The negotiations were to take place first in Thailand in June between the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the most powerful anti-government group in the northern part of the country that aimed to establish an independent state for the minority Tamils.

In the joint statement, the four prelates expressed their support for the ongoing peace efforts by the Sri Lankan government and requested the international community to support confidence-building among the Sinhalese, Tamil, and Muslim communities in Sri Lanka, all of which were affected immensely by the prolonged civil conflict.

The joint conference was organized by Rissho Kosei-kai with the assistance of the Japanese Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace and the Japan Buddhist Federation.

Prior to the joint conference, the Theravadin leaders met with Rissho Kosei-kai President Nichiko Niwano at the Horin-kaku Guest Hall at the headquarters in Tokyo and expressed their gratitude to him for helping them to hold the conference. The Theravadin prelates expressed their hope that better interchanges between Buddhist leaders of Sri Lanka and Japan would strengthen their good relationship with deeper friendship and trust.

On June 5, they met with former Japanese foreign minister Masahiko Komura, chairman of the League of Diet Members for the Promotion of Preventive Diplomacy, to hand him their statement and asked the Japanese government to support inter-ethnic reconciliation in their country. □

IARF Vice President Visits Rissho Kosei-kai

On June 1, Ms. Ellen Campbell, vice president of the International Association for Religious Freedom (IARF), visited Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters and held talks with President Nichiko Niwano and the external relations director, Rev. Michio Matsubara, at the Horin-kaku Guest Hall. Ms. Campbell described the 31st World Congress of the IARF to be held in Budapest, Hungary, from July 28 through August 2. She also reported on the IARF's ongoing projects: the rebuilding of a Hindu temple and a Muslim mosque in Gujarat, India, which were severely damaged by a major earthquake in 2001, in which IARF member youths from many countries took part; and the creation of guidelines for introducing the idea of religious freedom into school education. Ms. Campbell then expressed her hope to extend the continuing interfaith projects, instead of focusing solely on the success of the forthcoming World Congress. President Niwano praised Ms. Campbell for her continued leadership in guiding many people of faith who share in the aims of the IARF. □

UNHCR Regional Representative Calls on Rissho Kosei-kai

On May 24, Mr. Kasidis Rochanakorn, regional representative for Japan and South Korea of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Japan, held a talk with Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, chairman of Rissho Kosei-kai. Mr. Rochanakorn emphasized the importance of the international community's commitment in contributing to the solution of the problems of refugees and displaced peoples. Pointing out the changes in the causes for refugees, in a historical perspective, he explained that the conflicts are intricately interwoven with the international political matters that characterize

Sri Lankan Theravadin prelates announce their joint statement supporting the peace efforts in their country, which were to begin following ethnic conflicts lasting nearly 20 years.

the issues of today. In the understanding that Asia is now facing a critical moment, he said that it would be very significant if Rissho Kosei-kai would render a pivotal contribution to promote peace, mentioning its support of the peace effort by the four senior leaders of Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism and its commitment to the Asian Conference on Religion and Peace (ACRP). Agreeing on the strengthening of ties with the United Nations, Rev. Yamanoi said that Founder Niwano often mentioned the need to cooperate with the UN for the realization of world peace and taught that the essential purpose of all religions is to realize peace, for which interreligious cooperation is most important. □

Peace Fund Announces Second-Term Grants for Fiscal 2002

In June, the Executive Committee of the Rissho Kosei-kai Peace Fund announced the recipients of its subsidies for the second term of fiscal 2002. A total of about 30 million Japanese yen is to be used in support of 16 projects in 11 countries all over the world. The fund has been operated by donations from Rissho Kosei-kai members through the organization's Donate a Meal Campaign throughout Japan.

In the category of general grants, the fund elected to support 12 projects, including four ongoing projects continuing from previous years. In that category, the fund allocated 2 million yen to the Campaign for the Children of Palestine, which provides dental treatment and health education for the children in the Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, and 4 million yen to the Japan Center for Conflict Prevention, which has participated in the removal of landmines in Afghanistan and Cambodia.

The seven newly designated projects that the fund selected to receive grants included the Religious Information and Educational Centre (RIEC) in Hungary, which guards religious free-

dom in the shelters for refugees and displaced persons who have fled from some 150 countries (1 million yen), and the Banyan Home Foundation, an orphanage for HIV carriers in Chiang Mai, Thailand (1 million yen). As provisional aid grants, the fund also donated 5 million yen to support Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (An Oasis of Peace), a cooperative village in Israel to tackle reconciliation between Jewish and Palestinian citizens. □

Rissho Kosei-kai Student Members Visit Italy for Supercongress 2002

From May 24 to 29, four junior and senior high-school student members of Rissho Kosei-kai visited Italy to participate in Supercongress 2002. The international congress, promoted by the Focolare Movement, a lay Catholic organization with headquarters in Rome, is held every five years for young members aged from 12 to 17. This year, considering the importance of interreligious dialogue, the congress enlarged its scale.

During the event, the Rissho Kosei-kai participants joined in such activities as a musical presentation about the activities of the participant organizations with some 9,000 youths at Palaghiaccio di Marino in Rome, in which they introduced the Little Bags of Dreams Campaign, one of the organization's peace activities. They also took part in a ceremony offering prayers for peace at the Colosseum, a peace march from the Colosseum to Saint Peter's Square, and a study session in which they exchanged thoughts with other participants and drew up a message for peace, held in Loppiano, a town community of the Focolare Movement.

On May 28, in the closing ceremony at the Salone dei Cinquecento of the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, together with other youths from different religions, they received the Youth for Peace Award from Mr. Leonardo Domenici, the mayor of Florence. □

Multireligious Gathering Tackles Africa's HIV/AIDS Epidemic

From June 9 through 12, an African Religious Leaders Assembly on Children and HIV/AIDS was held in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. Nearly 120 participants from more than 25 countries, mainly on the African continent, attended. As well as African religious leaders, they included specialists on AIDS-related issues. Ambassador Stephen Lewis, special advisor to United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan on HIV/AIDS, and Ms. Carol Bellamy, executive director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), were special participants, delivering the opening address and a keynote speech, respectively.

The assembly, the first such pan-African multireligious gathering ever held, was hosted by the Hope for African Children Initiative (HACI), a multiorganizational NGO which includes as members CARE, Plan, Save the Children, the Society for Women and AIDS, and the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP).

On June 12, the final day, the participants adopted a Final Declaration that clarified the current situation regarding HIV/AIDS in Africa, noting that more than 14 million children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS are seriously affected by social discrimination and stigmatization. It stated that the participants, as religionists, should share in the pain of those suffering from AIDS-related diseases and strive to protect the basic human dignity of every child that is rooted in the sacred origin of life. The declaration explained that, despite the huge numbers of AIDS victims in Africa, 90 percent of the care workers are women of faith.

The religious leaders participating in the assembly were aroused to make a strong commitment to tackling AIDS-related issues. They took advantage of every opportunity to speak out to de-

fend the dignity of affected children, educate local community members, help to obtain clear and accurate medical information about HIV/AIDS, and call on African governments to do more in the fight against the epidemic.

The assembly also adopted a concrete Plan of Action aimed at bringing their declaration into effect. The plan emphasized the mobilization of African religious communities by utilizing existing social infrastructure and communication networks. The participants are committed to disseminating the information needed to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and to treat and care for affected children, as well as to enable religious leaders to provide the required education on all aspects of the health threat in their communities.

Assembly participants also intend to develop a curriculum to integrate the subject of HIV/AIDS into religious education so that it can play a greater role against social discrimination and stigmatization. The Plan of Action is not only intended to strengthen multi-religious collaboration in African communities, but also to call for increased action by all levels of African governments, the world's religious communities, United Nations organizations, and the international community. Religious communities are reported to be look-

ing toward such greater cooperation in order to improve their capacity to tackle problems in areas such as program management, financial accountability, technical skills, and training.

Under the auspices of the WCRP, an African Religious Leaders Council was established during the assembly as a pan-African multireligious body to put the Plan of Action into effect through the cooperation of the WCRP and HACL. The organization's challenge is to make every effort to meet the needs of HIV/AIDS-affected children and their families throughout the African continent. □

Rissho Kosei-kai Members Bid Farewell to Late Special Advisor

On June 23, the Farewell Ceremony for the late Rev. Motoyuki Naganuma, special advisor to Rissho Kosei-kai and its former chairman, who died of heart failure on April 7 at the age of 78, was observed in the Great Sacred Hall. More than 8,000 people, including his immediate family, the heads and leaders of all the branches throughout the nation, officials and retired officials of Rissho Kosei-kai, and guests from

various fields, offered their condolences.

At the ceremony, the opening address was followed by the ritual offering. After President Nichiko Niwano led the sutra recitation, he read the memorial address to the deceased and offered flowers to his memory. Following a video presentation of Rev. Naganuma's life, representatives from among the participants, including Rev. Takeyasu Miyamoto, leader of Myochikai, Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, current chairman of Rissho Kosei-kai, and Ms. Kazuyo Sano, chapter leader of its Suginami Branch, read farewell speeches. Then 24 participants, including Mrs. Yoshie Niwano and her daughter and the president-designate of Rissho Kosei-kai, Rev. Kosho Niwano, offered carnations before the portrait of the late special advisor as representatives of the organization and representatives of the family, guests, and the organization's local branch leaders. At the end of the ceremony, President Niwano spoke on memories of the late Rev. Naganuma. Referring to the early period when he started working for the organization, he said, "Rev. Naganuma was always at my side and led me properly when I had problems in conducting my duties." He added, "Rev. Naganuma served in the Tokyo headquarters every day supporting the late Founder Nikkyo Niwano. He devoted himself to his duties faithfully."

After the ceremony, the participants offered flowers reflecting their feelings of gratitude to him. The ceremony was relayed via satellite broadcast to all the branches throughout Japan. The late Rev. Naganuma served as the organization's chairman for 42 years, from 1952 until his retirement in 1993, continuing to support the late founder, the late cofounder Rev. Myoko Naganuma, and President Niwano throughout his life. After his retirement as chairman, he continued to support the organization in diverse ways as its special advisor. He was also active in promoting activities for interreligious cooperation, as well as playing an important role in related interreligious organizations. □

Participants in the African Religious Leaders Assembly on Children and HIV/AIDS visited an orphanage in a suburb of Nairobi, where children welcomed them with songs and cheerful smiles. Photo: WCRP/International

Engaged Buddhists Seek New Paths to Peace

by Paul H. Sherbow

On May 16, Rissho Kosei-kai of New York's Center for Engaged Buddhism presented a symposium titled "Buddhism and Conflict Transformation: Searching for New Paths to Peace" at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York before an audience of nearly one hundred Buddhist representatives and scholars, UN officials, NGO representatives, and the interested public.

The term "Engaged Buddhism" was originally coined by Vietnamese Buddhist monk Ven. Thich Nhat Hanh in the 1950s to describe the mindful practice of Buddhism "in" the world, rather than isolated from it, and has since developed in diverse forms as Buddhist principles are applied to modern social, economic, and environmental issues in Southeast Asia and other regions in the world. Nobel Peace laureates the XIV Dalai Lama and Burmese democracy and human-rights activist Aung San Suu Kyi have been described as models of Engaged Buddhism. The subject has also become an emerging field in academic Buddhist studies.

The three-and-a-half hour symposium was opened by Dr. William F. Vendley, secretary-general of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), who stated that Buddhists now have the task of re-evaluating their own precious heritage to see what it holds for the regional and global future. Modern society, in its search for peace and a global ethic, now looks toward religion to see what it has to practically offer for resolving conflict. What does the Buddha-dharma have to contribute in this role?

The opening speaker, Dr. Kenneth L. Kraft, professor of Buddhist studies in the Department of Religion, Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania—a specialist in Japanese Zen and a leading scholar in the new field of Engaged Buddhism with his books *Inner Peace, World Peace* (ed., 1992), *The*

Wheel of Engaged Buddhism (1999), and *Dharma Rain: Sources of Buddhist Environmentalism* (ed., 2000)—introduced the symposium's theme by turning to the root causes of suffering in society and politics: greed, anger, and pollution of the mind. He stated that the object of gaining insight is to qualify oneself for greater compassionate action in the world. When the root of

sity—and architect of the Community of Saint Egidio's conflict resolution methodology, which played a significant role in Mozambique, Algeria, Kosovo, and other trouble spots—introduced members of the panel, each of whom addressed the diverse elements encountered in resolving conflict in their particular country.

The first panelist, Rev. Dr. Thay

Symposium participants re-evaluated the potential of Buddhism to make practical contributions to peacemaking.

the separate self is cut, one can observe that everything is interdependent. We will then understand how every thought, word, or action carries the potential for peace or war. Only through personal transformation—a real change of hearts and minds—can conflict be resolved at the deepest level.

Symposium moderator Dr. Andrea Bartoli, founder-director of the International Conflict Resolution Program (ICRP) at the School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia Univer-

Ciac Duc, vice president of the Vietnamese Buddhist Congress in the United States, emphasized the Buddhist principle of nonviolence in his presentation, "Conflict Transformation and the Role of Buddhist Nonviolence in the Vietnam War." For followers of Buddhist rules of conduct, the practice of nonviolence is much easier, as they have learned how to control body, mind, and speech. He related the moving story of his close friend who became the first Vietnamese monk to

publicly set himself on fire in Saigon in the 1960s. Dr. Duc also stated that Buddhism does not follow the principle of "give and take," but "give and give" in kindness. The Buddhist teaching of interdependence also gives an understanding of helping one another.

The second panel speaker, Dr. Purnaka L. de Silva, senior advisor to the UN Secretary-General's Global Compact, in his presentation, "Buddhism and Conflict Resolution," after giving a brief historical background to the ethnic conflicts in his native Sri Lanka analyzed them as conflict over privileges and resources (Sinhalese versus Tamil) or populist versus Maoist (intra-Sinhalese tension), rather than religious-based. With over 250,000 dead or missing, these conflicts have been terribly destructive to the country. Dr. de Silva related his own role in assisting attempts at intervention by senior Buddhist clergy. He once conveyed a message from a senior Buddhist authority to Tamil insurgents that as Buddhists, the Sinhalese people are not vengeful, but are reasonable, and willing to give, and that the rebels should understand this and accept what they are able to give.

The third panelist, Professor U Aye Kyaw of the America Burma Institute, said in his talk, "Buddhism and the Challenge of Democratization," that if the entire canon of Buddhist scriptures could be reduced to two words, they would be "truth" and "love." This means that we should speak the truth, but also that we should be careful about hurting people—if we untactfully address a blind man as "blind," his feelings will be hurt.

The fourth panelist, Ven. Ill Mee Su Nim of the Korean Jogei Order, currently a doctoral candidate in religious studies at Harvard University, began his presentation, "Buddhism and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula," with the fact that the so-called demilitarized zone (DMZ) between North and South Korea is the most militarized zone in the world. Although the South Korean government has promoted an "anti-North Korean" policy for many years, several Buddhist organizations have begun independent cross-

border initiatives to develop friendship with North Koreans. As Korean Buddhists become more socially and politically engaged, they have an opportunity to play a significant role in the unification of the two countries.

Ven. Natha-Pandito Rithipol of the Cambodian Buddhist Sangha and founder of the Khmer National Salvation Campaign, described in his talk, "Buddhism and Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation," how his country had tried to remain neutral in the midst of superpower competition, following the Buddhist middle path, leaning neither toward capitalism nor toward communism. The unfortunate rule of Pol Pot decimated Buddhist temples and culture. The present free-market climate in Cambodia is breeding vicious competition, violence, and

on the present situation in Tibet, he called self-determination an essential and crucial part of Engaged Buddhism. Wherever there is unhappiness, there will be violence, which is being planted in the hearts of younger Tibetans today by those who would deny them their independence.

After the presentations, Dr. Bartoli took questions from the audience, which included representatives of the Bangladesh Buddhist Society, including its founder, Mr. Ratan Barua; Ven. Prajnananda Bhikku; and human-rights activist Dr. S.B. Karmakar, who expressed their deep concern for the safety of the persecuted Buddhist minorities in their countries. Rev. T. Kenjitsu Nakagaki, Jodo Shin priest at the New York Buddhist Church and current president of the Buddhist Council of New York, spoke in their support and requested audience members to assist their fellow Buddhists in Bangladesh. The question of female Buddhist participation was raised, and the comment was made in reply that some of the most active Engaged Buddhists are either nuns or laywomen.

