

FOR LIVING BUDDHISM AND INTERFAITH DIALOGUE

DHARMA WORLD

JULY/AUG. 2003 Vol. 30

*Recipient of the 20th
Niwano Peace Prize,
Dr. Priscilla Elworthy,
director of the Oxford
Research Group*



NIWANO
PEACE FOUNDATION

Buddhist Basics Explained for All

ESSENTIALS OF BUDDHISM

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The author of these readable, enlightening guides is the late KOGEN MIZUNO, Litt.D., a renowned authority on early Buddhism and Pali texts. He was president of Komazawa University, where he also taught Buddhology.

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Cover photo: On May 8, at a ceremony in Tokyo, the Niwano Peace Foundation presented the 20th Niwano Peace Prize to Dr. Priscilla Elworthy, director of the Oxford Research Group (ORG), a non-governmental organization in the United Kingdom that studies nuclear issues and is a well-known authority on nuclear disarmament and peace strategies. Dr. Elworthy delivered an acceptance speech entitled "Iraq, War, and Peace."

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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Religions Must Work Together for Peace

Because the war in Iraq ended sooner than had been expected, people around the world were able to heave a collective sigh of relief. While watching the progress of the war on television, I thought that at one time in a war situation the enemy was directly in front of a soldier. The person that one was about to kill was also actually about to kill one. Then later, modern warfare techniques changed that, so these days the soldier does not physically see the enemy. One just presses a button and fires a missile, or simply drops a bomb. In such a case, one does not have to witness the agony of the fallen enemy. Indeed, the situation is superbly expressed in the slogan, "Fire and forget."

Everything undergoes change. This is an unalterable truth. In this ever-changing world, the method of international politics seems to be to transform the status quo into a permanently fixed entity, and then to enter into various types of agreements and conventions in order to maintain the peace. But all social and historical conditions are constantly changing, so I feel it is somewhat unnatural to try to transform them into something fixed and conventional. This is where the bringing about of trust by religionists who go beyond the conventional is so important.

Because the issue of peace involves the issue of the survival of the human race, we cannot think of religious activities as completely separate from it. As the saying goes, "You cannot catch a bird with only a single mesh." Obviously, you cannot catch a bird unless you first have a net made up of many meshes.

In the same way, it is impossible to save all the people of the world with a single religion. All the existing religions need to cooperate and should work together toward bringing about trust and the elimination of factors that are obstructing peace. An activity that does not stand on a religious foundation will not have any sense of lasting value, and will become ineffective. The objects of devotion and the beliefs of the various religions differ, their

rituals and ceremonies differ, and their methods of practice differ. However, increasing the degree of happiness they can bring to the people of the world is the common goal of religionists; indeed, it is their sole mission.

One reason that Founder Niwano established the Niwano Peace Prize was to encourage religionists who were working for peace free from narrow sectarian boundaries, in the hope that they might not be discouraged and continue genuine endeavors on the basis of their respective religious faiths.

After Founder Niwano established the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), a certain woman reporter—I believe it was when he was visiting Belgium—asked him this question: "Rev. Niwano, you have established the WCRP and are engaged in its activities, but do you really believe this will bring about peace in the world?"

Founder Niwano answered very simply: "As you can imagine, the task is very difficult. For that reason especially, I am devoting myself to the cause with all my heart."

This year, the recipient of the 20th Niwano Peace Prize is a person who devotes herself completely to a mission that is equally difficult to achieve—Dr. Priscilla Elworthy, a member of the Society of Friends who works unceasingly to find a resolution to the threat of nuclear weapons. It is my sincere hope that the prize will encourage many more people to follow in the footsteps of Dr. Elworthy and the Oxford Research Group in research and activities leading to nonviolent approaches to solving nuclear-related issues, as well as to the abolition of all nuclear weapons. □



Kinzo Takemura

We would like to share readers' thoughts and experiences of faith and also welcome your comments on the contents of this magazine. We would also appreciate your reports on recent events of interreligious collaboration in which you took part. All letters are subject to editing. Letters can be forwarded to us by regular mail, fax, or e-mail. Our mailing address, fax number, and e-mail address are:

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Walking the Buddha Way in Everyday Life

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.

Birds hatch their young from eggs and thus are said to be oviparous. Human beings and other mammals, however, are viviparous, bringing forth young that have developed within the mother's body. We often hear, though, that people can find their true selves only by breaking out of their shells, so we get the feeling that human beings, too, are oviparous, at least metaphorically. Many people are trapped inside their own shells.

We find a similar concept in the New Testament: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, 'Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?'" (John 3:1-4)

A passage comparable to Christ's words appears in chapter 3 of the Lotus Sutra, "A Parable": "Today I indeed know that I am really a son of the Buddha, born from the mouth of the Buddha, evolved from the Dharma, and have gained a share of the Buddha Dharma." Hearing the Dharma spoken from the mouth of the Buddha changes one's view of life and the world. To put it more plainly, the expression "born from the mouth of the Buddha" depicts the complete change that comes over one's viewpoint and way of thinking, as if one were undergoing a real rebirth. Through such a rebirth, each person can receive the merits of the Dharma to the best of his or her ability.

Human beings are born first from their mothers. They are born a second time through hearing the Buddha Dharma. This is what is meant by breaking one's shell and

Founder Niwano always enjoyed sharing the Dharma with members and other visitors to Rissho Kosei-kai headquarters.

being reborn. Each person hears and accepts the Buddha Dharma according to his or her ability, thus gaining a share of it. To illustrate this idea with a metaphor, a carrot will always gain its share in accordance with the carrot's nature; a radish will always do likewise, in conformity with the radish's nature. A carrot cannot turn into the radish after hearing the Dharma. In other words, gaining a share of the Buddha Dharma does not change one's fundamental essence; rather, it means becoming the best person possible in accordance with one's individual capacity and circumstances. Becoming the best person possible also depends on the skill of those who have already gained a share of the Buddha Dharma and whose mission it is to cultivate the fields of other people's hearts and minds.

Accepting Everything

Let us imagine that a small child has a stomachache. As the pain gradually eases, the child feels hungry and reaches

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.

for food. If he were to eat, however, the pain would only return, so the child's parents take away the food, however sorry they feel for the child. The parents do this for the good of the child, even though the child, not realizing that, may end up crying and saying things to hurt the parents' feelings. This is not something that parents can laugh about. The same thing happens in our religious lives. When a setback occurs we rail at the gods and the buddhas, asking why they let it happen or why we alone have been singled out.

When we worship the gods and the buddhas we chant, "We earnestly ask you to arrange everything for us." By this we mean that we will accept everything the Buddha has in store for us, whether it is good or bad. We cannot decline something just because it does not suit us.

It is a mistake to divide things into good and bad. Even if what we see before us seems not to be good for us, we must understand it in a larger context, as a necessary arrangement of the gods and the buddhas. If we look only at what is before our eyes and try to escape things that do not suit us, we are just like the child with a stomachache.

In the Hands of the Gods and the Buddhas

I read in a magazine article that when the author Ayako Sono regained her sight as the result of an operation, she was overjoyed. Writing to a priest at the Vatican, she said something along the lines of "I have regained my sight miraculously through an operation." In reply the priest said, "You said that it is a miracle that you are now able to see, but it would be equally miraculous to be blind." This statement shows us that both good and bad are arranged by God.

I hope that we can all become people of faith who can say from the bottom of our hearts that we are in the hands of the gods and the buddhas. Such absolute faith is called "the realm of great peace."

It is appropriate to pray to the gods and the buddhas to grant our personal desires, isn't it? We pray, "Please hear this wish" or "Please help us with this problem." Of course there are various ways in which we may transfer merit to others: by taking refuge in the Three Treasures, by venerating our ancestors, or by praying for world peace. These are all things we should do, but aren't there also times when each of us wants to plead only for our own selfish desire?

Since the gods and the buddhas cannot lie, they do not grant all our prayers or answer every personal wish. Rather, we must believe in them from the bottom of our hearts and then rely on them for everything, accepting whatever they arrange. This is true prayer.

Winning without Shouting

These days some people complain about not receiving strict guidance from their instructors or supervisors. They are probably nostalgic about the severe training they ex-

perienced in the past. I spoke about this issue with Junzo Sekine, manager of the Yakult Swallows baseball team. He said, "If all it took to win was for me to look grim and to shout, I'd do it, but . . ." His implication is very true.

Some Rissho Kosei-kai branch heads have asked me, "Is it best to be strict in order truly to save people?" I answer, "There is no need at all to speak severely. What you should tell people is that if they act in a certain way things will be better; that is, you have to speak the truth."

A group does not become stronger as a result of its members' being told off in a loud voice. If members worry only about losing face or other selfish matters, taking refuge in their own desires rather than in the Three Treasures, the group will not come together, however much its members are shouted at. A gathering where people do not take refuge in the Three Treasures is not the Sangha, but a mob. It has only the outward form of the Sangha, not the reality.

Like the Lotus Flower

When we have to decide what we want to be—either a doctor or an architect, for example—we have to consider many things, such as our ability to do the job and our suitability for it.

Do we also have to bear such questions in mind when we decide to walk the Buddha Way? If we choose to embark on a spiritual journey and change our lives completely—closing up our house, becoming ordained, or undertaking ascetic practices in the mountains—then we may certainly have to think hard and deeply. However, when we set out on the Buddha Way as lay people, we do not have to live any special sort of life. Undertaking the Buddha Way is nothing more than discovering the true meaning of life—in the here and now, and in our occupations—and seeking to live in a fulfilled and content way. Trying to learn how to live truly rouses the mind to supreme enlightenment, and continuing to make efforts is itself the Buddha Way.

Seeking the Way does not mean looking for it somewhere else; it means realizing that our ordinary, everyday lives themselves are the practice of the Buddha Way. In other words, everything in our daily lives reflects the Buddha Dharma. The essence of lay Buddhism is an awareness that you are like the lotus flower, which grows in the mud but whose petals, spread out close to the surface of the dirty water, are not stained in any way.

Buddhism does not mean preaching from on high. The Zen master Dogen encourages us by saying, "Though he may appear humble, a person who has realized the Bodhi-mind is already the teacher of all human beings." As we bring up our children and interact with other parents, or gain experience in the workplace, we continually seek the happiness of those around us, while learning from one another. As long as we do not lose this mindset, we will already be, wherever we are, teachers of all human beings. □

Niwano Peace Prize Awarded to Dr. Priscilla Elworthy

On May 8, at a ceremony in Tokyo, the Niwano Peace Foundation presented the 20th Niwano Peace Prize to Dr. Priscilla Elworthy, director of the Oxford Research Group (ORG). The ORG is a nongovernmental organization in the United Kingdom that studies nuclear issues and is a well-known authority on nuclear disarmament and peace strategies. Basing its decision upon the recommendations of some 1,000 knowledgeable people from 125 countries around the world, a committee of seven—composed of representatives of various faiths, including Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam—deliberated in a spirit of strict fairness before coming to their decision.

Some 200 people participated, including representatives of Japan's religious circles and reporters from Japan's mass media. Among the invited guests were nine distinguished religionists from the prize's next screening committee, including Rev. Gunnar Stalsett, bishop of Oslo of the Church of Norway, who formerly served on the Nobel Peace Prize Committee. Also present were Mr. Stuart Jack, chargé d'affaires of the British Embassy in Japan; Mr. Yasushi Mitarai, Japan's Administrative Vice Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology; and Rev. Izu Kudo, chairman of the Japanese Association of Religious Organizations.

The ceremony opened with a prayer, which was followed by a report on the screening process. Rev. Nichiko Niwano, the foundation's president, presented the citation, a medal, and 20 million Japanese yen to Dr. Elworthy, and then delivered a commemorative address. Dr. Elworthy, in an acceptance speech entitled "Iraq, War, and Peace," discussed the Iraqi crisis in the context of the U.S. government's strategic global scheme and its reliance on military power. Saying that a systematic non-military route to free the Iraqi people from dictatorship had not been tried, she declared that with sufficient support from Western governments and

President Nichiko Niwano of the Niwano Peace Foundation congratulates Dr. Elworthy.

Western media, a "people power" campaign of civilian resistance would have been possible. In this regard, she pointed out that most people, including politicians and the press, as yet have no language for the skills and power of nonviolence, although their efficacy has been amply demonstrated by such pre-eminent figures as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Aung San Suu Kyi, and Nelson Mandela.

The ORG is an organization that conducts research in pursuit of the aim of greater security throughout the world by means of nuclear disarmament and the regulation and reduction of weapons exports. One of the particular characteristics of the ORG is the adherence of Dr. Elworthy and many of its members to the pacifist beliefs of the Religious Society of Friends. During the past 20 years, they have concentrated on building up a body of research on how decisions about nuclear weapons are made, and who makes those decisions. Research and recommendations directed toward the resolution of disputes through nonviolent means carried out by the ORG and its founder, Dr. Elworthy, have provided a calm and objective approach to scientists and

people in governments and NGOs around the world, and at the same time have had a tremendous impact on international negotiations for disarmament. For a private research institution to be able to bring to bear an incisive influence on how a nation forms its nuclear policy is a testament to its intellectual prowess as well as its persistence, and the ORG has been praised widely for bringing great hope and courage to people all over the world.

Dr. Elworthy has a varied and colorful background. After graduating from Trinity College, Dublin, she took part in relief activities at a refugee camp in northern Africa. Later, she served as coordinator for an organization working on malnutrition in South Africa, and helped establish the first nondiscriminating public theater in that country. She also worked as a representative of the Minority Rights Group in France, and from 1979 to 1980 acted as a consultant to UNESCO on women's issues. She also researched and wrote a report published by UNESCO for the United Nations Conference on Women.

A major turning point for Dr. Elworthy came in 1982, when she attended the Second Special Session of

the UN General Assembly on Disarmament. In New York's Central Park, one million people were demonstrating for nuclear disarmament. However, back in the UN building, the disarmament agenda was dragging along slowly, if at all. The voices of the thousands demonstrating for disarmament were not reaching the conference rooms in any form. Dr. Elworthy has described her feelings at that moment:

"Bridging that gap, the gap between the demonstrators and those who made the decisions, I thought, would be an essential step in making progress towards disarmament.

"I had the idea of groups of citizens talking to decision-makers—not waving banners outside their offices, not shouting violent opposition, but sitting down and discussing the issues quietly and soberly from a background of real knowledge."

From that moment, Dr. Elworthy started to steadily gather information. Her first focus was on "Who are the decision-makers?" She realized that the information was readily available from research libraries and elsewhere. And so the "Oxford Research Group" was brought to life, at first in Dr. Elworthy's home. With increased staff and funding, in four years it succeeded in documenting analyses of decision-making processes about nuclear weapons in all the nations that possessed or were developing these weapons, as well as a list of decision-makers and their backgrounds.

People tend to assume that such decisions are made by parliamentarians and elected assemblies. However, the results of these surveys showed that in reality, the important decisions about nuclear weapons are, in most cases, made by a limited number of experts, cabinet ministers, and bureaucrats, without sufficient information being provided to parliamentarians and elected assemblies. Thus was revealed a flimsy, brittle decision-making process, and the "human element" that forms the background to problems connected with nuclear weapons was brought to light.