Professor Kenneth Kraft observed in his closing remarks that we cannot avoid contact with suffering, which in turn is intimately linked with compassion. Buddhists from different traditions now need to meet together and find the common dharmic elements that can serve to influence the various cultures in the world for the better. He then dedicated the activity of the symposium for the benefit of all beings.

At the end of the session, Rev. Kyoichi Sugino, special representative for interfaith affairs of Rissho Kosei-kai of New York, who had organized the symposium with the assistance of Mr. Matt Weiner of the Interfaith Center of New York, and in collaboration with the Buddhist Council of New York and the WCRP, invited all attendees to a reception. The symposium proceedings were recorded and will be published in the near future through the *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*. □

Paul H. Sherbow is a special consultant for Hindu affairs at the WCRP International office in New York.

A question-and-answer session followed the presentations by panelists.

injustice, leading to calls for the reintroduction of Buddhist life, promoting nongreed. Monks may have a renewed role in resolving national conflicts and protecting the environment.

The final panel speaker, representing the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism, was Lama Pema Wangdak, founder and resident teacher of the Vikramasila Institute of New York, who spoke on the theme "Buddhism and Self-Determination." He refuted the misunderstanding that monastic passivism retarded progress. There can be no world peace until there is peace within. Although pre-Buddhist Tibetans were rather rough, they transformed themselves as individuals and as a nation. Focusing

2,000 Years of Contacts and Eight Years of Official Relations

by Eva Ruth Palmieri

A very special embassy was set up in Rome less than ten years ago. In fact, after centuries of misunderstandings, in the year 1994 the Roman Catholic church and the Jews set their seal on official relations with the establishment of the Israeli Embassy to the Holy See.

His Excellency Yosef Lamdan, appointed in 2000 as the third ambassador to the Holy See, agreed to be interviewed by DHARMA WORLD about his unique assignment.

Unlike other diplomatic relations, Ambassador Lamdan told us, those between the State of Israel and the Holy See encompass two broad spheres. The first involves the bilateral diplomatic work between two states: the State of Israel and the Vatican. The second concerns the interreligious dialogue between the Catholic church and the Jews, and within that the relationship between the Holy See and the Jews in Israel.

"In order to fully understand why the establishment of this embassy was defined as a major breakthrough in Jewish-Catholic relations," the ambassador said, "it is necessary to take a few steps back in time."

"For a long period Jews and Catholics have had a difficult relationship. Within Catholic theology the Jews were seen to have rejected Jesus as the Son of God and to have been punished for that, and forced to wander throughout the world, marginal to society in witness to their rejection of Jesus. Sometimes the accusations were even more serious, because the suggestion was made that the Jews had killed Christ and had to be punished for that deed. This situation underwent a major change in 1965, when the Second Vatican Council issued the document *Nostra Aetate* on the relations of the church with non-Catholic religions. In particular, in paragraph 4 on the relations with the Jewish people, the church rejected all forms of anti-Semitism and

professed its commitment to developing a fraternal relationship with the Jews, 'since,' it is written in the document, 'the spiritual patrimony common to Christians and Jews is so great.' In the wake of this major undertaking, a formal dialogue with the Jews was established. The past 30 years were in fact marked by a very productive dialogue between representatives of both religions, which included a number of landmarks. Notably, Catholics began to take an interest in what we can call their Jewish origins, the roots of the Catholic church in Judaism. Furthermore, the church issued in 1975 and 1985 two fundamental documents to members of the church on how Judaism should be studied and taught to believers."

Another benchmark, as the ambassador reminded us, was the visit of Pope John Paul II to Rome's main synagogue. "It was the first time ever for a pope to enter a synagogue, an unprecedented event that further strengthened Jewish-Catholic relations."

All these trends culminated in the Jubilee Year 2000, when the pope visited Israel. During his pilgrimage to the Holy Land, he also visited one of the holiest places in Jewish tradition. "We all remember the pope standing at the Western Wall and placing a significant message—in keeping with Jewish tradition—in a crack in the wall. In the message," echoed throughout the world by the media, "His Holiness reaffirmed

God's covenant with the Jewish people and expressed pain over the sorrow caused to God's chosen people and his hope of enduring fraternal relations between our two faiths. These events were indeed sea changes in Jewish-Catholic relations."

We asked Ambassador Lamdan what has changed in Israel-Vatican relations since the establishment of official ties between the two states.

"In these eight years, the relationship has been very productive, especially considering the relatively short period of time. Both sides in a certain sense have had a longer acquaintance with one another at the religious level, but in entering a formal relationship they have had to rediscover each other and learn about one another in a completely different way. Certainly for Israel to learn about the Vatican in a diplomatic relationship was a new experience, and I think we are still on the learning curve. We are, for example, still learning to understand the very special diplomatic language of the Vatican. I believe it is also fair to say that the Vatican is still engaged in a learning experience, on how to relate to the State of Israel, a sovereign Jewish state that is located in the Holy Land, which has such a central place in Christianity."

"Do you believe these events have reached everybody, even at the grassroots level, or do they still remain at the formal level of institutional dialogue?" we asked.

"The dramatic images impacted at all levels, from the pope's visit to Rome's synagogue to his visit to Jerusalem. However, we are talking about a process that will take time, of reversing attitudes that have become entrenched in the church for at least fifteen centuries, and we are only thirty-five years into the change. I have no doubt that the message of *Nostra Aetate* has been given embodiment by this pope. But I am not convinced that the words of

"Are there concrete projects under way between the State of Israel and the Holy See?" we asked.

"At a bilateral level, there is ongoing diplomatic work on the situation in the Middle East. The pope is deeply concerned with the situation in the Holy Land in particular, and with good reason. There have been a series of visits by Israeli officials to the Vatican. Only recently, on May 10, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with

tification. *Cor Unum*, which also set up the John Paul II Foundation for the Sahel, is joining hands with the State of Israel, the ambassador explained, to the benefit of the sub-Saharan countries.

"At the level of world dialogue, the last major event was held in New York in May 2001 by the International Liaison Committee, the official structure for dialogue between the Catholic church and world Jewry. On that occasion, a joint commitment for the protection of the holy places was adopted. What we have witnessed since that event is a new trend: the emergence of regional dialogues between the Catholic church and the Jews. In the fall of last year a dialogue was undertaken with Jews in Latin America at the institutional level, and in January this year a regional dialogue was initiated in Paris between the church and Jews in Europe. Only several weeks ago a high-level delegation from the Vatican traveled to Israel to explore with the chief rabbinate of Israel the possibility of conducting a dialogue between the Vatican and Jews in Israel. The talks were very fruitful and both parties hope to continue."

"Do you believe that interreligious dialogue among faiths can be effective in overcoming extremism and in uprooting terrorism?" we asked.

"Interreligious dialogue is extremely important. It is important that the religious leaders of all faiths speak out against hideous forms of terrorism. We can only applaud the numerous initiatives taken by the pope and the church. I refer especially to two occasions: when in his message for world peace on January 1, Pope John Paul II condemned all forms of terrorism, especially religious terrorism, and when he defined the taking of a life in the name of God as a desecration of religion for which no justification can be found. Secondly, of course, we applaud the Day of Prayer for Peace in the World, which the pope convened in Assisi on January 24 of this year. □

Eva Ruth Palmieri worked for the Embassy of Israel to the Vatican for several years and has a deep personal interest in interreligious dialogue.

Ambassador Yosef Lamdan in his office at the Israeli Embassy to the Vatican in Rome.

the pope have reached the grassroots level of all Catholic believers. I would add that there is different work to be done in different countries. In the United States, for example, the Catholic church has been very vigorous in producing educational material to promote mutual understanding, and this has ensured that the message reached all levels of believers. But there are other parts of the world where the work has scarcely begun and where anti-Semitic attitudes are still apparent. Hence, I hope that from this point on, the church, together with us, will try to map out areas of priority."

Secretary of State Cardinal Sodano and with Archbishop Jean-Louis Tauran, responsible for the foreign affairs of the Holy See.

"There are also a number of ongoing cultural activities with papal institutions. The State of Israel is also engaged in an international cooperation project with the Vatican dicastery, "*Cor Unum*," for nine countries in sub-Saharan Africa called the Sahel countries. The project is directed mainly at trying to revive arid areas through offering Israel's know-how." Israel is the world's leader in technology for overcoming the disastrous effects of deser-

Promoting a Culture of Peace: A Task for UNESCO

—The Role of Interreligious Dialogue—

by Jacqueline Rougé

The murderous violence that seems to be lurking everywhere may be overcome. Religions can lead the way, especially if they work together. UNESCO can also help. I have had a chance to observe how recent events gave a new impetus to its specific mandate to develop and disseminate a culture of peace. This, in turn, gives added importance to interreligious cooperation. I welcome the opportunity to share my experience on both these points with the readers of DHARMA WORLD.

The international agreement under which UNESCO was established in 1946 starts by declaring that “since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.” This often quoted statement is not what one would normally expect to find in a treaty between governments. Such documents usually refer to concrete problems, such as border adjustments or provisions for commercial transactions or financial arrangements. Indeed, many such practical questions needed to be dealt with after the end of the Second World War.

The United Nations and other multilateral institutions were set up at that time to handle a multitude of practical issues arising out of fifteen years of political upheaval, economic disruption, and military confrontation culminating in the devastation of entire countries. But politicians in charge of reconstruction everywhere were aware that action had to be taken also in what one might call the moral sector. They knew, from recent, bitter experience, that diplomatic incidents and material disputes had often been used as pretexts for armed aggression. They realized that conflicts of interest and rival ambitions cause war only when some leaders succeed in convincing their followers that they have a cause worth fighting for and when people on the other side are prepared neither to defend their own legitimate positions to the extent possible with nonviolent means nor search for a reasonable compromise. Such is clearly the case, for example, in the present Middle East conflict.

It seems clear that no war can be fought unless some people at least are willing to kill or risk being killed on this occasion. “Constructing the defenses of peace” in the minds of men and women everywhere would thus appear to be the best antidote to the deadly perversions of the sense of justice so often in evidence in the history of the Second World War and, unfortunately, even today. This is why a specialized institution was established to that effect within the United Nations system.

The area of competence of this new body is centered on culture. Culture determines how people deal with society. It is therefore crucial to their approach to questions of war and peace. One should note, in passing, that the particular vision of the world and the set of ethical norms that define each culture often derive from religion. Cultures are not frozen and do not subsist in a vacuum. For better or for worse, they ceaselessly borrow from one another. They are affected by scientific progress. They evolve over time as they move through education, formal or informal, from one generation to the next. UNESCO is entrusted with the entire complex of these interlocking issues, as indicated by its full English designation: the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

From 1984 to 1994, Jacqueline Rougé was an active president of the International Committee of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) and is now its honorary president. She is also now official WCRP representative with UNESCO.

Over the years, the headquarters of UNESCO in Paris has become a focal point for intellectual exchange on an ever-increasing variety of subjects. High-level experts from all over the world confront their views on critical scientific developments pertaining, for example, to the charting of the human genome or "Man and the Biosphere." Educators compare notes on the best way to ensure life-long education for all. Perhaps UNESCO's best-known achievement is its work for the preservation of listed monuments recognized as the world's cultural heritage. All this is unquestionably useful, but some have doubted that every item in the program contributed to turning the minds of men toward peace. On the other hand, one

tained unanimous agreement on a six-year program covering a limited number of items under a Medium-Term Strategy described as "UNESCO contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture, and communication." The importance given to development should not come as a surprise. It has been accepted for several decades already that "development is another name for peace."

In the area of education, the Medium-Term Strategy includes "promoting education as a fundamental right," "improving the quality of education through . . . the promotion of universally shared values," and "the diffusion of best educational practices." In the field of science, the program includes "promoting principles and ethical norms to guide scientific and technological development," "improving human security by better management of the environment and social change," and "enhancing scientific, technical, and human capacities to participate in the emerging knowledge societies." Strategic objectives for culture include "promoting the drafting and implementation of standard-setting instruments," "promoting cultural diversity and encouraging pluralism and dialogue among cultures and civilizations," and "enhancing the linkages between culture and development." Finally, in the area of communication, UNESCO will work at "promoting the free flow of ideas and universal access to information," "promoting the expression of pluralism and cultural diversity in the media," and "providing access for all to information and communication technologies." Two crosscutting

Education is an important part of UNESCO's strategies to contribute to peace and human development, which the organization assists in Cambodia, as seen here, and in many other parts of the world. Photo: National Federation of UNESCO Association in Japan

might wonder why no project is devoted to supplement the UN Security Council's resolutions on situations like those in the Middle East, Sudan, Indonesia, or the former Yugoslavia by tackling the cultural roots of the conflicts in these places.

Every other year, a General Conference brings together representatives of all member states—usually cabinet ministers responsible in their respective countries for education, science, or cultural affairs—to give direction to these multifaceted operations.

In 1999, the need came to be felt to concentrate UNESCO's activities on fewer topics, more clearly in line with its basic mandate. This was the task assigned to a newly elected director-general, Mr. Koichiro Matsuura, an able Japanese diplomat.

At the following General Conference, in 2001, he ob-

tained unanimous agreement on a six-year program covering a limited number of items under a Medium-Term Strategy described as "UNESCO contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization through education, the sciences, culture, and communication." The importance given to development should not come as a surprise. It has been accepted for several decades already that "development is another name for peace."

Unlike similar documents in the past, the Medium-Term Strategy does not make the promotion of a culture of peace an explicit objective of UNESCO. The reason may be that the present emphasis is on "pluralism" and "cultural diversity." That a large number of different cultures coexist in the world is a precious asset. Preserving it is essential. At a time when market mechanisms work in favor of the commercialization of inferior cultural goods the world over and globalization is felt as a threat to non-dominant cultures, UNESCO would not wish to appear to be promoting an overriding single culture of its own, however well-intended. What it aims at is for every culture

Forty-five religious leaders from fifteen countries gathered in Kyoto in December 1969 to prepare for the first assembly of the World Conference on Religion and Peace, scheduled for the following year.

to honor, in its own way, those shared values that make up the common heritage of humankind. "In its activities," the Strategy asserts, "UNESCO will be guided by three fundamental principles that are inseparable: universality, diversity, and dignity. These are closely related to the values of justice, solidarity, tolerance, sharing and equity, and respect for human rights and democratic principles." At the request of Iran, the UN designated 2001 a Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. It asked UNESCO to implement this decision. There is no doubt that if it is properly conducted, such dialogue can lead people of various cultures to realize how much they have in common, to cherish their differences, and to let themselves be enriched by their contacts with others. In other words, each culture can, and must, prove to be a culture of peace while fully preserving its own identity.

Since religion is an integral part of every culture, it is not surprising that the current development of interreligious dialogue should parallel the progress achieved in intercultural relations, both of which must be seen as important contributions to laying the foundations of world peace. An important milestone was the document adopted by the Vatican Council in 1965 about "The Church in the Modern World." In a section titled "The Fostering of Peace and the Promotion of the Community of Nations," it addresses all Christians, not only Roman Catholics, and it states: "All Christians are urgently summoned . . . to join with all truly pacific men and women in praying for peace and bringing it about." This was also the time when plans were being prepared to convene the first World Confer-

ence on Religion and Peace (WCRP), which took place in Kyoto in 1970. I take pleasure in recalling that Rev. Nikkyo Niwano, the respected founder of Rissho Kosei-kai, was involved in both of these events, as an observer in Rome and as a member of the preparatory committee for the conference at Kyoto.

The WCRP did pioneer work in interreligious dialogue and cooperation. It brought out the principles that such activities should respect: enhancing the spiritual motivations of all participants, safeguarding the religious identity of each partner's community, fully acknowledging differences in ritual and beliefs, basing all activities on deeply held and widely shared convictions. This enabled the WCRP to be found trustworthy by the senior leadership of all major religious traditions. They, in turn, accepted the challenge to work together, under the aegis of the WCRP, for peace and reconciliation in such places as Bosnia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone, as well as for other common concerns.