Moving forward on the basis of these results, the next step for the ORG was to aim for realistic talks with "people

holding key positions in the decision-making process." They aimed not only at clarifying the issue through research, but also at solving problems through dialogue. They started by contacting various NGOs, providing them with information and suggestions for meeting and talking with specific decision-makers. This approach met with widespread approval, and eventually was developed through 70 groups. Dr. Elworthy herself held face-to-face talks with bureaucrats from defense departments and foreign ministries, as well as military planners, weapons planners, strategists, and politicians. It can be said that Dr. Elworthy's preeminent personality was the factor that facilitated the progress of such talks, which took place moreover in a variety of religious contexts. Without confrontation, and giving due consideration to each participant's position while establishing trust, participants inched forward toward ways to prevent nuclear proliferation and eliminate nuclear weapons.

The problem-solving method of the ORG is always "nonviolent communication," and is based on dialogue. The goals are to foster a sense of trust between one person and another, and to work toward security based on trust. In 1992, when the problems of the weapons trade drew public attention, the ORG contacted 50 of the highest-level people around the world who were planning weapons deals and exports, as well as those who supplied the trade, and listened to what they had to say. In order to be able to recommend strategies aimed at resolving these problems, the ORG sponsored a conference of weapons traders and experts. It published the proceedings of the conference and was highly praised for its concrete, realistic approach. The American representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe said, "The information is extremely valuable to me. . . . The way it is put together makes it so much more usable than any similar report I have ever seen—and I have so many."

In this way, the ORG has organized and held international and domestic conferences, seminars, and workshops on security issues and the problems of

nuclear proliferation that have targeted scientists, NGOs, and people connected with the governments of more than 17 nations and have provided them with an opportunity to discuss these problems on a global scale. It has also published a large number of books and papers presenting research results and has received commissions for research and other activities from a wide variety of governmental and nongovernmental organizations, including the United Nations University, the European Parliament, and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War.

The ORG has recently started a project called "Peace Direct" that supports groups working toward solutions through nonviolent means on the front lines of actual disputes. By providing information and materials for training in nonviolence, organizing training sessions and educating teachers in nonviolence, offering material support, and helping mobilize the media, the ORG works as a "back-up group" for the "front-line action group." It thus strives for an integrated collaboration with the front-line groups, with a view to establishing a system in which ordinary citizens can participate in a variety of ways.

Dr. Elworthy also adheres to Quaker religious beliefs. It is safe to say that the various activities of the ORG reflect the main ethical criteria of Quaker religious beliefs—"simplicity," "fairness," "cooperation in society," and "peace (nonviolence)." With the faith that we are all children of God and have "the Light within," which serves as a foundation for philanthropy, the ORG has created and developed through sincere and realistic efforts a new approach to disarmament that is all-encompassing and nonconfrontational.

In Dr. Elworthy's own words, "When faced with a large system composed of many individuals, which is producing results you may want to change or influence, it is simply not true or realistic to believe that there is nothing that one individual can do. With a small number of allies, the effects of the decision of one individual can spread dramatically throughout the whole system, and thereby change the decisions it produces." □

Rissho Kosei-kai Opposes Proposed Contingency Bills

On April 25 Rissho Kosei-kai issued a statement, in the name of Rev. Katsunori Yamanoi, chairperson of its board of directors, opposing a package of emergency contingency bills that were under consideration by Japan's Diet, or national parliament. The package consists of three bills: a proposed new law outlining Japan's response to any military attack by a foreign power, a revision of the law for establishing an emergency management agency, and a revision of the law specifying the contingency duties of the Self-Defense Force. On the same day, Rev. Yamanoi and Rev. Michio Matsubara, director of Rissho Kosei-kai's External Affairs Department, visited Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi's official residence in Tokyo and presented the statement to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda.

Rissho Kosei-kai was concerned that if the bills were to be passed in the present form, they could infringe on the human rights of Japanese citizens and also affect Japan's international peaceful coexistence while seeking to ensure national security militarily. Since the government and the ruling coalition parties hoped to pass the bills during the current session of the Diet, Rissho Kosei-kai took the opportunity to pre-

sent its views on the bills and to express reservations about their possible effect on Japan's role as a nation of peace.

In its statement, Rissho Kosei-kai raised questions about whether the bills fully agree with principles concerning the dignity of human life, basic human rights, and world peace that should be the goals of both religion and politics. The Buddhist organization is also concerned about the possible risk of the bills leading to the mobilization of the Japanese people in an emergency, thus curbing their basic human rights, since the proposed legislation puts first emphasis on preserving national security by force of arms. It is thus feared that Japan could lose the respect of other nations that it gained as a nation of peace in the aftermath of World War II.

The statement reflects the Buddhist viewpoint that any war leads to the loss of human life. Although resorting to violence to combat violence appears realistic to some people, it eventually leads to an endless cycle of violence. The wisdom and compassion demonstrated by religion are therefore indispensable. The Rissho Kosei-kai document concludes by calling on the government and the ruling parties to discuss the bills thor-

oughly and take responsible action from an overall, broad-ranging standpoint.

When Rev. Yamanoi presented the statement to Mr. Fukuda at the prime minister's residence, he explained the organization's views and asked that the government hold more deliberate discussions about the bills and make greater diplomatic efforts to achieve a peaceful, stable world. The chief cabinet secretary responded that the bills were intended to outline Japan's response to an emergency situation caused by a possible armed attack from another nation and to create a new legal framework for dealing with the resulting crisis. □

Rissho Kosei-kai Joins Earth Day Event

Rissho Kosei-kai took part in Earth Day Tokyo 2003, which was held in Yoyogi Park on April 19 and 20. In April 1970 an estimated 20 million people from across the United States participated in an environmental rally, held in Wisconsin, that was organized by Senator Gaylord Nelson of that state. Since then, Earth Day has been observed in April throughout the world to remind us that we must take care of our planet. Rissho Kosei-kai displayed pictures and charts of its activities for peace at a booth set up in the park and also held a workshop on the background of the activities. The subject of the pictures and charts was Rissho Kosei-kai members' volunteer activities overseas—parents and children from branches across Japan handing Little Bags of Dreams to children in the former Yugoslavia, Northern Ireland, Afghanistan, and Palestine, as well as youth members distributing blankets collected throughout Japan to people in Africa. Staff members explained to visitors the purposes of Rissho Kosei-kai's Peace Fund and the Campaign for Sharing Blankets with People in Africa. The staff members also handed out fund-raising boxes and pamphlets for the Donate a Meal Campaign. The Executive Committee of Rissho Kosei-kai's Peace Fund donated 1 million yen to support the event. □

Rev. Yamanoi (center) explains Rissho Kosei-kai's stance toward the package of emergency contingency bills to Chief Cabinet Secretary Yasuo Fukuda (left) at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo.

The Spirit of Nonviolence and Civil Disobedience

by Yoshiaki Iisaka

The only way we can avoid letting the twenty-first century become another "century of war" is to spread to the world the true spirit of nonviolence and civil disobedience. In this way, we can make our vision of peace a reality.

At the opening of the twenty-first century, the United Nations declared 2001 as the "UN Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations." However, just as the curtain closed on the twentieth century—"the century of war"—and chances for promoting dialogue and tolerance were rising, the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks on the United States occurred. Since then, and in the name of "justice," the United States has exercised its military power in Afghanistan and Iraq. And, as if in response, incidents of terrorism and anti-American demonstrations have been taking place one after another all over the world.

To prevent the new era from becoming another "century of war," it is important to avoid attempts to solve problems through violence and military power, and instead to try to work toward peace in the spirit of nonviolence and

civil disobedience. Religious leaders in particular should not give their approval or provide justifications for violence to those engaged in war, but should labor to be of use in furthering peaceful solutions to conflict.

In answer to the colonial occupation of India by Britain and discriminatory treatment directed against the people of India, Mahatma Gandhi responded not with violence, but, in a spirit of civil disobedience, by leading India toward independence. The important thing for us is to believe that peace and justice can be promoted without resorting to violence, as Gandhi has proven for us, and then to act according to that belief, for Gandhi was not only ethically right, he was also politically wise.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.

When we hear the terms nonviolence and disobedience, we tend to assume that they refer to a doctrine of non-resistance. However, these terms actually refer to the most positive stance and mode of action for solving problems and for resisting evil and injustice most effectively.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the American civil-rights leader, was strongly influenced by Gandhi's thought, and is well known for his involvement in the 1956 "Montgomery Bus Boycott."

Formerly, in Montgomery, Alabama, the seats in the front of public buses were reserved for white people, and black people had to sit in the back of the bus. One day, a black woman named Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat to a white person, and was arrested by local police.

This event touched off the movement to boycott buses led by Dr. King and others, and it also led to the beginning of large-scale marches for civil rights. Day after day, the black people of Montgomery continued to walk to and from their schools and jobs. Because black people made up about 75 percent of the customers who normally rode the bus, the buses ran nearly empty.

One day, taunted by white people who asked her, "Aren't you tired?" a black woman replied, "My feet are tired, but my soul is rested."

During the boycott, many black people were violently

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attacked or imprisoned. But, for the sake of righting wrong, they bore their suffering patiently. And, finally, buses, which now prohibited racial discrimination, started running again after 381 days.

Dr. King said, "We have a power, power that can't be found in Molotov cocktails, but we do have a power. Power that cannot be found in bullets and guns, but we have a power. It is a power as old as the insights of Jesus of

countenance injustices. In pursuit of this, one is supposed to pay no heed to sacrifice and suffering. It has nothing to do with nonresistance. If Gandhi or Dr. King had sought justice through the use of terror or violence, they would have been immediately suppressed. If defeat of their opponents had been their aim, the issues would not have been peacefully resolved.

At the basis of the spirit that advised Gandhi and Dr. King was the firm belief that those who took them as enemies would some day recognize their own injustice. To live in harmony with them was the final goal for both Gandhi and Dr. King.

Building a New Vision of Peace

In addition, I would like to emphasize that the spirit of nonviolence can be divided into four main components.

The first is to remove violence from one's own heart. Even when we are not acting violently, we sometimes harbor resentment and hatred for other people in our hearts. It is important to remove that kind of feeling from our hearts. The next thing is to aim for peace between individuals. This means to eliminate actual attacks and acts of violence. The third is peace between human beings and nature. Destruction of the natural environment is violence toward nature. And, lastly, we must eliminate violence toward the gods and the buddhas. What we mean here by violence is a way of life that makes light of religious teachings. Originally, the major world religions all taught peace, all taught justice, and all taught love and compassion. I am confident that Gandhi and Dr. King lived lives that were faithful to those teachings.

The World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP), of which the late Rev. Nikkoy Niwano of Rissho Kosei-kai was a founding member, was conceived at an international symposium commemorating Gandhi's birthday in New Delhi in 1968. The desire to promote

the spread of the spirit of Gandhian nonviolence and civil disobedience throughout the world brought about the establishment of the WCRP.

Religious practitioners like ourselves need more and more to spread this spirit to other religious people and to national governments. Someday I hope we can replace Gandhi's nonviolence and civil disobedience with a new vision of peace of our own making. □

Mahatma Gandhi during a fund-raising drive for harijans he launched in Bombay on September 8, 1944.

Nazareth and as modern as the techniques of Mahatma Gandhi" (from *The Words of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, selected and with an introduction by Coretta Scott King [New York: Newmarket Press, 1999]).

Nonviolence does not aim for victory, but rather for justice and peaceful resolution. And civil disobedience means to bring unjust authority or injustice to the attention of the public by refusing to obey unjust laws or to

Penetrating Wisdom Buddha

by Gene Reeves

Through the tale of the fully-awakened buddha known as “Excellent in Great Penetrating Wisdom,” Shakyamuni Buddha teaches us that the best way we can serve the Buddha is to do something that will benefit all beings—indeed, it is by doing this that we are awakened to our own buddha-nature.

In chapter 3, as we have seen earlier, the Buddha assured Shariputra that in a future age he would become a buddha. In chapter 6 he did the same for Maha-Kashyapa, Subhuti, Maha-Katyayana, Maha-Maudgalyayana, and “the five hundred disciples.” Thus at least five of the ten “great” disciples of the Buddha have been assured of becoming buddhas in some future age. In chapters 8 and 9 as well, further assurances of becoming a buddha in the future will be given. But at the very end of chapter 6, the Buddha says that while he has been talking about the future, he would now like to say something about the past—“mine and yours.” “Listen carefully,” he says, and then in chapter 7 he tells a story about the distant past.

How distant? The Lotus Sutra has many interesting, ingenious ways of depicting large numbers, and this is one of the most interesting. Suppose, the Buddha says, someone ground everything in a thousand million worlds into a powder as fine as powdered ink. Then suppose he went to the East, passing through various worlds until he had passed through a thousand worlds. In that world he deposits one speck of the powder and passes on through another thousand worlds, where he drops another speck of powder. And he continues doing this until all the specks are gone. This would be a very large number indeed. But now suppose all of the worlds he has passed through, whether a speck of powder was dropped there or not, were all ground into powder as fine as powdered ink. The number of eons since Penetrating Wisdom Buddha passed away is millions of billions of times larger than that!

The Story

Such a very long time ago, the Buddha tells us, there was a prince who had earnestly sought supreme awakening by meditating for billions of years but was not able to meet with success. To help, some gods from the highest heaven prepared an enormously high throne for him under a bodhi tree, and the kings of the lowest heaven rained flowers over the whole area in which he was sitting. From time to time a fragrant wind would come up and blow away the old

flowers so that new ones could fall from the heavens and replace them. The kings of heaven beat their drums, and other gods joined in, to make a kind of concert of heavenly music as an offering to this prince. Still, he sat on that throne, without moving a muscle and without thinking at all, for ten small eons. Finally, the Dharma came to him and he became fully awakened as a buddha named “Excellent in Great Penetrating Wisdom.” Here we will call him “Penetrating Wisdom” for short.

Before leaving home, this prince had sixteen sons. When they heard that their father had become a buddha, they gave up their playthings and went to him, followed by their grandfather, the king, hundreds of ministers, and hundreds of thousands of ordinary people. When they arrived before the Buddha, the princes all congratulated,

Photo: IBC

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praised, and honored him for doing something from which everyone would benefit, and they begged him to explain the Dharma.

When Penetrating Wisdom became a buddha, all of the many worlds in each of the ten directions shook in the six different ways in which a world can shake,¹ and all of those worlds, even those darkened by shadows, were filled with light, so that everyone could see each other well for the first time.

Here the Lotus Sutra introduces a slight note of humor. Today, Tokyo's Shinjuku Station is probably the busiest train station in the world, always crowded with people coming and going. Imagine being blind and being led through such a busy place every day. You would be aware that there are other people around. But most of them are very quiet, so you would have no idea how many people there were. One day, if quite suddenly you were able to see, you might say, "Who are all these people?" The buddhas bring light to the dark places of our lives, enabling us to see more than we could see before, surprising us.

In the East, Shakyamuni says, continuing the story, the palaces of the kings of heaven were suddenly twice as bright as before, leading the kings of the Brahma heavens to wonder what was going on, and to discuss this strange business among themselves. One of them suggested that perhaps the reason for all the light was that a great god or a buddha had appeared somewhere in the universe. So the Brahma kings all gave up the pleasures of deep meditation and set out toward the world of Penetrating Wisdom Buddha carrying huge plates full of flowers, and bringing their palaces along behind them.