After the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon in Washington and the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, for which the perpetrators claimed religious motivations, the religious leaders brought together by the WCRP were able to take a strong common stand against such a horrendous misuse of religion. They unequivocally condemned the wanton murder of innocent civilians. Since then, the WCRP has called repeatedly for a negotiated settlement of the Middle East problems. It has supported all joint efforts for peace in the region by religious leaders and by the religious communities concerned.

The events of September 11, 2001, also moved Pope

John Paul II to convene a new solemn interreligious meeting at Assisi. Eminent representatives of all major faiths accepted his invitation. I attended this most moving occasion as part of the public gathered on the square in front of the Basilica of Saint Francis. I was pleased to see that Rev. Nichiko Niwano was there as one of the leaders representing Buddhism. The message conveyed to the world was one of prayerful brotherly unity among religious communities and a common commitment to peace with justice and forgiveness. "There is no holy war," they all seemed to say; "only peace is holy."

Interreligious events, peace marches, prayer and meditation meetings, and symposia and the like take place more and more frequently, even in small towns, in churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, in monasteries, in schools, in city halls, and other public places. This, I submit, gives evidence of the spread of the culture of peace among a growing number of people. Of course, it could not escape the attention of UNESCO.

Dialogue and cooperation among religions is an area that was approached cautiously by UNESCO, an organization

accountable to mostly secular governments with a constituency of scientists and educators often suspicious of clerical claims on the minds of believers. It initiated only in 1995 a program called "Spiritual Convergence and Intercultural Dialogue," the aim of which was "to bring to light the dynamics of interaction between spiritual traditions and their specific cultures by underlining the contributions and the borrowings that have taken place between them." From this historic and sociological point of view, it first looked at the Silk Road, for many centuries the main commercial route between East and West and, at the same time, the stage for intense cultural exchange between peoples shaped by Christianity and Islam, as well as Buddhism and various other Asian religions. This and other similar projects made it clear that interreligious dialogue is a paramount dimension of intercultural relations. The program thus began "to seek to promote reciprocal knowledge and the discovery of a common heritage and shared values."

For this purpose, UNESCO organized a series of conferences bringing together personalities from different religions, spiritual traditions, and cultures, "so they could

The world's religious leaders joined in Assisi on January 24 this year at the invitation of Pope John Paul II and demonstrated their shared commitment to reject violence and promote a culture of dialogue as the world remains tense in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States.

acknowledge, through formal Declarations, the proximity of their spiritual values as well as their commitment to interreligious dialogue." Such meetings took place in Barcelona, Rabat, Malta, Bishkek, and Tashkent. I attended those held in Malta (1997) and Tashkent (2000). Enough high-level religious leaders from all major traditions were present to give undoubted authority to the texts adopted. As an example, I will quote from the Tashkent recommendations:

"1. As misunderstandings and misinterpretations between one religion, spiritual tradition, or culture, and another arise from ignorance and mutual lack of knowledge, priority should be given to promoting the study and appreciation of all religions at all levels through informal, formal, and non-formal education.

"2. As memories of past experiences would not be obstacles to mutual recognition and esteem between religions when they are viewed from neither a desire for revenge nor a sentiment of hate, interreligious dialogue should, where applicable, be directed to facing the past, so that memories of past discrimination, persecution, and hostilities could be overcome and fraternal solidarity could be developed between the religious groups for the future.

"3. Since all religions uphold peace and harmony as an objective of supreme importance and the ethical mission of UNESCO is to promote peace for fraternity and solidarity among nations, all forms of extremism and terrorism should be condemned."

I strongly feel that such pronouncements deserve to be better known.

The 2001 General Conference of UNESCO took place just a few days after the terrorist attacks of September 11, which had just emphasized the link between peace and religion. Nearly all participants explicitly condemned those attacks. They refused to accept that such criminal acts be presented as deriving from an authentic religious sentiment. They saw them as yet another reason to approve a Medium-Term Strategy aiming at contributing to peace and human development through culture and education. "Learning to live together" was seen as an essential aim of education policies. It requires dialogue among civilizations, which UNESCO was asked to encourage.

The events in Washington and New York gave additional relevance to the Draft Declaration on Cultural Diversity submitted to the General Conference for adoption. Representatives from all regions referred, in this regard, to interreligious dialogue as a necessary element of the dialogue between cultures. They concurred with the French president's mentioning that "the essential contribution of religions to human life is when they raise people above their simple condition to bring them to the Absolute, when they lead people away from hatred and selfishness and gather them in open and generous communities." No speaker took a contrary position. Respecting cultural pluralism paradoxically does not preclude accepting uni-

versal values that governments also claim as their own. Several speakers proudly described how their countries had recently restored democracy.

Many recalled that generally recognized human rights include the right of every human being to education, culture, and access to science and modern means of communication. I only regret that religious freedom, which many governments do not respect, was not mentioned in this connection.

It was, however, emphasized a few weeks later at a meeting held in Madrid on the theme of "school education in relation with freedom of religion and belief, tolerance, and non-discrimination." Speaking there on behalf of the WCRP, I noted that "Religions can provide an invaluable contribution to the building of peace. Interfering with the free exercise of religion prevents communities of believers from serving to the fullest extent needed the cause of the dignity of each human being and promoting the liberation and interdependent development of all peoples. Indeed, religion may often make conflicts worse. It is only too easy to abuse religious feelings and turn them to purposes having little to do with religion. This is especially the case when the group concerned has but a superficial knowledge of its own religious traditions and entertains only prejudices about those of others. Fanaticism feeds on ignorance. This is why, in my organization, a standing commission in charge of peace education will not separate it from religious education. Maintaining and reinforcing peace requires that each one, already at school, learn to respect religion, one's own and those of others."

I referred to the rapporteur of the committee in charge of education at the recent UNESCO General Conference who had said that "education must be at the heart of an action program for peace and must, above all, allow all people to live together within a world community based on tolerance, democracy, nonviolence, intercultural dialogue, and the shared recognition of the importance of each of the great religions and civilizations of the world." I concluded my remarks with a statement that is also appropriate here: "UNESCO is to be commended when it sets lifelong education for all in relation with religious freedom, tolerance, and non-discrimination. In so doing, it pursues such vital objectives as 'raising the defenses of peace in the minds of men'; making 'learning to live together' a priority aim of education; promoting dialogue among religions, cultures, and civilizations; celebrating cultural diversity; and safeguarding human heritage, which is the noblest expression of cultural diversity."

Promoting a culture of peace, a crucial need in the world today, is co-extensive with the mandate of UNESCO. It also requires an intensified dialogue among religions, at every level. All can play their part by learning to do away with stereotypes and prejudices and by looking at others with an open and benevolent mind. □

The Whole Earth as Our Sangha

by Ruben L.F. Habito

*The intuitive path, which the sages have traversed for thousands of years,
is now converging with the scientific path, which tries to figure
out reality in terms of equations and relationships.*

I would like to offer some musings on certain implications of the Three Treasures of Buddhism, with an emphasis on the third, the Sangha, or community, pursuing the question, "Who is included in the Sangha that I belong to? Who is my community?"

The first treasure, the Buddha, literally means "the awakened one." A cardinal teaching of Buddhism is that all sentient beings are endowed with the seeds of awakening, the capacity for becoming an awakened one.

Gautama Shakyamuni represents for us the archetype of the awakened way of life. Having attained the wisdom of enlightenment, he lived a life of deep inner peace, humility, and compassion, which are grounded in the experiential realization of the Dharma, characterized by three seals: impermanence (*anicca*), nonself (*anatta*), and suffering (*dukkha*). The term nirvana (*nibbana*), which is of-

ten seen as the fourth seal of the Dharma, refers to the overcoming of suffering and arrival at "the place of peace." This involves a direct insight into things as they truly are. To see things as they are is thereby to be freed from clinging and delusion and expectation. Such freedom thus leads to the wisdom that ushers in inner peace, humility, and compassion.

Several hundred years after Shakyamuni, the movement known as that of the great vehicle, or Mahayana, recaptured the basic thrust of this life of wisdom, and summarized it in the keynote term *shunyata*. Although usually translated as "emptiness" in English, this Sanskrit term can be better rendered by the translation "zeroness." It relates to the Indian mathematical notion of *shunya*, or zero, the matrix of all integers. That zeroness that underlies the very being of all of us is what enables us to touch the realm of the infinite. For example, each one of us can be likened to an integer, say 1, 2, or 3; 72, 153, or 49. We know that each particular integer is unique and different from all the others, and plays a role that none other can play within the realm of integers. This conveys the fact of the uniqueness that each one of us is as an individual personality or entity. If we stop here, we will be led to the deluded notion that we are all separate entities and that we are all different and thus have nothing to do with one another. However, if we see that underlying each integer there is a hidden denominator, that is, zero, then our understanding of how all integers relate to one another is radically transformed. In short, as each integer is divided by zero, the outcome is a realization of the infinite horizon in each one of us. And this is the same for any given integer, as it is placed over the denominator zero. Thus realizing that we are all grounded in that infinite horizon is also realizing our interconnectedness with one another.

This is a mathematical analogy that can give us a glimpse of what the discovery of that *shunyata* at the heart of our very being can open us to. In other words, this discovery enables us to realize who we are. The awakening to that *shunyata* is the awakening to our true self. And that true

Ruben L.F. Habito is professor of world religions and spirituality, Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas. He is the author of numerous scholarly articles and a dozen books in Japanese and English, including *Original Enlightenment: Tendai Hongaku Doctrine and Japanese Buddhism* (Tokyo: International Institute for Buddhist Studies of ICABS, 1996).

self really is nonself. That experience of nonself is what enables us to realize the whole universe as manifested in each and every one of us.

This is the Dharma that Shakyamuni awakened to. What can happen, as we breathe in and breathe out in silence and come to a point of inner stillness, is that our eyes may be opened to see that zeroness that is the very ground for our being. This involves cutting through the debris of our delusive ego and its machinations, the clutter that blocks our view of things as they are. This debris is the result of our social conditioning, of the things that bombard our consciousness through the media, received tradition, and so on. But as we steep ourselves in silence, we may see through this debris and get glimpses of that infinite horizon of our being.

Intimations of infinity may come to us in certain moments of our life. For example, we may just be looking at a flower, or we may be looking at a painting in a museum or at a sunset, or not doing anything in particular at all, and then all of a sudden, it hits us that what we are looking at is beyond what meets the eye. Indeed, the reality that we truly are is much more than meets the eye.

We can give ourselves the opportunity to see that infinite horizon if we come to a retreat and sit in silence. We can open ourselves to the same horizon in our daily lives if we give ourselves the gift of silence and sit in meditative silence on a regular basis. Or, within the busy schedules of our daily lives, in the middle of whatever activity we may be engaged in, if we occasionally pause for a moment and simply take that opportunity to breathe in and breathe out and pause in stillness for just a moment, such moments can enable us to touch again that infinite horizon and enable us to cut through the debris that blocks our view. This is an invitation to keep grounding ourselves in that infinite horizon, that is, the reality of who we truly are, in the midst of our daily lives.

I recall a lecture that I attended in Tokyo by a world-famous physicist with a doctorate from Princeton, who was teaching at Sophia University, where I was also teaching at the time. He began by taking a sip of water from a glass in front of him, saying: "What I will try to convey to you in this lecture is that this glass that you see here, which I drank from, is not really just this glass that you see here as opposed to this table, or this microphone. You may think that this glass is a particular object present before your eyes and distinct from all other objects in the universe. But it is not."

The lecture, as I recall, elucidated the basic principles of nuclear physics in order to help the audience understand that "this glass is not (what we think is) this glass." That is, this glass is only what we can call "this glass" on account of everything else in the universe being what it is. In other words, each component of the universe is only what it is precisely because everything else is what it is, and because all things are related to one another. The lec-

turer wanted to show how each particular thing in the universe is interconnected with everything else that is, and each thing is defined by everything else in the universe. This is now recognized as a basic notion in physics, namely, that the universe is an interconnected web of relations. There is no part of it that is separable or independent from any other.

What does this mean for us as we ask the question "What is the meaning of my life?"

Some of us, at some low point in our lives, may have been overtaken by a sense that "the world can go on without me," or "I don't have anything to give to the world and so I can just disappear, and it will make no difference to anybody," or thoughts to that effect. It can happen to any of us as we go along the way and fall into the dumps. But this kind of thought is really only a delusion, wherein we are beclouded and we are prevented from seeing the true nature of who we are. Each of us is the unique gift of this universe to everyone else.

In the Flower Garland Sutra, the universe is likened to a vast and infinite net, each of whose eyes is itself like a smaller net and has a jewel in it. Lo and behold, if you look at each jewel, each jewel reflects all the other jewels contained in the great net. Each one of us is like a jewel in that net. Each component in this universe is one such jewel reflecting every other jewel. That is how we are defined and interconnected.

Sages have known this since ancient times, through meditation. And now this reality is being rediscovered in contemporary mathematics and physics. So these two directions in the search for ultimate reality are converging. The intuitive path, which the sages have traversed for thousands of years, is now converging with the scientific path, which tries to figure out reality in terms of equations and in terms of relationships. Both paths point to a common dimension of reality: that the universe is interconnected and there is no such thing as an independent or autonomous entity.

We have been asking questions such as: Who am I? What is this life all about? How can I live my life in a way that can truly realize what it is ultimately meant to be? Answers to these fundamental questions are found in the realization of the Dharma, the realization of zeroness, the realization that everything is interconnected. To realize that we are all interconnected with one another is the content of what we say when we recite: *Dhammam saranam gacchami* (I go to the Dharma for refuge). I place my whole being in the Dharma in a way that that Dharma may be realized in my being.

With that, then, the significance of the Sangha also becomes manifest: *Sangham saranam gacchami* (I go to the Sangha for refuge). What is the Sangha in this context? The first level would point to the community of beings on the way to awakening, that is, to the realization of the Dharma, as described above. So as each one of us begins

to understand ourselves as a seeker of the truth, we come to realize that we ourselves constitute the Sangha.

So whatever we consider “us” to be, it is “us” together with “everyone else” that is the Sangha. What are the levels of the “us” that we can understand? Well, the first level would be, again, the community that we identify with in our search for ultimate truth. Historically, the community that grew around Shakyamuni as he expounded the Dharma, that is, the people who followed him, seeking to be awakened as he was, is the first level of the Sangha. The Sangha in its primary sense is that community that we find ourselves belonging to in this endeavor to live the awakened life, the community of fellow seekers of truth. So the people that practice meditation together would be the immediate group that comes to mind in that regard.

It is really so good to meet and be with people who are on the same path, seeking the most important things in life together. It is such a joy to discover like-minded people who are also in the search for the most important things in life as we are. And it is such a blessing to really be with and spend time with such persons. That is a source of deep gratitude on the part of each and every one of us—to have found one another. Each of us is a treasure in ourselves, and to have found one another in this way is really something that is very precious. This is something that goes beyond words.

There is another level of “us” if we consider who we are. We are who we are because of our parents, our siblings, our immediate family and relatives. So our familial relations would be another level that we can consider our Sangha. Thus, although those individuals sitting in meditation with us are our Sangha of fellow-seekers of the Dharma, there is also a wider circle of the families of each one of us, those that each of us is connected with: our parents, siblings and their children, their children’s children, and so forth. This is an invitation to consider our families, our immediate and wider family, and look at them with gratitude for enabling us to be who we are. We may still have struggles with some of them, we may still be fighting with some of them, or we may have issues we need to settle with some family members. But we are invited to look at each of them and to realize that we are who we are precisely because of what our families have allowed us to be—who we are. So natural gratitude comes from that realization. Maybe we have taken some of them for granted or perhaps have not appreciated them for who they are to us. Moments of silence in sitting can also be an occasion to look within ourselves and enable us to appreciate the people close to us in a new way. We are invited to look at those who have been supportive of us and those who have been really a part of our lives, whom we have not been able to fully recognize as who they truly are to us.

Widening the circle further, all the people we have met in our lives, such as the people who may have taken care

of us when we were children, or whatever friends of our parents may have come and hugged us even once, and so on, are also part of our lives. Kindergarten, elementary-school, and high-school teachers and classmates, and so on, and all our friends and acquaintances through the years—all of them have made us who we are. All of the people that we have met in our lives who in some way or another have been part of what formed us into who we are, are included in our Sangha.