This part of the story reminds me of the story of the wise men in the East seeing a star announcing the birth of Jesus and following it, carrying gifts to the place where he was born.

Soon the kings of the Brahma heavens came to the place where Penetrating Wisdom Buddha was sitting on his great throne under a great bodhi tree, surrounded by a large variety of people and heavenly beings, and the sixteen princes who were begging the Buddha to preach. These heavenly kings worshiped the Buddha by walking around him several hundred thousand times, strewing the flowers they had brought and creating a mountain of flowers in the process. They also offered flowers to the bodhi tree. Then they offered their palaces to the Buddha, praising him for doing good for all living beings and begging him to proclaim the Dharma.

Most honored of human and heavenly beings, we beg you:

Turn the supreme Dharma-wheel,
Beat the drum of the great Dharma,
Blow the conch of the great Dharma,
Rain down everywhere the rain of the great Dharma,
And save innumerable beings!

Similarly, in a series of short stories, all the kings of the Brahma heavens from all the other ten directions come in turn to the place where the Buddha is sitting, to praise and worship him and offer him flowers and palaces. After each of these groups begged him to teach the Dharma, the Buddha agreed. And when they had all assembled, he taught them the Four Noble Truths and then the teaching of Twelve Causes and Conditions, teachings that in the Lotus Sutra are associated with shravakas and pratyekashravakas.

At this point, billions of the people listening to the Buddha's teachings refused to become attached to things, freed themselves from evil passions, gained profound and wonderful meditation, the three kinds of knowledge, the six divine powers and the eight emancipations, and became shravakas.

The sixteen princes became novices, and they begged the Buddha to preach now, not just about awakening, but about supreme awakening, that is, about becoming a buddha. The Buddha agreed, but it was not until another twenty thousand eons had passed that he finally preached the Lotus Sutra. And it took him eighty thousand eons without resting to complete the entire Lotus Sutra. The novices and some shravakas received the sutra fully, while others did not.

Following this, Penetrating Wisdom Buddha went into a state of deep meditation for eighty-four thousand eons. Seeing this and realizing that someone would need to do the work of the Buddha in his absence, the novices each taught the Lotus Sutra to monks and nuns and lay men and women for the whole time, thereby helping billions and billions of living beings. When the Buddha emerged from meditation, he praised the novices and asked everyone to make offerings to them. Later, the Buddha tells us, these sixteen novices also became supremely awakened, became buddhas, and are now teaching the Dharma in the worlds of the ten directions, among them, in the West, is Amitabha (Jpn: Amida) Buddha. And the sixteenth of them is Shakyamuni Buddha himself, teaching the Dharma in this world.

Four Truths and Twelve Causes and Conditions

Probably the most basic teaching in Buddhism generally is that of the "Four Truths," often called the "Four Noble Truths"—the truth that life involves suffering; the truth that the cause or origin of suffering is desire and ignorance; the truth that suffering can be overcome, usually understood to be the state of nirvana; and the truth that the way to overcome suffering is the Eightfold Path.² Closely associated with this teaching in classical Buddhism is the teaching of the Twelve Causes and Conditions. Here is the way in which it appears in chapter 7 of the Lotus Sutra:

"Then he taught the teaching of twelve causes and conditions, namely, ignorance causes actions, actions cause consciousness, consciousness causes name and form, name

and form cause the six kinds of senses, the six kinds of senses cause contact, contact causes sensation, sensation causes desire, desire causes attachment, attachment causes existence, existence causes birth, birth causes old age and death, anxiety and sorrow, suffering and anguish. If ignorance is extinguished, then action is extinguished. If action is extinguished, then consciousness is extinguished. If consciousness is extinguished, then name and form are extinguished. If name and form are extinguished, then the six kinds of senses are extinguished. If the six kinds of senses are extinguished, then contact is extinguished. If contact is extinguished, then sensation is extinguished. If sensation is extinguished, then desire is extinguished. If desire is extinguished, then attachment is extinguished. If attachment is extinguished, then existence is extinguished. If existence is extinguished, then birth is extinguished. If birth is extinguished then old age and death, anxiety and sorrow, suffering and anguish are extinguished."

In the Lotus Sutra these two teachings are closely associated with the shravaka and pratyekabuddha ways respectively, and they are mentioned frequently. But only here in this story, are they actually described. And here both are associated with the shravaka way. In the Lotus Sutra generally, while the bodhisattva way is thought to be more inclusive or more far-reaching, as in this story there is no general intention to disparage the shravaka way.

Comfortable Life

The kings of the Brahma heavens give up the pleasures of meditation to come down to earth and offer their flowers and palaces to the Buddha. We can understand this to mean that even a king of heaven cannot become a buddha without working in the world of human beings to benefit others. This does not mean that meditation is to be avoided. In this story it is through meditation that the prince became the Buddha Penetrating Wisdom. But the story does suggest that meditation alone is not sufficient Buddhist practice. What is needed from the perspective of the Lotus Sutra is doing something from which everyone will benefit, at least eventually.

Often, probably in every religion, people are attracted to a religious practice because they have a problem and need some help. They pray to be cured of some illness, or to overcome some human interrelations problem, or to find success in business, or to find a suitable husband or wife. And quite often religious practice results in some

Twelve Causes and Conditions

1. Ignorance
2. Action
3. Consciousness
4. Name and Form
5. Six Kinds of Senses
6. Contact
7. Sensation
8. Desire
9. Attachment
10. Existence
11. Birth
12. Old Age and Death,
Anxiety and Sorrow,
Suffering and Anguish

kind of overcoming of such problems.

In the parable of the magic city which is told late in this story and will be discussed in the next issue of DHARMA WORLD, the Lotus Sutra makes quite clear that comfort may be necessary—but only as a temporary resting place. If someone is comforted by the Buddha's teachings, we should all be glad. Shakyamuni Buddha, you will remember, was also born as a prince, initially living in a palace with everything that could possibly make him comfortable and happy. But this is what he abandoned in order to seek awakening.

Though it may have such a result, the Dharma should not be practiced merely for the sake of obtaining a peaceful or comfortable life (a palace). There should be deeply felt

compassion toward others and a desire to help others. Nichiren said that a hundred years of practice in a pure land was not equal to a day of practice in this impure land.

Even Bodhisattvas and Buddhas Need Help

As a bodhisattva, Penetrating Wisdom was helped toward becoming a buddha by gods and kings of the Brahma heavens. We can understand that without the help of the gods and kings of heaven, the prince who became the Buddha Penetrating Wisdom would not have become a buddha at all. We can understand this to mean that Buddhist practice is not primarily a solitary business, but something done in and for a larger community with the help of others. The sixteen princes praised and honored their father because he was doing something from which everyone would benefit. In other words, because he received help, he was able to help others.

Toward the end of the story, the Buddha Excellent in Great Penetrating Wisdom enters deeply into meditation. Seeing this, the sixteen princes realize that the Buddha is no longer available and that someone else has to do the Buddha's work, especially his work of teaching the Dharma so that all will be helped to become buddhas. And so these princes do the Buddha's work, filling in for him as it were, and enable countless living beings to enter the bodhisattva path in order to move closer to becoming a buddha. In other words, even a buddha needs help—especially the help of bodhisattvas.

In Buddhism we say that we have faith in or take refuge in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, or community. It expresses the important ideas that we need the help of the Buddha, of his Dharma, and of a supporting

community. This sense that we all need the help of others extends, in the Lotus Sutra, even to buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Doing Something for the Good of All

The sixteen princes thank their father because, by his awakening, “not only ourselves, but also human and heavenly beings have been enriched.” And they beg him to “preach for the sake of the world.”

At the end of the series of stories of heavenly kings coming to the Buddha, the last group of them says:

May these blessings
Extend to all,
That we with all the living
Together attain the Buddha Way.

This is an important expression for Rissho Kosei-kai and for many other Buddhists as well. It is a kind of summary of the heart of Mahayana teaching. With others, “with all the living” is a way of reminding ourselves that we are related to all, and that highest Buddhist practice is doing something for the good of all.

“Doing something for the good of all” is a way of talking about serving the Buddha. Nothing is good all by itself. Good is always a blessing for somebody. It is relational. Our own good is always limited, limited in part by the very limited scope of our experience, our knowledge, and our compassion. The good of our family is larger, less limited, than our individual good. The good of the community is larger than the good of our family. The good of the nation is larger than the good of our community. The good of all people is larger still. But all of these are limited goods.

The Buddha, who is in all times and places, is not so limited. That is why “serving the Buddha,” “doing the Buddha’s will,” and similar expressions have the meaning of doing something for the good of all. But doing something for the good of all should not be seen as opposed to doing something for our own good. The Buddha never asks us to completely give up our own interests, our own good; to be completely selfless; to serve only the good of others. But the Buddha does ask us to go beyond our own good; to understand and to feel that we are related to a whole cosmos of living beings; and to know that it is by doing something for the good of all that we ourselves can realize our buddha-nature.

To be continued

1. While these six ways in which the earth can shake are often referred to in the Lotus Sutra, they are never listed or described there. In the Garland (Avatamsaka) Sutra, however, they are listed as: moving, rocking, springing out or gushing, shocking, quivering, and roaring.

2. The Eightfold Path includes: 1) right views or understanding; 2) right thinking; 3) right speech; 4) right action; 5) right way of life; 6) right effort; 7) right mindfulness; and 8) right concentration.

An eighth-century limestone relief of the Eleven-headed Avalokiteshvara formerly enshrined in Baoqingsi temple in Chang’an, China. The statue is now in the possession of the Tokyo National Museum and is designated an important cultural property of Japan.

Mahayana and World Engagement

by John P. Keenan

The identification of emptiness and dependent co-arising is the foundational Mahayana teaching for world engagement. It is only when the silence of the ultimate meaning of emptiness has laid to rest all ideas of any stable being that conventional ideas of how to engage in the world are resurrected and the reality of the world—as co-arisen—is restored.

The basic teaching of Mahayana Buddhism is emptiness—that all things lack any inner, abiding essence that might identify them as ontologically separate and self-sufficient. They are nothing that can be clung to, offer no surcease from existential worry, and no refuge from the constant change and impermanence of our lives. Indeed, the only refuge is to take refuge in emptiness, to accept the change and impermanence of life itself.

This is the Mahayana teaching. Still, it reveals its Hindu origins in that the goal is to attain release (*moksha*) from the world of transmigratory change and suffering. The world is an illusion (*maya*) and release from its false allure takes one back to the source. The point is not to involve oneself in the world, but to transcend it. Perhaps one may return to preach and lead others to practice the path and awaken from the world dream, but the world, in and of itself, has no particular value. Worlds come and worlds go, coalesce and fall apart, in an endless series of equally worthless worlds. In Indian Buddhist thought, the world is called the “container or receptacle world,” the stage for practice, from which one is to exit, either to stage right or to stage left, but exit indeed.

This otherworldliness, in its Buddhist manifestation and in other Asian traditions, has often been criticized—both by Western traditions and by Buddhist practitioners themselves.

Dependent Co-Arising

Buddhist thinkers were themselves quite aware of the issue. Nagarjuna, the archetypal Mahayana thinker, equated emptiness to the world of constant change, the world that arises in dependence of one thing on another. Emptiness denies that the world is firm and abiding, that there are any essences to grasp or apprehend. At the same time, dependent co-arising affirms that essence-free things do indeed arise in virtue of their causes and conditions. The being of emptiness, Nagarjuna argued, is dependently co-arisen being. No single thing, no single self, exists apart from clusters of causes that hold it in being. Contemporary Maha-

yana scholar and philosopher Gadjin M. Nagao, in his many articles and books, talks of a second level of dependent co-arising. The first level is the twelve-staged chain of causation that results in deluded and delusory transmigration. It begins with primal ignorance—or, in some explanations, with craving for stability—and ends in old age and death, only to be repeated endlessly in unawakened nightmares. Even those who interpret transmigration mythically, as the vicious cycles of delusion and attachment characterizing all human living, see this first level of dependent co-arising simply as the genesis of pain and suffering.

In *The Foundational Standpoint of Madhyamika Philosophy* and in many other works, Professor Nagao shows how Nagarjuna and later Mahayana thinkers reinterpreted

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dependent co-arising as the counterpart of emptiness, as the flip side of that very notion. This second level is the world as seen by an awakened buddha, in all its dependently co-arisen complexity and beauty. Such a world is not indeed the ultimate truth of awakening, but it does offer and provide ground for a valid understanding of conventional reality, and thus of conventional truth. The later Yogacara school commentators on the philosophy of emptiness are insistent on this point. They read the teaching of emptiness as describing the very structure and functioning of our minds. Just as Madhyamika thought taught that one must empty emptiness itself, so they emphasized that conscious insight into emptiness caused one to rebound back into the everyday world of human affairs. Emptiness itself is no refuge that stands apart from the world, but is rather its true description. So understanding the world—in all its radical impermanence and constant flux—allows one to engage in human affairs robustly and yet free from ideological or religious assumptions.

Mahayana World Engagement

Western religious traditions are themselves often quite otherworldly, engendering monastic practices and encouraging people to focus on salvation and the transcendent will of God. But these traditions also draw upon their scriptures to insist that this world is God's creation and as such has deep and abiding value. For Jews, this world is the arena of God's activity and of human morality. For Christians, the incarnation of Jesus means that the world itself has been assumed into the godhead, and so one must emphasize not only the salvation of people, but also the salvation of the world itself. Various images of world restoration flow through Western religious thinking—eschatological visions of peace and justice, when the enemies of God have been vanquished and God is all in all. Muslims at times want to establish Muslim states in order to permeate culture with religious values and moral norms. Christians long embraced the same notion, forcing people to convert, baptizing entire peoples, and establishing a Christendom coterminous with the entire known world.

Buddhist doctrine does not drive one to do this, because there is no parallel stress in Buddhist scriptures on the deep and abiding value of the world. Traditionally, the optimal situation for a Buddhist monarch was to support and favor the Dharma teaching—so that that teaching might prosper and enable people to attain awakening.

It is only when people meditate on the implications of such awakening, as both world-transcending and rebounding back into the depths of the world, that Buddhists begin to develop a “theology” of world engagement. The social activism of Sri Ariyaratne in Sri Lanka or of Sulak Sivaraksa in Thailand flows from an awareness that authentic, awakened wisdom entails compassionate care for the earth and its peoples, not just to lead them out of the world, but to care for them by promoting justice within the world.

The identification of emptiness and dependent co-arising is the foundational Mahayana teaching for world engagement. It is only when the silence of the ultimate meaning of emptiness has laid to rest all ideas of any stable being that conventional ideas of how to engage in the world are resurrected and the reality of the world—as co-arisen—is restored. Expressed in conventional language, emptiness signifies an awareness of the transience of the world, dependently arising from moment to moment. Social realities are as they are because we make them to be so. So the seeker after wisdom, the bodhisattva, enters into the world of history in awareness of its emptiness, practicing insight and reasoning with an awareness that it is impossible to capture anything unchanging by that insight or reasoning. This attitude is profoundly and, one hopes, effectively—pragmatic. The ultimate silence of emptiness does not become mixed or mingled with the actions and speech of such reengagement. Our worldly projects and engagements stand or fall on their own conventional merits. Nothing guarantees them. No theocracy could hold sway, for that would be the arrogant assertion of some worldly and conventional vision as ultimate. The realm of awakened social engagement does not function by religious pronouncements, for in a Mahayana perspective, rendering pronouncements is not a religious function but a secular one. It is a rediscovery of the dependently co-arisen as the nature of the world, already present from the very beginning.