In Japan there is a saying, “Even the accidental brushing of sleeves [as we pass another] is due to karmic connections from previous lives” (*Sode fureau mo, tasho no en*). That is a rough translation of a very nice, succinct Japanese proverb that means that even if we do not know the person we pass when walking down a corridor or on a busy street, that encounter—which was itself determined by the karma accrued in some previous lifetime—helps to determine who we are, and that even that unknown person is part of the circle that makes me who I am. This is simply an indication that every other person is someone with whom I am connected in a wondrous way.

In taking a meal for example, if we consider how that meal got there, or how the bread got there, and how the fruit got there, we will see the hands of a great many people behind every morsel of food. We may even see the truck driver who brought the bread from the bakery to the retailer and the farmers who grew the wheat in their fields. If we consider all those connected with us as we eat this piece of bread, we come to realize that we are naturally connected with all living beings and that we owe a debt of gratitude to each one for helping us become who we are.

So as we look at this circle of interconnectedness, we will see that it excludes no one in the universe. In some way or another, everything, every sentient being, is part of that Sangha that makes me who I am. So this is another dimension of the understanding of the Dharma, gained by looking at the Sangha. Who is my Sangha? Who is “us”? As we widen the circle, we realize that no one is excluded from our Sangha. So we can only sit in awe and feel a deep sense of gratitude for all members of this Sangha, which enables me to be who I am.

I recall a medieval Japanese poem written by a monk named Saigyō (1118–90), who was sitting on top of a hill one early evening, just after the sun had set. He was looking at a village nearby and saw the rooftops, and the smoke coming out of the chimneys. He described what he felt in the short poem that goes like this: “I do not know the reason why, tears of gratitude moisten my eyes.” In his mind’s eye, he was perhaps contemplating the families preparing their evening meal, the mothers taking care of their children, or the fathers returning from their farms and washing their feet before entering the house. This scene brought to him an overwhelming sense of gratitude. That sense can come to us, as we are wrapped in silence,

and simply become aware and able to realize the wondrous reality that makes us who we are right here. Tears of gratitude can really come and overwhelm us.

The Sangha is what we are invited to really consider as we ask ourselves, “Who am I?” As I am led to see who my Sangha is, I realize that I am not alone, that I am never alone in this life. It was Saint Augustine who said, “I am least lonely when I am by myself.” That sense of *being* can come to us more profoundly when we are by ourselves, just sitting in silence, and we are able to appreciate things for what they are.

The whole earth community then is our Sangha, and each member of this earth community belongs to our Sangha. Each child who goes to bed hungry at night is “us.” We cannot hold back the tears, this time, not of gratitude, but of pain and sorrow that children have to be hungry or die of malnutrition and poverty. They are “us.”

Each person treated unjustly, discriminated against, harassed, assaulted, murdered, is us. Indeed, everyone who treats others unjustly, who discriminates against, harasses, assaults, or murders a fellow sentient being, is us.

As we chant *Sangham saranam gacchami* (I go to the Sangha for refuge), we open our eyes to the reality that the Sangha is none other than the reality that we are. We are thus empowered to live in a way that cherishes and treasures one another, the whole community of sentient beings on this earth, as our true self. And we are likewise enabled to take a straight look at the pain and suffering that this earth Sangha bears, realizing that it is our very own pain, and thus are enabled to offer all that we are and all that we have toward the healing of this pain and the suffering that we bear together. □

(Adapted from a Dharma talk given at Maria Kannon Zen Center, Dallas, Texas)

A bodhisattva playing the flute in veneration of the Buddha's teaching: a relief devised on one of the grids on the octagonal bronze lantern that stands in front of the Great Buddha Hall of Todaiji, Nara. Designated a National Treasure. Photo by Kozo Ogawa.

Ethic of Survival or Vision of Hope?

—The Aim of Interreligious Dialogue—

by John D'Arcy May

Just what is interreligious dialogue and what is its aim? How can we maintain our own faith and beliefs and effect true dialogue with those of other faiths? Should we look to an "ethic of survival" or a "vision of hope" as we move into the future? These and many other questions are examined here in detail.

The dialogue of religions is often regarded in Christian ecumenical circles as a problem rather than a promising new perspective. It can seem to pose a threat to Christian ecumenism by opening up the possibility of transformations and inculturations of Christianity that challenge such fundamental doctrines as the centrality of Christ and the trinitarian understanding of God. Yet throughout its history, theology has thrived on such challenges: the more "ecumenical" (or, if you prefer, "catholic") the church becomes, the more theology has to cope with difference and re-establish identity-in-diversity. Many Buddhists have similar difficulties with dialogue as Buddhism begins to take on Western forms, and I wish to bear this in mind as I proceed with the following reflections inspired by the events of September 11, 2001.

One difficulty we all share concerns our uncertainty about the "end" or aim of interreligious dialogue. The pros-

pect of one religion being "proved right" to the exclusion of all others, or of all combining to form one meta-religion, is understandably a nightmarish scenario for most religious people. One way of escaping such dilemmas is well-known Swiss theologian Hans Küng's "Declaration of the Religions for a Global Ethic" (1993), which suggests that the creation of a "global ethos" through the dialogue of religions would prepare the ground for what really matters: a *global ethic* to which each religious tradition would contribute and to which all could subscribe without giving up their particularities. In the light of the September 11 atrocities and the worsening situation in the Middle East, Küng's vision seems little short of prophetic. But is this really a way forward? Is it our last remaining expectation of the world's religions that they may yet provide a common ethic that will help us to survive, or do we look to them for more than that—for reassurance about the truth of our common destiny and for ways of envisaging its impact on our lives? It is this question that I would like to explore in this article, moving from the ethics to the eschatology of dialogue and concluding with some suggestions about the consequences of dialogue.¹

1. The Ethics of Dialogue

If those who have diagnosed our situation as "postmodern" are at all correct, then it would seem to call for a reconstitution of ethics. We can no longer afford the luxury of fundamental ethical diversity in a world characterized not only economically, but also culturally and even politically by globalization. We need to arrive at commonly agreed upon solutions to the moral problems spawned by Western technology in areas such as sexual and biological ethics and to cross-cultural questions such as human rights and gender equality. If it is true that ethical positions can only be formulated within traditions (moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre [Duke University, professor emeritus]) and that individualism and ethics are ultimately incompatible (pluralist philosopher Charles Taylor [McGill University]), it is also the case that we lack narrative traditions

John D'Arcy May, Th.D. (ecumenics), Ph.D. (history of religion), served as director of the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College in Dublin, and is now associate professor of interfaith dialogue and ethics there. He is a member of the International Interfaith Centre (IIC) in Oxford.

that could give coherence not only to particular moralities, but to the diversity of traditions itself (political philosopher Jean-François Lyotard, 1924–98). Africans, Muslims, and Confucianists have all at different times challenged the perceived Western-liberal-Christian hegemony in human and civil rights. There is no longer any prospect that any one religious tradition, including the Christian, can lay down the parameters of a “universal” ethic.

There are many in the West and elsewhere who would react by saying: “So be it! Religion should be kept out of ethics, which is a project of practical reason that can only be perverted by religious ideology.” There is more than enough evidence in a world wracked by religiously inspired violence to give credence to such a view: the “sacred,” as the concretization of transcendence, manifests a profound moral ambivalence.² Yet I wish to argue that ethics, if it is to go beyond mere pragmatism, is always more than a purely rational activity. Without relinquishing the Enlightenment’s conviction that ethics is autonomous with regard to religion, social philosopher Max Weber (1864–1920) distinguished between *Verantwortungsethik* and *Gesinnungsethik*, an “ethic of responsibility” and an “ethic of disposition,” and more recently, Catholic theologian Robert Gascoigne (Australian Catholic University) has proposed the complementarity of *normative* and *visionary* ethics.³ This implies not only a substantive view of the good-in-itself but a narrative account of the origin and destiny of things.

Ethics in the narrower sense of the study of what is “right” can legitimately be conceived in the abstract as being autonomous with regard to particular religious traditions, yet in its more profound sense of determining what is the “good,” it cannot be distinguished from mere emotivism or pragmatism unless its transcendent dimension is taken into account, and this dimension can best be represented in story and symbol. Moral obligation, if it is to be binding, points beyond the social construction of norms of behavior and the calculus of consequences. Kant (1724–1804) called this transcendent dimension of ethics the “categorical imperative,” which suggests a normative force that is unconditional, but even this needs complementing by something that grips the imagination and motivates to action. In both senses ethics is akin to the “religious.” In the course of history, in fact, it is religious traditions that have brought forth and nurtured ethical systems. Even if it is conceded that ethics is an autonomous rational activity whose relationship to religion is at best indirect, it remains true that ethics itself contains an element of transcendence that needs to be contextualized in some kind of “salvation” narrative.

The other side of this coin is that ethical traditions, like their religious counterparts, have developed largely independently of one another and may now be culturally incompatible. As if that were not enough, the religions

themselves appear anything but ethical in their own relationships with one another. Virtually all of them have built into their doctrinal or legal systems a conviction of their own superiority, a “meliorism” (from Latin *melior*, “better”) which allows them to look down on other traditions as their spiritual inferiors. To this extent genuine interreligious dialogue is urgently needed, otherwise the religions simply lack credibility when they exhort individuals and nations to moral behavior. But the problem goes deeper. The steps to be taken are not in the following sequence:

1. Deduction of universal principles of a common ethic from the ethical traditions of the religions;
2. Cooperation according to these previously agreed upon principles;

but rather:

1. The practice of nonviolent communication among the religions themselves;
2. Gradual growth in mutual respect and understanding;
3. The overcoming of “meliorism” and unilateral declarations of definitiveness and superiority;
4. Distinctive but complementary contributions, not only to a putative “global ethic,” but to a shared vision of transcendence.

Each religion, in its own cultural “dialect,” provides very particular stories and symbols of transcendence. In the new context of globalization, these need to be mutually translatable without the threat of alienation and identity loss. It is along these lines that we must search for a further dimension of interreligious dialogue beyond the ethical.

2. The Eschatology of Dialogue

Dialogue, as I suggested above, is not simply *about*—among other things—ethical matters, but *consists in* the nonviolent praxis of communication. Christians tend to think of dialogue in theological terms as discussion of doctrinal differences, but it could be argued that no other religion has a “theology” in anything equivalent to the Christian sense, and that the differences that matter to the others are legal and practical rather than doctrinal. For Muslims, Christians distort and complicate a truth that is blindingly simple: there is no god but the God (*Allah*), and Muhammad is God’s prophet; for Buddhists, doctrines are in themselves a distraction from the practical path to liberation upon which the Enlightened One (*the Buddha*) goes before us; for Hindus, doctrines are by definition compatible, but the cosmic, moral, and social Law (*Dharma*) is eternal and transcends all differences.

Christian theologians, after decades of dispute about exclusivist, inclusivist, and pluralist paradigms for a theology of religions, have only recently begun to realize that,

as Catholic theologian Paul Knitter (Xavier University) put it, “doing” comes before “knowing.” It is the moral and spiritual quality of the relationships achieved in the actual practice of dialogue that will determine the degree of mutual understanding to be reached. Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas (1906–95) has reminded us that the *face* of the other person is a window on the infinite, which as such communicates to us the categorical injunction not to harm or destroy the other person’s life, because each life is an unfathomable mystery of incalculable value. This realization is phenomenologically prior even to the awareness of our own existence as persons in a world we share with others, and its moral quality determines our own self-awareness and our knowledge of the world. In this perspective, ethics comes before truth itself and is the primordial philosophy. If this insight may be applied to interreligious relationships, and presuming we can distinguish “genuine” religion from spurious cults, it follows that, precisely because and to the extent that another religion is different from ours, its institutional “face” discloses a vision of the infinite that elicits our unconditional respect. This is not to say that there cannot be disagreements and disputes, conflicts of interpretations, and occasions for criticism: from another, “gnoseological” point of view, the question of truth remains paramount (Paul Ricoeur [Universities of Paris-X and Chicago, professor emeritus]). But if these are to occur—and be resolved—in the context of dialogue, they presuppose a fundamental relationship of mutual acceptance and respect. Otherwise the so-called “dialogue” is itself unethical.⁴

The religions, then, in sorting out the apparent incompatibilities between the culture-bound symbolic languages in which they speak about the meaning of poverty, suffering, and death and celebrate creation, life, and hope, must already be exemplars of nonviolent communication. Nonviolence is not merely the topic but the medium of their communication; otherwise it is sub-religious and more likely to give scandal than inspire. In learning to translate one another’s symbolic languages, the religions are not only clarifying a vision of transcendence-in-immanence that they could eventually share; they are also enacting ethically what they proclaim symbolically. Their stories, rituals, and metaphors, always with particular reference to times and places, nevertheless make us aware of what lies “beyond” the space-time of history *as a dimension of history itself*. In their particular cultural contexts, they were each able to do this separately in the past; in the new context of globalization, they can only do it, if at all, together. Our hypothesis is that if they succeed they can provide a foretaste of liberation from the unceasing cycles of violence and vengeance, whereas if they fail, it is hard to see where such a liberation could come from, given the human capacity to rationalize violence.

The Christian name for this dimension of transcend-

ence is “eschatology,” which though it transcends time itself is symbolized as the “end time.” Christian rootedness in the Jewish story of salvation invites us to think of “meaning” in terms of an “outcome,” an “ending” that is at the same time the fulfillment of a purpose. Eschatology includes both senses of the word “end”: it is a finality that transcends time yet delimits it and gives it a sense of direction. Not every religious tradition is similarly structured, though several seem to possess equivalent eschatologies: the return of the Hidden Imam in Shi’ite Islam; the Pure Land in the west to which the Buddha Amitabha and the future Buddha Maitreya are beckoning the devotees of Shin Buddhism; and the concept of *mappo* or historical decline in Nichiren’s reading of the Lotus Sutra.⁵ What concerns us here, however, is not the particularity of the symbolism but the element of vision that provides a context for ethics. Even if the imagined final realization transcends the ethical, it nevertheless provides the everyday practice of morality with a home, a nurturing context that ensures that people *see the point* of being moral. This “meaning” of morality, though immanent within the moral act itself, is in danger of not being realized if its intrinsic orientation to transcendence is not dramatized in metaphor, symbol, and story. This is not simply to say that one such narrative context can be substituted for another or that a number of them may be pooled or combined in order to enhance the ethical result. But it does suggest that the element of vision, whether temporally or spatially structured, is as intrinsic to ethics as ethics itself is fundamental to an orientation toward transcendence.

3. The Consequences of Dialogue

These reflections may seem impossibly abstract in view of the situation we are facing. If September 11, 2001 marks the true beginning of the twenty-first century as an era that is not only postmodern but also proto-fundamentalist, then the approach to interreligious dialogue outlined above is put to a severe test. The “realist” interpretation of this new situation is represented by Samuel Huntington’s thesis of the inevitable “clash of civilizations” as the liberal West holds out against religiously inspired cultural blocs with their potential for violence. This seems to be borne out by the persistence of conflicts along the “fault lines” where ancient civilizations meet (Northern Ireland, the Balkans, the Middle East, and the Sudan, to name but a few) and by the fateful configuration of the Gulf War and the war in Afghanistan as Arab Islamic Jihad vs. Western Christian Crusade. The “idealist” view, represented by the father of peace studies, Johan Galtung (b. 1930), sees in the “religious cosmologies” of the ancient civilizations a potential for the nonviolent resolution of conflict that is systematically neglected by Western approaches to international relations and diplomacy.

Neither approach, I would suggest, does full justice to

the role of religions in bringing about ethical renewal. It is true that violent conflict is no longer typically between nation-states but between transnational movements embodying worldviews that are considered by their adherents to be insufficiently acknowledged or under threat. But it is also true that the religions that have inspired these worldviews are all too often guilty of complicity in the most atrocious violence, as is evidenced by the role of the Christian churches in Rwanda, the contribution of Islam to the Iran-Iraq war, and the implication of the Buddhist Sangha in the political violence of Sri Lanka. This can make interreligious relations extremely sensitive, as those who are involved in Jewish-Christian-Muslim dialogue are aware.

The credibility of the religions as peacemakers is fatally compromised until it is demonstrated that they themselves are capable of nonviolent relationships. This extends to the cognitive sphere: the spectacle of religious traditions demonstrating their own superiority over all others does not augur well for either dialogue or peacemaking, despite the genuine concern for truth that often underlies it. Yet the religious traditions, in their very different ways, each present a vision of how things could be on this earth if only our gaze were raised above our individual selves and our supposed grievances to an awareness of the whole of reality and its purpose, the questions of why, whence, and whither. In order to gain this vantage point we must already be intentionally “beyond” our immediate concerns and problems and the particularities of our traditions, so that they all, in some constructive and nonalienating way, become “relativized” and assume their true “eschatological” importance. Levinas calls this perspective “the infinite,” which cannot be contained within any system or “totality”; I have used the shorthand term “transcendence.” Its Christian equivalent would be “hope,” whereas Buddhists might speak of the “equanimity” (*upekkha*) of liberated ones. However it is symbolized and embodied in metaphor and story, it is this orientation toward ultimate liberation that can and must be translated into programs for action in the world—whether in the areas of economics, politics, or personal morality—if the religions are to realize their peacemaking potential.

The nub of this argument is that the religious traditions, though themselves capable of becoming the occasion or pretext for violence because of the ultimate loyalties they inspire, are nevertheless *in themselves*, and not just because of the ethics that can be deduced from them, crucial to peacemaking. “Without a vision the people perish,” says the Hebrew prophet. Now that globalization has made us all aware that there are many visions, we must learn to give up our instinctive tendency to absolutize our own and institutionalize the infinite. We must master the difficult art of remaining secure in the unique identities bequeathed to us by our religious traditions while recognizing that there can legitimately be others that inspire

other religious people in ways that can be disturbingly different. “Truly” does not mean “only” (Paul Knitter)—the truth we cherish in our own tradition does not of itself negate the possibility that others too possess truth from which we may learn.

Given that virtually every society now contains representatives of most of the existing religious traditions, it is up to them to find an interrelationship within the public space created by secular pluralism that will of itself bear witness to their peacemaking potential. Debate about the “truth” of the religions’ widely disparate views of the world is not incidental to this testimony but integral to it. The problems at issue between religious traditions, though they may seem archaic and irrelevant, encode their answers to the deepest questions that trouble the human heart, including the practical problems of peacemaking and reconciliation. To the members of the respective traditions, this is likely to seem like an invitation to disloyalty because it appears to place all on an equal footing for purely pragmatic purposes. Our task is to learn, together, that this need not be so, that each of us can continue to be fully committed to our faith while acknowledging the scope for dialogue offered by secular societies. But the actual acceptance of people of other faiths in their religious difference is itself a religious act that must spring from a spirituality of nonviolence. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, the Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh, and Nikkyo Niwano spring to mind as exemplars of the peacemaking potential of such a spirituality. What is needed, however, is the creation of a global nonviolent way of life that will come to seem as natural and inevitable as violence does now. This is an ethical task, but ethics alone will not accomplish it. Only those who can commit themselves to a credible vision of hope will be able to sustain it. □

Notes:

1. This article originated as a paper read at the Signadou campus of the Australian Catholic University in Canberra, November 26, 2001.

2. Cf. R. Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Lanham/Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

3. Cf. Robert Gascoigne, *The Public Forum and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2001).

4. For further development of these questions, see J.D. May, *After Pluralism: Towards an Interreligious Ethic* (Münster-Hamburg-London: LIT Verlag, 2000); “Strange Encounters: On Transcending Violence by Transcending Difference,” *Studies in World Christianity* 6/2 (2000) 224–44; “Catholic Fundamentalism? Some Implications of *Dominus Iesus* for Dialogue and Peacemaking,” *Horizons* 28 (2001) 271–93.

5. The eschatology of Nichiren Buddhism was investigated in a stimulating paper by Michio T. Shinozaki, “A Buddhist Approach to an Ecological Crisis: The Lotus Sutra,” at the 1999 Lotus Sutra conference sponsored by Rissho Kosei-kai.

The first part of chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra, “Introduction,” is devoted to setting the scene for what is to follow in the sutra. It is, in a sense, the first chapter of a story that ends with chapter 22, “Entrustment.” It truly is an introduction, in that it both introduces the story and creates a setting for it, and, as I wrote in the previous essay, introduces the reader to the special, even magical, world of Lotus Sutra stories.

The Story

“This is what I have heard.” The Buddha, we are told, once lived on Sacred Eagle Peak, near Rajagriha (the capital of Magadha), where he was accompanied by a vast assembly—a great variety of twelve thousand monks, nuns, lay

devotees, kings, arhats, eighty thousand bodhisattvas, gods, god-kings, dragon-kings, titan-kings, griffin-kings, chimera-kings, centaur-kings, and many other kinds of fantastic supernatural mythical beings.

Having preached the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings, the Buddha entered deeply into meditative concentration (*samadhi*). Then, to prepare the assembly to hear the Buddha preach, various omens suddenly appeared—flowers, extremely rare flowers, rained down from heaven on everyone, the earth trembled in the six different ways that it can tremble, and the Buddha emitted a ray of light from between his eyebrows, lighting up eighteen thousand worlds to the east, so that the whole assembly could see these worlds in great detail, including their heavens and

hells, all their living beings, and even their past and present buddhas.

Then Maitreya Bodhisattva asked Manjushri Bodhisattva why the Buddha was displaying such a wonder. Manjushri's response provides a brief summary of all of the major teachings of the sutra. The Buddha, he says, intends to teach the great Dharma,¹ send down the rain of the great Dharma, blow the conch of the great Dharma, beat the drum of the great Dharma, and explain the meaning of the great Dharma. He explains that in the past he has seen many other buddhas do the same thing in preparation for delivering a very great and difficult teaching and that one such Buddha, Sun Moon Light, living many, many ages ago and preceded by twenty thousand buddhas of the same name who taught appropriately different things to different people, also displayed such a wonder before preaching the Lotus Sutra.

At that time the sutra was preached especially for a bodhisattva named Wonderful Glow, who was actually Manjushri Bodhisattva in a previous life, and for one of his disciples, Fame Seeker, who was Maitreya Bodhisattva in a previous life. After assuring all that the Bodhisattva Treasury of Excellence would become the next Buddha, Sun Moon Light Buddha passed into nirvana, after which Wonderful Glow Bodhisattva kept and taught the Lotus Sutra for a great many eons. The wonderful omen, explained Manjushri, is a device for revealing the true nature of all things.²

This Is What I Heard

The Lotus Sutra begins: "This is what I heard." This phrase occurs at the beginning of most Buddhist sutras to indicate that the sutra has been heard from the mouth of the

Buddha. The sutras are said to have been memorized and recited originally by the Buddha's disciple Ananda. None were actually written down until five or more centuries after the death of the Buddha.³

Some Lessons:

(1) *The Lotus Sutra as imaginative vision*

As indicated in the first installment of this series, what the Lotus Sutra offers is what we might call an imaginative vision. It not only does not ask us to accept its stories as though they were reports of historical facts; it invites us, from the very outset, to enter into a world that is very different from our ordinary world of historical facts, a world of stories in which strange things sometimes happen. In part, stories are used in the Lotus Sutra to persuade and convince us, first of all, that we ourselves can take up the life of the bodhisattva.

(2) *The Lotus Sutra is for all*

Monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, gods, dragons, satyrs, centaurs, titans, griffins, chimeras, pythons, humans and nonhumans, minor kings, and holy wheel-rolling kings, and others are all addressed by the Buddha in chapter 1. What we should understand from this is that the Buddha-dharma is not only for Buddhists, not only for those people who are good, and not only for human beings. Even the gods and other heavenly creatures come to hear the Buddha's teaching.

There is an important truth here. While the Lotus Sutra, like any book, is very much a human creation, its significance goes beyond the human. The range of concern, in other words, is not limited to the human species, but extends to all the living. In part, this sense of cosmic importance is a reflection of the rich Indian imagination at the time the sutras were being compiled. People simply assumed that the world was populated with a rich variety of what we would regard as mythical beings. There is, on the other hand, very little interest shown in Buddhist sutras in ordinary cats and dogs, or cows and sheep. This too is a reflection of an imaginative vision.

This imaginative vision urges us to reach out beyond what our eyes can see and our hands can touch, to understand ourselves as being significantly related to a much larger universe that is located in and transcends our selves, families, countries, and even species. It is a vision that urges us to imagine ourselves as part of a vast cosmos in which our own lives are important.

(3) *Sharing the Dharma*

The Buddha intends "to teach the great Dharma, to send down the rain of the great Dharma, to blow the conch of the great Dharma, to beat the drum of the great Dharma, and to explain the meaning of the great Dharma."

This represents an interesting mix of emotional and in-

Gene Reeves, former dean of the Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago, recently retired from teaching at the University of Tsukuba, where he taught Buddhism and American Studies. He is currently doing research, teaching, and writing on the Lotus Sutra at Rissho Kosei-kai in Tokyo.

Frontispiece for chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra, from a Lotus Sutra scroll owned by Enryakuji, the head temple of the Japanese Tendai sect in Shiga Prefecture.

tellectual practices. The meaning of the Dharma rain will be discussed at length later in this series. For now it is enough to say that it is a symbol of equality among the living, in that all the living equally receive the Dharma without discrimination or distinction.

The meaning of the conch and the drum is not so obvious. Almost certainly they are instruments used to lead an army in battle, to inspire and motivate soldiers to move forward. Similarly, those who receive the Lotus Sutra in their hearts are not merely comforted by it; they are motivated to practice it passionately and to share it with others. Like Christianity and Islam, Buddhism is a missionary religion. Here in chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra we can see that the Dharma is intended for all the living and that those who share it should vigorously and enthusiastically share it with others. We can also think of the sound of the conch as representing the beauty of the Dharma, while the sound of the drums represents the power of the Dharma.

It is important to notice, also, that even enthusiastic

teaching is to be accompanied by an explanation of the Dharma. This suggests that we should not attempt to make only emotional appeals on behalf of the Dharma. It is equally important that the Dharma be understood. What is both embraced and understood will have a more lasting value than what is embraced merely on an emotional basis. This is probably truer now than it was when the sutra was composed. Today people are trained to think scientifically, rationally, and critically. For the Lotus Sutra to be accepted by modern people, it has to be carefully taught and explained in terms that people can understand.

(4) Heavenly flowers

That heavenly flowers rain both on the Buddha and on the whole assembly is very important. It means that it is not only beautiful and rewarding to preach the Dharma; it is also beautiful and rewarding to hear it. It is, in other words, one of the ways in which there is equality among all of those in the congregation, including the Buddha. It indicates that there should be no sharp distinction between

teachers and learners. While some forms of Buddhism have adopted a kind of guru system in which some are authorized to be permanent teachers and others to be students, the Lotus Sutra teaches that we should all be both teachers and learners. There will, of course, be times when some are in special positions as teachers or as learners. But this should always be understood as temporary and relative. All can and need to be teachers, and all can and need to be learners.

As any good teacher knows, what makes students good is not the ability to repeat what the teachers have said, but the ability to think critically and creatively about what has been said, thereby helping the teacher to be a learner. It is a remarkable feature of many of the stories in the Lotus Sutra that the person who represents the Buddha is a learner, one who tries things, makes mistakes, and learns from his experience.

(5) *The omens*

In the first chapter we are introduced to the kinds of omens that occur in various stories in the sutra—flowers rain from heaven, the earth shakes in the six ways it can shake, drums can be heard in the heavens, the Buddha emits rays of light, etc.—which indicate that nature itself is moved by the Buddha. The Buddha-dharma is not merely about something in your head; it is about the whole world. Note also that these omens appeal to different senses—we see light; we see and smell flowers; we feel the earth shake; and we hear drums beating. This means that we are to embrace the Dharma not only with our minds, but with our whole beings.

(6) *The Buddha's light lights up all the worlds*

The Eternal Buddha is the Buddha, not only of this *saha* world, in which suffering has to be endured, but of all worlds, past and future, here and elsewhere. This is the major teaching of the second half of the Lotus Sutra and will be discussed later. For now it may be enough to note that the vision enabled by the light from the Buddha is four-dimensional—it involves seeing not only other worlds, but also the past and anticipated futures of those worlds.

(7) *The worlds of the Dharma*

In the Lotus Sutra there are worlds, heavens, hells, etc., making up a very rich imaginary cosmos. Much has been written about Indian and Buddhist cosmology, but none of it is very helpful in facilitating better understanding of the Lotus Sutra. In the sutra, cosmology is used, not as quasi-scientific description of the universe, but to enhance the place and importance of Shakyamuni Buddha, the Lotus Sutra preached by him, and the world of Shakyamuni Buddha, this "*saha* world." This too will be discussed at greater length later in the series, but it is important to realize from the outset that the cosmological episodes, the mysterious and even magical events that occur in the

Manjushri Bodhisattva. In chapter 1 of the Lotus Sutra he explains why the Buddha displays various wonders. A Kamakura-period painting owned by the Tokyo National Museum.

Lotus Sutra, are not intended to be scientific or empirical descriptions of historical events. They are imaginative stories, used for the practical purpose of transforming the lives of the readers or hearers of the sutra. They are used for the purpose of having us understand—not only in our heads, but also spiritually, in the depths of our beings—that how we live our lives is important, not only for ourselves and those close to us, but for the whole cosmos as well.

We should also recognize that each preacher or teacher of the Dharma must be so in his or her own smaller world, be it a university, a business, a playground, a home, or whatever. There are buddhas in temples to inspire us, but what the Dharma demands of us is that it be shared, taught, and embodied everywhere, that is, wherever we are.

In other words, from the perspective of the Lotus Sutra, what is most important is not finally the miraculous actions of the gods and heavenly bodhisattvas and buddhas, but the everyday actions of the people of this world.

(8) *The Lotus Sutra*

Manjushri Bodhisattva's story about Sun Moon Light Buddha indicates not only that the Buddha is the buddha

of all worlds, but also that the Lotus Sutra itself is not something devised a few centuries ago. It too is eternal, in the sense that it teaches timeless truths. Thus the books we have called “The Lotus Sutra,” etc., whether in Sanskrit or Chinese, or Japanese or English, are at best representations or exhibits of the sutra. Such pages of text, on wood or palm or paper, are but embodiments of the Lotus Sutra. This does not mean, however, that the Lotus Sutra that is so embodied is in any way more real than the concrete embodiments. Rather, it is only in concrete embodiments—not only in printed texts, but also in chanting, in teaching, and in practicing the Lotus Sutra—that the sutra lives.

(9) *The Three Vehicles*

Manjushri indicates that all buddhas have taught the Four Noble Truths and nirvana for those who sought to be *shravakas* (ordinary monks), the teaching of the twelve causes and conditions for those who sought to be *pratyekabuddhas* (self-enlightened ones), and the six practices (perfections) for the sake of bodhisattvas.

These three sets of teachings represent the variety of different teachings and emphases within Buddhism. “Three” is used to represent variety, but very often what is discussed are two ways, that of the *shravaka* and that of the bodhisattva. The three teachings are also presented as particularly important teachings, important in the sense that they have been effective.

The point is not only that there are various teachings, though that is important, but that they work, that they are skillful and appropriate in many situations. There is no teaching or magical formula that can replace such important teachings, though the teachings of the Lotus Sutra can—and do—include them.

The chapter ends in this way:

The time has come for people to understand.
With your hands together, wait single-mindedly!
The Buddha will pour the rain of the Dharma
To satisfy those who seek the Way.

If those who seek after the three vehicles
Have any doubts or regrets,
The Buddha will remove them
So that none whatever remain.

In effect, the first chapter is a warning—that you are entering an imaginative territory, a world that can change your life—and that such a change in you can be significant for the entire cosmos. The world of the imagination can be a frightening and even dangerous place, precisely because it invites us into a world that is new and unfamiliar and therefore difficult to understand. It may place demands on us by assuring us that we can be and do much

more than we ever believed possible. If we respond to it in joy, our entry into this transformative world can be very rewarding.