So we have no set of instructions for action in the world, except that one is not to float free in awakened bliss, but rather to return to the everyday world and there to carry out the tasks of intelligent compassion. Such a doctrine of reengagement does not parallel Western theologies of world affirmation, however, for it is bereft of religious or doctrinal directives. There is to be no new world age, no eschaton, no evolutionary convergence in Christ or the Buddha, no state imbued with religious values. The Mahayana vision is minimalist; it outlines no plan whatsoever. It envisages no new heaven, no new earth. At the same time, it is, by and large, innocent of the canker of clinging to religious views as if any one view possessed anything more than conventional truth.

Nevertheless, emptiness is said to have the sound of thunder, because, with human engagement in the practices of careful attention to worldly conditions, insightful understanding of problems, and reasoned judgment, the decision for a particular course of action will stand with the full strength of human wisdom. In this kind of social engagement—ever adaptable and ever revisable in light of new information and keener insights—the silence of wonder at the emptiness of all views reverberates with its thundering power as human speech and action. This is not a millennial quest for an ideological revolution, but always a human decision reached in awareness that decisions are always human, always occluded and clouded by the inability of human conventions ever to reach beyond their humanness.

Buddhist leaders from both Mahayana and Theravada traditions show their shared commitment to acting for world peace during an international interreligious conference.

Buddhism often rejoices that it has an almost universal history of peaceful engagement and has seldom inspired wars. This is due in large part to its basic dialectic, which functions in awareness of the fragility of all human thinking and reasoning.

Ethical Impact

The relative absence of Buddhist social movements in comparison to the West, with its proliferation of religiously formed politics, does not indicate a lack of social awareness. Rather, it indicates a different understanding of the impact of religion on society. Buddhist action in the world is in a sense anonymous, for there is a clear disinclination to be identifiably Buddhist in one's actions, lest that preempt cooperation with others in favor of some ideological ideal. It is quite enough to be intelligently open to change. As conditions change—in the manner of all dependently co-arisen phenomena—decisions and commitments follow. A Mahayana commitment is profoundly pragmatic, weighing the times and occasions, and seeking whatever works to further compassionate progress.

There is no specifically Buddhist program for action in the world. Indeed, we witness a distrust of any "social gospel" as tending toward some ideology that would pretend to capture ultimate reality in a finely woven net of verbal doctrines and pronouncements. This may perhaps lead some practitioners to neglect worldly engagement. But the logic of Mahayana encourages not aloof disengagement, but rather worldly engagement that is simply and humanly worldly engagement. As needed, one may or may not acknowledge roots in Buddhist social thinking. If such is of benefit, then people should and indeed do identify their struggle for justice and peace as Buddhist. But that is in no

way necessary, for the roots of Mahayana engagement in the world are secular and human, acknowledged and practiced as such. There is no need to legitimate action by religious claims that God or the Buddha are on one's side, that goodness infuses one's efforts. Similarly, there is a distaste for projecting all evil onto anyone else. Instead, there is a recognition that we all labor under the enticing power of primal ignorance that continually mistakes what benefits oneself and one's personal group's self-interest for truth and justice.

In this human perspective, conciliation and diplomacy clearly hold the paramount place, but self-defense is not altogether ruled out. The attitude is pragmatic: If war is truly needed, then—dangerously and tentatively—war should be pursued. But it should be undertaken in fear and trembling, with the awareness that wars tend to create their own justificatory rhetoric and to take on a life of their own, swallowing up—like some immense black hole—all cultural sensitivities and ethical concerns into the patriotic banner of "my cause" and "my people."

We live in an always dangerous time, when narrow ethnic or national interests usurp the right to define what is really real. But it remains a thoroughly secular world, wherein the ultimate meaning is signified by emptiness and silence, not by race or nation or religion. It is completely other and transcendent. Social engagement occurs in the dependently co-arisen world and can claim to be valid only as insight into worldly conventions, into the concrete conditions that obtain at particular places and times. There is no such thing as a Buddhist "liberation theology" that would pledge ultimate meaning to the service of any, even the most needed, conventional action in the world. But there are liberation struggles that are clearly called forth as

responses to entrenched and institutional violence. These are not religious crusades, but human struggles. As engendered by oppressive conditions and aimed at the establishment of justice and peace, still they can easily turn into holy wars that feed on their own rhetoric in self-justifying continuation.

This is not to argue against the need for social or political liberation or even revolutions. It is to insist that any arguments for such action recognize their worldly and conventional status and eschew any attempt to supernaturalize their authority. God lurks behind no war, ever. The Buddha inspires no class to warfare, although historically he did indeed reject the Indian class system.

With the passing of classical Western culture and the emergence of a pluralistic world of many societies and many cultures, religious usurpation of political or social movements tends increasingly to absolutize secular insights, to fabricate cultural absolutes in a nostalgic quest to recover some imagined past when all values were supposedly clear. Such engagements, often in the name of Western culture, but also in the name of Islam, in the name of Christ, or possibly even in the name of the Buddha, isolate theocratic nations and distort the very religious traditions to which they appeal. God as politician, whether conservative, liberal, or revolutionary, can scarcely maintain any authority, given the passing appropriateness of always-true-and-never-to-be-changed policies. From a Mahayana perspective, all of this is not only unnecessary but also destructive of engaged social action. It is unnecessary because the most effective worldly action is based not on religious principles, but on careful attention to conditions, insightful thinking, intelligent evaluation, and responsible commitment to the good of all. Religious principles tend by contrast to be destructive of social action for, as Marx claimed, they relieve people of those very activities of attentiveness, insight, judgment, and commitment, and substitute the illusory certainty of some divine sanction. Religious ideology can indeed act as an opiate. It can anesthetize engaged social action through the opium dream of some supernal surety. But, wondrous though that dream may appear, it prevents people from participating in necessary social actions, in necessary movements to change and seek justice. It keeps people separated from just revolutions and attached to revolutions that have long since wasted their energy and reason to be.

The function of doctrinal discourse in Mahayana teaching is not limited to enunciating the content of primal experiences of awakening and ultimate emptiness. It also combines a clear caveat against the incursion of religion into areas of social and political convention with a demand that we always engage in such issues with intelligent compassion. As the novelist Nikos Kazantzakis asserted in his *Report to Greco*, the Buddha came “to free people from religion.” And, one may add, to free them for action in the world. □

A ninth-century hanging banner (ban) bearing a painting of a bodhisattva, unearthed at Dunhuang, China. The bodhisattva is painted in colors on silk. A ban is a Buddhist altar fitting to adorn the enshrined buddhas and bodhisattvas. 195 cm x 28 cm. Tokyo National Museum.

How Can Interfaith Organizations Address Global Problems?

by Marcus Braybrooke

In today's world, it is always hard to know what to do and how to do it. And it is even harder for a group of people to come to any kind of meaningful consensus. Is the interfaith movement part of the problem of globalization or part of the solution? The president of the World Congress of Faiths examines this very question in great detail.

Soon after the "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic" was published in 1993, the distinguished Indian Catholic scholar John B. Chethimattam wrote (in *Visions of an Interfaith Future* [International Interfaith Centre, 1994], p. 135) that "the very label of a 'Global Ethic' smacks of an imperialist plot to continue imperialism's domination on the majority of humanity through specious moral preaching." He complained that the formulation of a set of core values amounts to the imposition of a Western ideology. It ignores the differences between religions and mistakenly separates moral teaching from its context in a religion's total world vision. It also fails to recognize that many past atrocities were perpetrated in the name of religion. Moreover, he stated (p. 135) that the Global Ethic did not address many of the most urgent social evils in Asia. Similarly, the Rastafarian contributor to the book *Testing the Global Ethic* (Arthur Dion Hanna, Jr. [a.k.a. Ras Boom Skak], P. Morgan, and M. Braybrooke, eds. [The World Congress of Faiths and CoNexus Press, 1998]) complained that the emphasis on sexual discrimination ignored Western discrimination against black people, and that in any case Rastafarians would have preferred the concept of "gender equity" to "gender equality."