To be continued

Notes:

1. While the Sanskrit term *dharma* is sometimes translated as “Law,” I believe that for ordinary readers this creates a false impression of how the term is used in the Lotus Sutra and in Buddhism in general. It is translated as “Law” because it was translated by Kumarajiva into Chinese as *fa* (pronounced *ho* in Japanese), a term that can reasonably be translated into English as “Law.” But to many, the term “law” has negative connotations, reminding us of courts, police, and punishment. More important, the term “law” simply does not convey the rich meaning and significance of the Buddha-dharma. That is why, like some other Buddhist terms, such as “nirvana,” “sutra,” or even “Buddha,” it has become a term in the English language. And this is why the Rev. Senchu Murano, of the Nichiren-shu, while originally using “Law,” decided to use “Dharma” for the revised version of his very fine translation of the Lotus Sutra into English.

While it can mean other things such as way or method, there are four chief ways in which “Dharma” is used in Buddhism:

(1) things—all the objects which we can see, feel, hear, and touch;

(2) the Buddha’s teaching, a use which is often extended to include Buddhist teachings and practices generally, and thus can mean Buddhism itself;

(3) the truth that is taught, especially the highest truth disclosed in the enlightenment of the Buddha; and

(4) the reality that the truth reveals, that which enables and sustains things in accord with interdependence.

2. This phrase, “the true nature of all things,” has been variously translated and interpreted. There are two major possibilities: One is that it is an affirmation of the reality of the everyday world of concrete realities, as opposed to views that understand this world to be a product of our minds or an illusion. The other is that it is a claim that the Buddha’s teachings reveal the nature of things, namely, that all things are interrelated and interdependent.

3. In the case of the Lotus Sutra, though there is a variety of speculative theories, we do not actually know, or have any real evidence for, where or when or in what language the sutra was first written. Probably it is from some place in northern India or central Asia, originally written in some local language, and then put into literary Sanskrit to give it more class.

It was first translated into Chinese by 255 C.E. Sanskrit versions known to exist at the present time are more recent than the version from which Kumarajiva (ca. 350–410) and his associates translated the Lotus Sutra into Chinese around 406. It is an interesting fact of history that virtually none of the Sanskrit originals from which early Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures were made have been found to exist today. It seems almost as though the Chinese translators, once having translated a Sanskrit text, threw it away. An earlier translation into Chinese by Dharmaraksha (ca. 223–300) exists, but as far as I know it has never been translated into any Western language.

Kuya Shonin: A Wandering Sage

by Takeshi Kuno

One of the best-known works of Japanese sculpture abroad, this thirteenth-century rendition of an itinerant priest is filled with power and majesty. Especially striking are the six small Amida figures that issue forth on his intoning the name of the Buddha Amida.

This is a portrait statue of Kuya Shonin (903–72), an early exponent of popular Pure Land Buddhism during the Heian period (794–1185). From his youth, Kuya traveled as a lay practitioner (*ubasoku*) to many holy sites in Japan, and assisted ordinary people by repairing roads, building bridges where there were none, and digging wells where water was short. He took private ordination, and after some years of religious training, arrived in Kyoto in 939 as a mendicant priest and became known among the populace as the Wandering Sage of the Marketplace (*Ichino Hijiri*). In 963 he founded a temple called Saikoji, which was later renamed Rokuharamitsuji.

The portrait statue of Kuya (117.6 cm high) is unique in a number of ways. He is portrayed as a wandering religious man, with a metal gong hanging from his neck, a wooden rod in his right hand, a staff topped with a deer's antler in his left, and the straw sandals of a traveler on his feet. Six tiny Amida figures issue from his mouth, which legend says represent each of the characters of the six-character mantra of Amida: *Na-mu A-mi-da Butsu* (I take refuge in the Buddha Amitabha). The following episode accounts for the antlered staff. When Kuya was living in Kifune, deep in the mountains north of Kyoto, a deer would come each night and call out. Kuya loved listening to the deer's cry and regarded the deer as his companion in solitude. But one night the deer did not come, and not hearing its cry Kuya feared something was wrong. The next day a man called Taira no Sadamori came and told him he had killed a deer nearby the previous evening. Kuya was horrified, and very saddened. He received the skin and antlers of the deer and made the skin into a robe to wrap around his body, and he attached one of the antlers to the top of his staff. Sadamori repented his deed and became a Buddhist priest.

Carved out of wood that was then painted, the statue of Kuya is realistically portrayed, from his thin face and body to the creases in his deerskin robe. It is said to have been made by a reputed sculptor of the Kamakura period (1185–1333): an inscription inside the body written in black ink records the name of Kosho, the fourth son of Unkei (d. 1223), and a famous sculptor of Buddhist statues active in the thirteenth century. Kosho worked with his father and brothers, Tankei (1173–1256), Koun (dates unknown), and Koben (fl. 1190–1215), on statues of the two benevolent kings and the two heavenly deities for Toji in Kyoto, and in 1208 he was commis-

sioned to make a number of statues for the North Octagonal Hall (Hokuendo) of Kofukuji. In the fourth month of 1223, he made statues of the four heavenly kings for the Jizo Jurin'in (in Nara), which had been moved to Kozanji (in Kyoto).

Later, in the eighth month of 1232, he completed a bronze Amida triad as the main image of the Western Room (Nishinoma) in the Main Hall of Horyuji. The statue of Amida reflects a conscious archaizing, in imitation of the statue of Yakushi Nyorai (Bhaishajya-guru) in the Eastern Room (Higashinoma) of the same hall. It is an important statue when we think about the breadth of experience of Buddhist sculptors of the time. One of the at-

tendant statues, that of Seishi (Mahasthamaprapta), was for a long time considered lost, but recently it was identified as a statue belonging to the Guimet Museum in Paris.

Kosho later made a statue of Kobo Daishi (Kukai) for Toji (1233). This statue too is important as a masterpiece of portrait statuary. It is not known when Kosho died, but it can be assumed it was before the eleventh month of 1237. □

Takeshi Kuno, formerly a director of the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, is now director-general of the Institute of Buddhist Art Research in Tokyo.

The Age of Life

by Nichiko Niwano

*Merely being born physically is not enough to make us human.
Only when we awaken to the realm of eternal life and are
reborn to the realm of the spirit are we truly human.*

The phrase “the age of the heart and mind” first came into use back when Japan was beginning its period of rapid economic growth. It was intended to emphasize the value of the spirit, warning against the materialistic notion that satisfying material needs would lead to happiness. I think people felt the urge to focus on spiritual affluence when they realized that although they had, if anything, an overabundance of material things, something was missing—that they could not gain true satisfaction this way.

The spirit has always been important to people in every age, whether or not they are materially blessed. Enriching the heart and mind is the basis of life for us Buddhists. On reflection, however, we realize that while the dimension of the spirit is important for a fulfilling life, physical as well as mental and emotional health is important and that enriching our living environment is also necessary. Buddhism teaches that body and mind are one. The two are inextricably linked. Buddhism does not hold that the mind is superior to the body.

Buddhism sees the importance of the heart and mind as extending to their vessel, the body, and also to the environment. Therefore I prefer to emphasize the immutable importance of what I call “the age of life”—the importance of living in a way that enhances healthy living—which includes such concepts as “the age of the heart and mind” and “the importance of body and mind.”

In 1998, the sixtieth anniversary of Rissho Kosei-kai, I announced the overall objective of “each and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind.” This reflects the wish of the Buddha and the spirit of Rissho Kosei-kai at the time of its founding. The state of Japan and the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century has brought home to us the importance of cultivating the field of the heart and mind.

In 1996 I visited Israel, where I discussed the Middle East peace process with Muslim, Jewish, and Christian leaders. The following year I visited Jordan in February and Bosnia in September, exchanging views on conflict resolution

and the peace process with many religious leaders. Over the past several years I also had many opportunities to meet and engage in dialogue with Japanese religious leaders.

All this made me aware of the importance of efforts to prepare a conducive climate and enter into various agreements in order to resolve conflict and build peace. At the same time, I was keenly aware that such measures are not the way to a fundamental solution; that since it is human beings who cause conflict and war and human beings who build peace, there can be no world peace, no fundamental resolution of conflict, until and unless peace is built in the hearts of individuals. I also felt the great hope placed in Buddhism and Rissho Kosei-kai. I realized more than ever that Rissho Kosei-kai exists to work for world peace and true personal happiness.

I feel strongly that we who take the Lotus Sutra as our central scripture, as members of a Buddhist organization, are called upon to reveal the essence of Buddhism and demonstrate true Buddhism to the world. In short, our

Nichiko Niwano is president of Rissho Kosei-kai and the Niwano Peace Foundation, a president of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), and vice-chairman of Shinshuren (Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan).

role as members of a Buddhist organization is to cultivate the field of the heart and mind—in other words, enhance our own lives. This, I believe, will lead not only to world peace, but also to peace of mind and true *joie de vivre*. That is why cultivating the field of the heart and mind is our great goal and the basis of living as members of a Buddhist organization and as Buddhists.

Returning to the Original Spirit

The ancient Chinese calendrical cycle of “ten stems and twelve branches” takes sixty years to complete. The sixtieth year, when the cycle returns to its starting point, thus signifies both a return to the “beginner’s spirit” and a fresh start. From the standpoint of a Buddhist, it means returning to the fundamentals of Buddhism and endeavoring anew.

Upon Rissho Kosei-kai’s sixtieth anniversary, then, it was important that we return to the starting point of the organization and, like newborn babies, make a fresh start, engaging anew in endeavor. Most important was that each and every one of us bring the Buddha’s teachings alive in our daily lives and cultivate the field of the heart and mind.

In the first sixty years we devoted ourselves to the objective of “dedicating ourselves to the salvation of each and every person,” the wish of Rissho Kosei-kai at the time of its founding and the wish of the Buddha. “Cultivating the field of the heart and mind” sounds a bit different, but there is no real difference in the underlying wish, since cultivating the field of the heart and mind means being saved.

“Each and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind” strongly connotes looking within ourselves—and, even more strongly, first undergoing a great transformation. “Dedicating ourselves to the salvation of each and every person” expresses the wish to cultivate the field of the heart and mind through the bodhisattva practice, and “each and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind” expresses the wish to devote ourselves to the bodhisattva practice by cultivating the field of the heart and mind. While the emphasis differs slightly, fundamentally the two objectives mean the same thing. Both involve benefiting oneself and benefiting others, which are equally necessary.

Cultivating the field of the heart and mind is important in every age. It is the basis of the Buddha’s teaching. Indeed, I believe it is the basis of all religions. When we turn our eyes to the basis of all religions instead of being preoccupied with a particular religion, an expansive world opens up to us.

Looking Within

When we think through the wish of the Buddha and the spirit of Rissho Kosei-kai at the time of its founding, we can glean a variety of meanings from the aim of “each

and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind.” Merely being born physically is not enough to make us human. Only when we awaken to the realm of eternal life and are reborn to the realm of the spirit are we truly human. Rebirth as true human beings—this is the realm to which religion aspires. Cultivating the field of the heart and mind is indispensable to this rebirth. In other words, to be born again as a human being, to be reborn as a true human being through transformation, is the wish and the goal of “each and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind.”

As I have already suggested, “each and every one of us cultivating the field of the heart and mind” means looking within, looking at one’s own heart and mind, before looking at the external world, the conditions around one. This is the important meaning of “cultivating the field of the heart and mind.” Looking deep within is one of the Buddha’s teachings, and it is basic to the way in which Buddhism builds peace in society and generates individual peace of mind.

Religion, especially Buddhism, emphasizes looking deep within oneself over looking outward and reforming society. By looking within we become aware of the value of life, and that in turn leads to a great transformation, giving us a sense of the oneness of all living things.

Buddhism seeks the fundamental solution to human suffering through each and every person’s looking within and undergoing a change of heart. That is why the Buddha considered meditation important. Changing external conditions is one prerequisite for bringing about peace, but it does not lead to a fundamental solution of the problem of suffering. It is by looking within oneself and recognizing the Truth and the Dharma that the problem of suffering and all other problems are solved and peace is attained.

Behind our founder’s contributions to world peace through interfaith cooperation and his many initiatives in this area lay the fundamental wish that each and every person would establish inner peace. I believe that it was because he himself looked deep within himself that he gained the goodwill of religious leaders around the world and was able to expand Rissho Kosei-kai’s scope of activities so much. In terms of conventional wisdom, looking within oneself is not particularly empowering, but in actuality it is the most empowering thing one can do and is the way to lead people to peace and true happiness.

Cultivating the field of one’s own heart and mind has a great impact on those around one. “Believing oneself, one brings others to believe,” it is taught. The all-important first step is to firmly establish one’s own faith, take refuge in the Buddha, and recognize the Truth and the Dharma.

If the field of the heart and mind is well cultivated, we can enjoy a life that is always replete with joy. Instead of criticizing others, let us first recognize the Truth and the Dharma, look within, and enjoyably walk the Way of the Buddha. This is the basis of everything. □

My Daughter Showed Me How Important a Change of Heart Can Be

by Izumi Ogino

Wearing a rather revealing outfit, and with her hair dyed a bright color, my daughter looks to me for approval as she says tersely but in a slightly sweet tone, “I’m going out to have a good time.” To me, she is absolutely adorable this way. I think of the days past when I forced her to walk a lonely path toward a goal of my choosing, without giving her an opportunity to have her own say in the matter. It is now painfully apparent to me through her words and actions how heavy a burden that was for her to carry.

Two years ago, my daughter’s attitude changed completely when she first strayed from the path I had laid down for her. My training in motherhood started the day I saw that my daughter had lost her goal in life and been struggling.

To study the piano seriously and aim for musical training at the university level—this was the goal I set for my eldest daughter, Kimino, 18, having discussed it with her when she was in the fifth grade in elementary school. At the time, my husband Tomoyasu said, “No need to decide the future now, is there?” However, I continued to believe in Kimino’s potential.

I started piano lessons for Kimino when she was four years old. I am an elementary school teacher and I have always been weak in giving music lessons, so I wanted my daughter to grow up as someone who could play the piano with ease.

Kimino outstripped my expectations and progressed swiftly in her lessons. By the time she was five years old, she had mastered her “Bayern” beginner’s practice book. Somewhere along the line I developed excessive expectations for Kimino, thinking to myself, “This child is special.”

By the time she was in fifth grade, she was taking private piano and voice lessons every Sunday at a music school in our area. In order to keep up with ever more exacting piano instruction, she practiced at home for three hours every day. This was our life.

It was not long after she started high school that Kimino began to talk about quitting her piano lessons. No matter

how hard she practiced, nobody praised her, and she had begun to feel that it was beyond her limitations to reach the level of proficiency her teacher was demanding.

In tears, she sobbed to me, “I never want to see or touch a piano again!” “Then, what’s the point of all your effort up to now? The only way to get better is to practice,” I replied. “I never liked the piano. If I said I wanted to quit, I knew it would make you unhappy, so I have just been putting up with it all this time,” she said. Hearing this, my mind went blank and I could not think of anything to say. “Just to please me . . .,” I thought.

When I realized what feelings my daughter had been keeping bottled up inside for such a long time, I could conjure up neither the desire nor the words to stop her from doing as she wished. From then on, having left the appointed path, she seemed to become lost, and strayed right out of control. She dyed her hair and pierced her ears,

Izumi Ogino is a member of the Fukuchiyama Branch of Rissho Kosei-kai in Kyoto.

and from the second semester on did not go to school very often.

She would stay in her room, and when I saw her curled up with her quilt pulled up over her head, this seemed to communicate to me the suffering she was going through, and every day my heart felt ready to break. On top of this, my husband was temporarily sent to a branch office in Osaka, and I could only consult with him over the telephone.

"Oh, really, is she behaving that way? Nothing we can do, is there?" he would say, but he would call back the next evening to say, "I am so worried I can't get anything done at work." Kimino was also not setting a very good example for her younger brother, Nobuya, 15, and her sister, Tokiko, 12, either.

"The whole family is going down the drain," I thought. A sense of fathomless crisis began to control my mind, and I gradually began to lose confidence in myself as a mother.

To Change Myself

The person who took the trouble to listen to my worries was Ms. Sachiko Yoden, who worked in the administrative office of the school where I teach. One day, when we were talking about the upcoming marriage of Ms. Yoden's daughter, I felt envious and for some reason let everything slip about my problems with Kimino.

Soon afterward, Ms. Yoden visited our home, bringing two members of Rissho Kosei-kai with her. That was the first time I realized that Ms. Yoden was a member. The other two members were mothers of children I had formerly taught in my classes, Ms. Yasuyo Tanaka, chapter leader, and Ms. Nobuyo Aoki, area leader.

On that day, Ms. Tanaka said to me, "Your daughter's problems are all your problems. To deal with these problems you will have to look deeply within yourself and undergo a change of heart. While you are trying to change yourself, don't forget to think about the gratitude you owe your own parents."

"Change myself? Gratitude to my own parents?" I thought. Still unable to grasp what Ms. Tanaka was saying, that evening I looked through the sutra readings they had given me. I came to chapter 3, "Ten Merits," from the Sutra of Innumerable Meanings. The message contained in the chapter struck close to home.

"For those who are attached to their loved ones, they will achieve detachment. . . . For those whose hearts are swelled with pride, they will become able to see the mistakes in their ideas and actions, and become humble."

I felt the thought passing through my mind that "These words are describing my own situation right now." Although I could not plumb the depths of its meaning, the teaching of the Buddha that it is important for people to change their feelings of pride and of being very attached to something sank into my heart.

As I continued to read the sutra, somehow the shape of how I had been up until that time rose up within me and then disappeared. This was the part of me that, without thinking of how Kimino felt about it, had pushed her along with excessive expectations, the part of me that wanted to show I could raise three children by myself even while my husband was stationed away from home.

It was the same story with respect to my own parents. Ever since my husband and I started dating in high school, my parents treated him just as if he were one of their own children and paid for his college education, as his own family could not afford it. This was all to give us a secure future.

I could not help but think over what Ms. Tanaka had said to me earlier. I had been taking my parent's affection for granted, and believed that I had achieved all I had as a result of my own efforts alone. I eventually realized that it was this arrogant state of mind that was at the root of Kimino's problems also.

Seeing Her the Way She Is

From then on, my religious practice began. As if to test me, when Kimino was about to go into her second year of high school she started to stay away from home for several days in a row, staying over at her friends' houses, and was temporarily suspended several times for violating school rules, causing one problem after another, all of which troubled me.

When I did not know what to make of her actions, or felt confused about how I should change in practical terms, Ms. Yoden listened to each problem and gave me advice.

"If the parents don't believe in their own child, who will?" she said, or, "Because Kimino knows how to be thoughtful of other people, she has a lot of friends who will let her stay over." She taught me the importance of looking for and developing my daughter's good side.

When I tried praising her for the things Ms. Yoden had pointed out to me, my daughter answered, "That's right, I always care a lot about my friends," in an unusual display of self-confidence about her good points. I realized that what I lacked was the ability to see and accept my daughter just as she really is, and not just as someone no longer giving an honor-student performance. This was what she had wanted from me all along.

As I thought more about this, I felt as if a straight and strong ray of light were penetrating into my heart. Perhaps my feeling was communicated to Kimino as well, because from this time on she began gradually to open her heart to me. One day, she said to me, "I really do like you, Mom." When I heard her say that, a feeling rose up from the bottom of my heart and filled me with the desire to hug her to me.

I was also given the opportunity to reconsider my approach to the children in the class I taught at school. One boy in the class, whom I'll call A, did not make friends



Ms. Ogino (left) shares her problems with Ms. Yoden, who always is a good advisor.

with his classmates. One day I got a telephone call from his father, who said, "The reason my boy does not go to school is because there is something wrong with the teacher in charge, that is, you."

If I still had the same attitude as I had formerly, undoubtedly I would have thought, "There must also be problems at home." However, this time I was able to hear his criticism calmly, and take it as an opportunity to examine my own approach to the boy.

One day, all the children gathered around the classroom radiator were discussing what they thought about A. "He is so tough, I ran away from him." "I honestly don't want to have anything to do with him, though I know that's not very nice."

One after the other, the children said things that were rather thoughtful of A and what he might be feeling. After this, the atmosphere in the classroom became lighter, and A started to come cheerfully to school.

From this one incident, I learned something from the children, and that was the importance of trying to consider the feelings of the other person.

My Wish for My Daughter

In December of last year, Kimino started insisting that she really could not stand going to school, and eventually she dropped out. I was no longer in doubt about my feel-

ings, because I had made up my mind to believe in my daughter.

Subsequently, Kimino started of her own accord to go to a special school in Osaka where she could earn credits in required subjects needed for high-school graduation. Because she only went there once a week, on the other days she started working part time at an animal hospital in a nearby town.

Since then, Kimino has started to change little by little. At the animal hospital, she sometimes has to witness the death of a pet. On those days, she talks with the owners about what happened, tears welling up in her eyes. At times like this, I can see her clearly as somebody doing her best to follow a path of her own choosing.

Every now and then, her friends encourage me, saying, "Don't worry, Ms. Ogino, we're all behind you." They all know how troubled I was about Kimino in the past. It makes me very glad to think of how my daughter is surrounded by so many wonderful friends.

As a parent, naturally I continue to worry about her, as she is still just starting out on the new path she has chosen. I expect we will come up against a great many obstacles as time goes on. However, no matter what happens, I hope she will be able to carry on keeping her sweet smile, and live as she is. That, as a mother, is my only wish for my daughter. □

The Venerable One Converts the Courtesan

by Hajime Nakamura

This installment describes how the Buddha Sakyamuni rejected the invitation of the Licchavi nobles in order to dine at the house of a successful courtesan, who had been the first to honor him with an invitation. During the meal, his words convert Ambapālī, who then donates her mango grove to the Buddha and the Sangha.

The Licchavis rode in their carriages to the place where the Buddha was staying and received his teaching.

“(18) And the young Licchavis went as far as they could by carriage, and then stepped down from their carriages, and, on foot, went to where the Venerable Master was. Drawing near, they greeted the Venerable Master and sat down to one side. The Venerable Master taught the Licchavis, sitting to one side, by means of a lecture on the Dhamma, instructing them, encouraging them, and delighting them. Then the Licchavis, instructed, encouraged, and delighted by the teachings of the Dhamma, said to the Venerable Master, ‘May the Venerable One consent to eating a meal at our house tomorrow.’ The Venerable Master told them, ‘I have already, Licchavis, accepted an invitation from the courtesan Ambapālī to eat at her house tomorrow.’ Then the Licchavis snapped their fingers and said, ‘Ah, we have been beaten by a woman! Ah, we have been outwitted by a woman!’ Then the Licchavis, having delighted in and felt gratitude for the Venerable Master’s instruction, rose from their seats, paid their respects to the Venerable Master, circled around him to the right, and departed.” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 18)

The Sanskrit recension (Ernst Waldschmidt, *Das Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, p. 184) says that the Buddha instructed the Licchavis, in virtually the same words as the Pāli text. The Yu-hsing-ching describes the discourse in detail.

The episode shows that the Buddha followed current social norms in honoring the first invitation. The custom of circling the master to the right three times as a sign of respect was practiced also in Jainism; a believer “circled

[Mahāvira] three times to the right, greeting him, showing him respect, . . . honoring him” (Uvāsaga-dasāo, I, 10).

Ambapālī’s Invitation

“(19) And Ambapālī, having prepared during the night at her home fine-tasting food [hard food] and soups [soft food], had it announced to the Venerable Master, ‘It is time, Venerable One. Your meal is ready.’ In the early morning, the Venerable Master put on his inner robe, took up his outer robe and alms-bowl and went, together with his *bhikkhus*, to the house of the courtesan Ambapālī. When he arrived, he sat down in the place prepared for him. Then the courtesan Ambapālī approached the place where the Venerable Master was sitting, at the head of his following of *bhikkhus*, and with her own hands served delicious food, both hard and soft, to the Venerable Master until he had had his fill. When [she saw] that the Venerable Master had finished and had washed his bowl and his hands, she took out a stool and sat down to one side.” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 19)

This scene is common throughout the Buddhist countries of South Asia. In those places people use their hands, rather than implements, to eat, and so it is imperative that the hands be washed after each meal. Like modern Zen priests in Japan, the *bhikkhus* would drink the water they had used for washing their bowl.

“[19 *continued*] The courtesan Ambapālī, seated to one side, said to the Venerable Master, ‘Venerable One, I would like to donate my park to the *bhikkhus* and the Buddha at their head.’ The Venerable Master accepted the park. Then the Venerable Master, having taught, instructed, encouraged, and delighted her concerning the Dhamma by religious discourse, rose from his seat and departed.” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 19)

Since the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Sarvāstivādin texts do not mention that Ambapālī donated her park to Sakyamuni, this incident was added later. Such a donation could

The late Hajime Nakamura, an authority on Indian philosophy, was president of the Eastern Institute in Tokyo and a professor emeritus of the University of Tokyo at the time of his death in October 1999. This ongoing series is a translation of Gotama Buddha, vol. 2, Tokyo, Shunjūsha, 1992.

be accepted to build a dwelling or for financial gain, but the early Buddhists had no thought of such things, as is made clear in the Suttanipāṭa and the Theragāthā. The above legend represents the ideas of *bhikkhus* of later times who wished to own land.

“(20) Next the Venerable Master, while staying at Ambapālī’s grove in Vesālī, gave a large number of discourses concerning the Dhamma. ‘Such and such are the precepts and regulations. Such and such is concentration. Such and such is wisdom. Concentration perfected with the precepts brings a great result, great merit. Wisdom nurtured with concentration brings a great result, great merit. A mind nurtured with wisdom is completely liberated from all stain—the stain of the desires, the stain of becoming, the stain of false views, and the stain of ignorance.’” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, II, 20)

It is not clear whether the Buddha gave a special discourse for the sake of Ambapālī or not. The description here follows standardized lines. The Yu-hsing-ching, however, says that Āmrapālī (Pāli, Ambapālī) received the three refuges and the five precepts at this time.

“[Āmrapālī] gradually drew near to where the Buddha was, and having prostrated herself at his feet, withdrew to one side. At that time the World-honored One spoke in a graduated fashion, instructing and benefiting her. Hearing the Buddha’s discourse, she felt great delight and said to the Buddha, ‘From this day forth I take refuge in the three objects of veneration. I beg of you to listen and grant my plea. I will become an *upāsikā* within the True Dharma, and for as long as I live, I will not kill, steal, have illicit sexual relations, tell lies, or take intoxicants.’”

There is a great contradiction in the above passage. A courtesan, by the very nature of her work, cannot follow the precept regarding sexual relations; to do so she would have to give up that calling. Similarly, it would be very hard for a courtesan not to drink intoxicants. This section is undoubtedly a later addition. The words were applied to Ambapālī’s situation at some future time when the form of the five precepts had become fixed. It is highly unlikely that Ambapālī followed the five precepts, although she had taken refuge in the Buddha. This means that it is possible for someone to be a Buddhist without necessarily keeping the lay precepts; a woman like Ambapālī, working as a prostitute or something similar, could still accept the Buddhist faith. Buddhism gives direction to behavior, encouraging Buddhists to act for others and to create good. Directions for leading one’s life, like the five precepts, for example, give form to this direction as it appears in behavior.

Whereas the Pāli and Sanskrit texts call Āmrapālī a courtesan (*gaṇikā*), the Yu-hsing-ching calls her a prostitute and the P’i-nai-yeh yao-shih (fasc. 6 and 7) merely refer to her as a married woman (*fu-jen*). Traditional Chinese (or Confucian) morality made the translators loath to translate *gaṇikā* directly. The Tibetan translation ex-

hibits similar inhibitions; it calls her the “woman who protects the mango [grove] (*amra-skyon ma*).”

It is said that in later years Āmrapālī realized the emptiness of beauty and became ordained. Her acknowledgment of this fact can be seen in a number of verses in the Therīgāthā (252–70).

The first half of the above-mentioned passage in the Yu-hsing-ching gives a detailed explanation of the “five jewels.” This can be found nowhere in the Pāli text. The jewels are said to be (1) the Tathāgata, (2) one who expounds the Tathāgata’s teachings, (3) one who has faith in and understanding of the Tathāgata’s teachings, (4) one who practices and perfects the Dharma which the Tathāgata teaches, and (5) one who expresses gratitude when saved by another. It is of interest that the idea of expressing gratitude should appear here. The second half of the same passage encourages lay believers to make donations to the Saṅgha. These verses, too, which suggest “erecting stupas and building monasteries,” are not to be found in the Pāli and were a later accretion.

It is highly significant that Gotama converted the courtesan. His teaching was the same, whether directed at a king or a courtesan. In content it may have differed depending upon the listener, but in essence it was always the same, for Gotama’s purpose was to ease the suffering of all people. Gotama taught all; he did not select certain people. Nor did he force his teachings on others. If people came to him seeking relief from their suffering, he would teach; his teaching work arose from a particular occasion and cause. This attitude remained a basic characteristic of Buddhism in later times as well.

Āmrapālī had wealth greater than most, and even possessed land. That a courtesan could amass such wealth could only happen in a society with a developed money economy. It is clear that at that time and in that place, at least, a few courtesans had high social status. Nevertheless, as an individual she was troubled spiritually and therefore came to seek the advice of the Buddha. Āmrapālī and the Buddha were acquaintances for only two days. For the courtesan, however, those two days had a decisive meaning in her life, as is obvious from her verses in the Therīgāthā.

Ambapālī’s taking refuge in the Buddha was given a romantic nuance by later Buddhist artists and craftsmen. A relief from the Sikri Stupa (now in the Lahore Museum), dating from the second century, shows Ambapālī donating the mango grove to the Buddha. Mango leaves and blossoms form a canopy over the Buddha’s head, and standing on either side of him are a woman holding a water flask and a woman holding a robe, both representing Ambapālī. The figure beyond the woman on the left is a beardless Vajradhara, and the two figures in the upper left, with the palms of their hands together, are considered to be deities making offerings.

To be continued

The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 5

The Parable of the Herbs (3)

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

TEXT Know, Kashyapa! / It is like a great cloud / Rising above the world, / Covering all things everywhere, / A beneficent cloud full of moisture; / Flashes of lightning shine and glint, / The voice of thunder vibrates afar, / Bringing gladness and ease to all. / The sun's rays are veiled, / And the earth is cooled; / The cloud lowers and spreads / As if it might be caught and gathered;

COMMENTARY This simile is a skillful expression of the essence and workings of the Buddha's teaching.

- A great cloud rising above the world, covering all things everywhere. We should note the phrase "rising above the world." Just as a cloud is formed from vapor from the land that has risen into the sky, so the Buddha's teaching originated in the world. It did not descend from some invisible being like a god in heaven but was taught by Shakyamuni, a human being, to relieve human unhappiness and distress. It is therefore the teaching of the people, by the people, and for the people. This is the first characteristic of the Buddha Law.

Next, the Buddha Law covers "all things everywhere"; it is not the exclusive property of a particular race or class of people. It covers all, even those who have no knowledge of the Buddha's teaching. Yes, even those who know nothing about it receive its benefits. Yet because they know nothing of the teaching they are unaware of its value and so are unable to experience perfect human happiness. This is the second characteristic of the Buddha Law.

All people are burdened with some pain and anguish. Like the trees and grasses that await rain after a drought, they hope for something to quench their spiritual thirst. Though this desire may not be apparent on the surface of the mind, all people without exception seek in the depths of the heart to satisfy it. That which satisfies the heart's desire is the Buddha's teaching, which is likened to "a beneficent cloud." We must give deep thought to this point, for the Buddha's teaching, that is, true wisdom, quenches the heart's thirst. Even through a religious faith

based on mere emotion we can feel refreshed and slake our spiritual thirst temporarily; but being far from perfect, it cannot last long. It is the wisdom that derives from knowledge of the truth that eases spiritual pain forever. This is the third characteristic of the Buddha Law.

Because the Buddha's teaching has such great characteristics, the closer we approach it and the deeper we enter it, the more happiness and ease of spiritual thirst it gives us. This progression is apparent in the words of the text. First, "flashes of lightning shine and glint, the voice of thunder vibrates afar, bringing gladness and ease to all." Even those who have not yet approached the Buddha Law, that is, those who know only that there is such a teaching, can experience a kind of expectant joy, just as when lightning flashes amid dense clouds and thunder is heard rumbling in the distance, indescribable joy and pleasure well up in the hearts of those suffering from drought. Then "the sun's rays are veiled, and the earth is cooled," just as even people who have touched only the surface of the Buddha Law can feel its merits. Just as the heavy clouds ameliorate the heat of a long spell of dry weather, so people experience the cooling touch of a breeze in their hearts, and this is enough to ease their suffering considerably. Next, "the cloud lowers and spreads as if it might be caught and gathered." Since the rain cloud is spreading over the whole sky and hanging low, it feels as if it could be gripped in the hand. In brief, the Buddha Law is now felt to be still closer to people; now liberation is right before them and they wait in eager anticipation of rain.

TEXT Its rain everywhere equally / Descends on all sides, / Streaming and pouring without stint, / Enriching all the land. / On mountains, by rivers, in steep valleys, / In hidden recesses, there grow / The plants, trees, and herbs; / Trees, big or small, / The shoots of all the ripening grain, / Sugar cane and grapevine, / All these by the rain are fertilized / And abundantly enriched. / The dry ground is all soaked, / And herbs and trees flourish together. /

From the one water which / Issued from that cloud, / Plants, trees, thickets, forests, / According to their need, receive moisture.

COMMENTARY Since the connotation of this passage has already been discussed, I will explain only the meaning of the following phrase:

- *According to their need.* Trees and other plants receive the moisture of rain according to their own nature, including size. Similarly, human beings accept the Buddha Law according to their own nature. This is the reason for individual differences in the manner of receiving and understanding the Buddha Law.

TEXT All the trees, / Superior, middle, inferior, all, / Each according to its size, / Grow and develop / Roots, stalks, branches, and leaves, / Blossoms and fruits in their brilliant colors; / By the pouring of the one rain, / All become fresh and glossy. / Just as their bodies, forms, / And natures are divided into great and small, / So the enriching [rain], though one and the same, / Yet makes each flourish. In the same manner the Buddha also / Appears in the world, / Like a great cloud / Universally covering all things; / And having appeared in the world, / He, for the sake of all living beings, / Discriminates and proclaims / The real [aspect] of all the laws.

COMMENTARY *Bodies, forms, and natures.* “Bodies” here refers to all phenomena, from plants and trees to human beings, but does not refer to phenomena as fixed, permanent, ontological substances.

TEXT The great holy World-honored One / Among the gods and men / And all the other beings / Proclaims this, saying: / ‘I am the Tathagata, / The most honored among men; / I appear in the world / Just like a great cloud, / To pour enrichment on all / Parched living beings, / To free them all from misery / And so attain the joy of peace, / Joy in the world, / And the joy of nirvana.

COMMENTARY *The great holy World-honored One.* “Holy” is an epithet used for one who has attained the spiritual state of not being swayed by circumstances. Its opposite is “ordinary.”

- *The Tathagata.* The Sanskrit *tathagata* is a compound of *tatha-agata* (thus come) or *tatha-gata* (thus gone), and thus tathagata indicates one who has come from Absolute Truth. Absolute Truth (or Thusness) is the buddha-nature. Since all human beings are endowed with the buddha-nature, we too are *originally* those who have come from Absolute Truth, that is, *tathagatas*. “Living beings are originally buddhas,” as treatises on sutras often state. What is the difference then between the Buddha and us? It is a question of whether we are enlightened. One who realizes

clearly the truth, perfectly making it part of oneself and practicing it—one who embodies the truth—is the Buddha, the Tathagata. As long as we clearly understand the difference, we will not mistakenly assume that we in our present state, with our defiled physical bodies, are buddhas. At the same time, we understand that we can become buddhas in our present state if we are enlightened. This gives us the courage to pursue our quest.

- *The joy of peace.* This indicates the happiness that derives from peace of mind. If we have no more swings of emotion as a result of being swayed by phenomenal change and if our minds always remain calm and peaceful whatever changes occur in our circumstances, we are constantly happy. The Buddha’s teaching guides all people to this mental state.

- *Joy in the world.* This is worldly happiness. It is obvious that if our minds follow the truth and gain peace and calmness, our bodies and surroundings also become comfortable in response, in accordance with the principle of the oneness of body and mind, or the law of the nonduality of matter and mind. The truth of worldly benefits is here clearly declared in Shakyamuni’s own words.

- *The joy of nirvana.* We have touched on nirvana many times. The highest nirvana is not to transcend all phenomena (all things) but to become a part of them, that is, to make friends of them. This is to join in the great harmony of all things and to bring all to live correctly while living correctly oneself. This state of utter freedom is true nirvana, and the Buddha’s teaching is the great profound teaching that helps all that have life arrive at that state.

TEXT Gods, men, and all! / With all your mind hearken to me. / Come all of you here / And behold the peerless honored one. / I am the World-honored One, / Who cannot be equaled. / To give peace to all living beings / I appear in the world, / And for the hosts of the living / Preach the Law, pure as sweet dew:

COMMENTARY *Come all of you here and behold the peerless honored one. I am the World-honored One, who cannot be equaled.* This may seem to our modern minds uncomfortably like excessive self-praise. We must read more deeply. It is in fact an urgent call to us to observe the truth of that revered existence we call buddhahood. It is a dignified declaration that only a being like Shakyamuni can make. Such phrases appear often in the sutras. We should never interpret them in ordinary terms, but understand them as exclamations that emanate from the Buddha’s utter compassion in aspiring to bring us to comprehend the nature of his existence.

- *The Law, pure as sweet dew.* Sweet dew (literally “nectar,” from the Sanskrit *amrita*) was the elixir of immortality and youth of the Indian gods. Since it was considered an excellent medicine, it was widely used as a metaphor

for the Buddha Law, for it well symbolizes the Buddha's teaching, which is sweet and mellow, not bitter or hard to swallow. The Law is called "pure" because purity aptly expresses its nature. "Pure" includes not only the idea of undefiled but also that of beauty. Purity often connotes teachings that are cold and forbidding. Buddhism, though, while pure, is also warm, endearing, and beautiful. Let us carefully consider the essence and character of Buddhism expressed in this phrase.

TEXT The one and only Law / Of emancipation and nirvana.' / With one transcendent voice / I proclaim this meaning, / Constantly taking the Great Vehicle / As my subject.

COMMENTARY *With one transcendent voice.* Here "transcendent voice" does not denote excellent words, for the teachings are various and diverse. "One transcendent voice" means a specific subject, wonderful and most important, which is the mental state of emancipation and nirvana. The Buddha's teaching is always directed to the way to attain that state, though expressed in different forms according to the person and the situation ("I proclaim this meaning.")

• *Constantly taking the Great Vehicle as my subject.* It is easier to understand this if we read it as meaning "always creating the cause and condition of reaching the Great Vehicle (Mahayana) teachings." The Buddha proclaims the various teachings of skillful means as a starting point (cause) and a foothold (condition) for us eventually to reach the Great Vehicle. In other words, he compassionately produces the cause and condition for us to arrive at the Mahayana teachings.

TEXT I look upon all [living beings] / Everywhere [with] equal [eyes], / Without distinction of persons, / Or mind of love or hate. / I have no predilections / Nor limitations [or partiality]; / Ever to all [beings] / I preach the Law equally; / As [I preach] to one person, / So [I preach] to all.

COMMENTARY *Nor limitations [or partiality].* These words refer to limitations or barriers. The Buddha has unlimited compassion for all people, and he proclaims his teaching to all, without any barrier. As ordinary people, we are apt to be grudging in our affection, bestowing it only on some people. We must try to abolish all such barriers in our attitudes to others. Whether we can do so is a measure of our greatness as human beings. A true teacher teaches all with the same affection, whether they are talented or poor at schoolwork. Similarly, a great statesman has the same concern for other regions and for the country as a whole as he has for his own constituency.

How can we eliminate discrimination toward others and give freely of our affection and concern? The easiest

way is to think of the Buddha in all that we do, asking ourselves what the Buddha would do in a particular situation. If we are constantly mindful of this, we will find ourselves being pulled in the right direction and will naturally emulate the Buddha. This is his great virtue. To the extent that we can exclude cold reasoning and just think of the Buddha, we and our society will be transformed beyond all imagining.

TEXT Constantly I proclaim the Law, / Never occupied with aught else; / Going or coming, sitting or standing, / I never weary of / Pouring it abundantly upon the world, / Like the rain enriching universally.

COMMENTARY *Never occupied with aught else.* The Buddha does not think about anything but expounding the Dharma to save all living beings. This is something we must study and emulate. There is no doubt that we can achieve great results when we are able to concentrate our minds on one thing, like the Buddha. It is so easy for people today to be preoccupied with other things. We should reflect upon ourselves in this regard.

• *Going or coming, sitting or standing.* This phrase means "at all times."

TEXT Honored and humble, high and low, / Lawkeepers and lawbreakers, / Those of perfect character / And those of imperfect, / Orthodox and heterodox, / Quick-witted and dull-witted, / [With] equal [mind] I rain the rain of the Law / Unwearingly.

COMMENTARY Here we see the great compassion of the Buddha. Those who have practiced his teaching to some extent can preach the Law irrespective of the social standing or position of their listeners, but it is far more difficult to preach the Law "with equal mind" to those who are corrupt or uncouth and to those who believe in a mistaken way of thought. "Lawbreakers" are those who ignore the Buddha's admonitions, or precepts, and those who are of loose morals. The Buddha leads these people, and those who will not do as they are told, with the same compassion that he extends to those who keep the precepts. "Those of imperfect [character]" are those who lack decorum; for example, they may not bow before the Buddha or may sit with their legs outstretched toward him. Even to those people the Buddha proclaims his teaching with warm compassion, in exactly the same way as he does to those whose behavior is impeccable. "Heterodox" here refers to those who are ensnared by false views. They look disbelieving when hearing the Buddha's teaching and are defiant. The Buddha teaches such people gently, in the same way that he teaches those of "orthodox" (right) views. A "dull-witted" person is weak in understanding and cannot comprehend things however much he or she

is taught. The Buddha, though, patiently teaches dull-witted people with the same affection that he gives the intelligent. That the Buddha is able to do this is a cause of enormous gratitude. When we realize that this is so, we can pursue our quest with renewed courage. Since the Buddha's rain of relief falls equally on all of us, we can realize, from the words in this passage, that we can definitely recover from our distress, whatever our capacity, nature, and desire. Let us cast aside the past, make a fresh start, and then, with a frank, open mind, meditate deeply on the Buddha's compassion. A new confidence will be sure to well up within us, a confidence that will become a steppingstone to spiritual progress.

TEXT All living beings / On hearing my Law, / According to their receptive powers, / [Find their] abode in their several places; / Some dwell [amongst] gods or men / Or holy wheel-rolling kings, / Or Sakra, Brahma, or other kings; / These are [like] smaller herbs.

COMMENTARY *Holy wheel-rolling kings.* In ancient India, legend had it that great virtuous kings were endowed with jeweled wheels by the gods. When they rolled these wheels, it was said, their enemies vanished and they could conquer all. Such great kings were called "holy wheel-rolling kings." The epithet "holy" is important; even if they were powerful enough to conquer the entire world, they could not be holy wheel-rolling kings if they were not of high virtue.

• *Sakra, Brahma.* Sakra (Indra) and Brahma were the highest deities in the ancient Indian pantheon. They entered Buddhism as protective deities. We should note that the passage states that even people who can associate with the holy wheel-rolling kings of the *saha* world or with the supreme gods in the realms of heaven are no more than "smaller herbs," though normally they would be regarded as the highest beings. Fine though they may be, they are "smaller" than those to be discussed below. Here Shakyamuni states clearly that true human value lies in spiritual achievement, and that this value depends upon the degree of enlightenment.

TEXT [Those who] know the faultless Law / [And are] able to attain nirvana, / [Who] cultivate the six transcendent [faculties] / And obtain the three clear [views], / Who dwell alone in mountain forests, / Ever practicing meditation, / And obtain pratyekabuddhahood— / These are the larger herbs.

COMMENTARY *The faultless Law.* To be faultless is to be pure and undefiled. "The faultless Law" here indicates the law of dependent origination, a basis of Buddhism. This is the teaching that the phenomenal appearance of all things arises as the result of causes and conditions and

that when these causes and conditions disappear, the phenomena also disappear. Since our spiritual suffering arises from the delusion that things have lasting, real existence, if we realize that they are but temporary, impermanent phenomena and cease to be attached to them, our distress and suffering are sure to disappear. If we can truly learn this law of dependent origination that the Buddha taught, our minds will always be calm and peaceful. This is the mental state of the Hinayana nirvana, and one who has reached this state (or is learning the Buddha Dharma in pursuit of this goal) is called a shravaka.

• *The six transcendent [faculties].* The first transcendent faculty is the ability to see what is invisible to ordinary people; the second, the ability to hear that which is inaudible to ordinary people; the third, the ability to read all minds; the fourth, the ability to perceive all one's own and others' earlier lives; the fifth, the ability to move anywhere with great speed and to do anything at will; and the sixth, the ability to remove delusions from the minds of others. (For details, see the September/October 1996 issue.)

• *The three clear [views].* These are the first, fourth, and sixth of the six transcendent faculties. A clear view is a more advanced state than a transcendent faculty.

• *Pratyekabuddhahood.* This refers to the realization of those who have realized the truth through the practice of meditation, that is, through their personal spiritual practice. Those who have attained this spiritual state (or are practicing to attain it) are called pratyekabuddhas.

TEXT Those who seek the World-honored One, / [Resolving,] 'We will become buddhas,' / And practice zeal and meditation— / These are the superior herbs.

COMMENTARY *Seek the World-honored One.* This phrase of the Chinese text can be read as meaning "seek the place of the World-honored One." Since "World-honored One" is an epithet of the Buddha, "the place" means "buddhahood."

• *We will become buddhas.* This phrase expresses strong determination to attain buddhahood. The person who has such determination and endeavors with all his or her might in practice is of high value as a human being and thus is a "superior herb."

TEXT And these Buddha sons / Who single-mindedly [walk] the Buddha Way, / Ever practicing compassion, / Assured that they will become buddhas / Certainly and without doubt— / These are named shrubs.

COMMENTARY *Buddha sons.* This of course refers not to the Buddha's actual children but to those who have inherited his teaching. In a way, all who are true heirs to his teaching can be considered kin, for they realize their oneness with the Buddha (the Eternal Original Buddha).

Originally the Buddha and we are not separate existences; we are one with the Eternal Original Buddha, living through him. In this sense he is our parent.

The Buddha says that such people can be likened to “shrubs,” a stage above the “superior herbs.” They are still small, because they are primarily concerned with benefiting themselves rather than others. Though they are “ever practicing compassion,” there is a considerable difference in their compassionate acts and those of the people named “trees” in the following passage.

TEXT The firmly settled in the transcendent [faculties],
/ Who roll the unretreating wheel / And save infinite hun-
dred / Thousand kotis of the living, / Such bodhisattvas as
these / Are named trees.

COMMENTARY The same compassionate practice differs greatly in quality depending on whether it actually liberates people from their immediate suffering and helps

them remove suffering from the depths of the mind through instruction by means of the Buddha Law. Someone with tuberculosis who suffers from fever, a cough, and phlegm can gain temporary relief from those symptoms with medicine, but the root causes of the disease are not affected and the person will not return to full health. Compassionate acts that provide temporary relief from fever and coughing are necessary, but they do not truly help unless they are able to restore the person to health. The great way that leads people to liberation helps them reestablish the mind through the truth. A person who can do this is of the highest human value, a “tree.” All of us can become trees, and indeed are walking that path already. Buoyed by confidence and pride in this fact, we should continue our spiritual endeavors.

To be continued

In this series, passages in the **TEXT** sections are quoted from *The Threefold Lotus Sutra*, Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Company, 1975.

Detail from a fragment of a picture scroll depicting the pilgrimage of the Bodhisattva Good Treasures (Jpn., Zenzai), described in the Avatamsaka (Flower Garland) Sutra. He visits fifty-three teachers in search of the Dharma. Painted in colors on paper in the twelfth century. Important Cultural Property. Tokyo National Museum.

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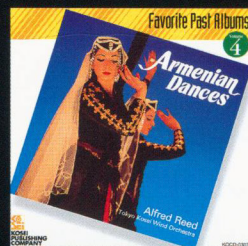
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