Globalization Is Neutral

Globalization, as Charles Leadbeater has recently written (*Up the Down Escalator* [Viking/Penguin, 2002]), has become a term of abuse. "A rag-bag alliance," he writes, "of protectionists, trade unions, anarchists, leftists, environmentalists, animal-rights protesters and concerned citizens has authored one of the grand narratives of our time: Globalisation is Bad." I do not myself, however, see globalization as necessarily an evil. The growth of a world community is part of the dynamic of history, which at an earlier stage led to the creation of nation states and is perhaps part of the purpose of God to break down the walls of division and create a new humanity. I largely agree with Hans Küng that globalization is unavoidable, ambivalent, unpredictable,

and, I hope, controllable. Globalization, as Küng says (*A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics* [SCM Press, 1997], p. 160), is "not a conspiracy of the Americans, the Japanese, or some dark powers, but a result of the technological and economic development of modern Europe." Economic and technological unification can add to the richness of our life. Think of the variety of fruits or vegetables, flown in from around the world, to be found in any supermarket: but does their production distort the local economy? The telephone, let alone e-mail, has transformed communications: but this emphasizes the divisions in our world. Fifty percent of the people in the world have never

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made a telephone call in their life. I rejoice at the possibilities of travel that I never dreamed of as a child—but what environmental damage is caused by jet travel and exotic holidays?

My own hope is that as the people of the world are brought together technologically and economically, so will they come together spiritually. Indeed, this is essential if globalization is to be controlled and to be for the good of humanity as a whole. As Kofi Annan has said (in a message to the ninth International Anti-Corruption Conference in Durban, South Africa, in 1999), the challenges that face humankind transcend national borders: “Issues such as environment, crime, terrorism, and corruption carry no passports.” These issues also transcend religious frontiers. If we are to tackle the great problems facing our human society, which are essentially moral and spiritual, we need to draw on the wisdom of *all* the great religions. Sadly, many people working for secular developmental agencies have only experienced religious bodies as divisive and concerned with promoting their own interests. This is why the interfaith movement is of vital importance if the spiritual insights that religions share are to enrich current efforts to tackle the problems that Annan identified.

The conviction that faiths have shared insights to offer to the wider society is now increasingly recognized, but when I first became involved in interfaith work, nearly forty years ago, most Christians thought that Christianity by itself had a solution to the world’s evils, and probably members of other religions had the same trust in their religion. It is really only in the last decade that the interfaith movement has gained the confidence to begin to address these major issues and only very recently that a wider public has begun to recognize that the faith communities may have something useful to say.

How the Interfaith Movement Has Developed

It has taken years of hard work for the interfaith movement to have come this far. Its growth has seen various stages, which, to some extent, have to be repeated by each individual who becomes involved in this journey of discovery. Initially, energy was devoted to dispelling ignorance and prejudice—for example, Christians had to learn to stop blaming the Jews for the death of Jesus. Then people of different religions had to be encouraged to come together. When, as a student at Madras Christian College, I visited some Hindu temples, some Christians felt I was betraying the true faith by doing so. Yet there is no substitute for personal encounter, which can be life-changing, as it helps us break through inherited stereotypes and enables people to discover their shared humanity. Such encounters may also lead us to rethink our beliefs. In my case, as a student in India, I met some saintly Hindus. This made me realize that Christianity has no monopoly on goodness or salvation, and that the churches need to leave behind exclusive

attitudes. The God of Love whom Jesus reveals has to be a God whose love is for all people and all creation.

A Turning Point in Interfaith Work

As the sense of fellowship with people of other faiths develops, there comes a growing desire to discuss, act, and pray together. This will to work together was very evident at the 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions, which was, to my mind, a turning point in interfaith work. The question, to which the “Declaration Toward a Global Ethic” was intended as an answer, was no longer whether people of faith could or should meet together, but what they could do together for the benefit of the world—although of course some interfaith activists had asked that long before (cf. *Stepping Stones to a Global Ethic*, M. Braybrooke, ed. [SCM Press, 1992]). The Parliament for a moment captured the attention of the world and sought to show, at a time of intense conflict in the former Yugoslavia and of communal troubles in India, that religions need not be a cause of division but could unite on certain basic ethical teachings.

In the years since 1993, the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions has attempted to see how these ethical demands can affect the life of our whole society. At the 1999 Cape Town Parliament, “A Call to Our Guiding Institutions” was issued. This invited those engaged in government, business, education, arts and media, science and medicine, intergovernmental organizations, and the organizations of civil society, as well as those in positions of religious and spiritual leadership to “build new, reliable, and more imaginative partnerships toward the shaping of a better world” (*A Call to Our Guiding Institutions* [Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, 1999]). It was a call to find new ways to cooperate with one another and to reflect together on the moral and ethical dimension of their work. It was a pity that too few leading members of the “guiding institutions” were there. Dialogue now needs to be interdisciplinary as well as interfaith.

Beginnings of a Wider Dialogue

At the same time as the focus of much interfaith activity has become more practical, those in positions of leadership in the political and economic spheres are both recognizing the importance of religion in shaping the modern world and acknowledging that there is a spiritual and ethical dimension to the major problems facing humankind. There is space only to give a few examples of this development.

Religions, which may be a cause of conflict, may also contribute to peace. Since 1993, therefore, UNESCO has held several conferences addressing the role of religion in conflict situations and the UN itself was the venue for the Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders.

Of greater relevance to our theme was the meeting in

1998 that brought religious leaders and representatives of the World Bank together at Lambeth Palace, London, under the joint chairmanship of James D. Wolfensohn, then president of the World Bank, and of Dr. George Carey, then the archbishop of Canterbury. From this emerged the World Faiths Development Dialogue (WFDD), to which I shall refer more fully below.

Further, in 2001, for the first time, the World Economic Forum—an independent foundation that engages business, political, and other leaders of society seeking to improve the state of the world—invited religious leaders to share in their deliberations on globalization at Davos in Switzerland. It was recognized that “religious traditions have a unique contribution to offer, . . . particularly in emphasizing human values and the spiritual and moral dimension of economic and political life” (press release issued by the International Council of Christians and Jews, Jan. 31, 2001). In February 2002, in an address to the Forum, Sir Sigmund Sternberg (*The London Rotarian* 86 (7): 1 [March 2002]) called for politicians, business people, and faith leaders to come together to be a “force for change.”

Is the Interfaith Movement Part of Cultural Imperialism?

There is then a growing dialogue between faith communities and the political and business world. But as chaplains used to bless bombers and destroyers, are swamis and imams now hallowing globalization?

I can see why the interfaith movement may be seen as part of Western cultural imperialism. The headquarters of the most powerful interfaith organizations are in America, and the key workers are mainly male, white, and Christian. But I do not think the search for shared values is a Western plot.

Shared Values Is Not a New Ideology

The search for shared values is not intended to be a substitute for the specific teaching of particular religions. The interfaith movement should celebrate diversity. Further, religions should not be co-opted to serve someone else's agenda. Social concern should flow from their central vision.

At the 1993 Parliament of the World's Religions, the document called “Toward a Global Ethic,” to which I have already referred, was signed in Chicago by some leaders of all the main religions and has since been endorsed by people of many faiths. It affirmed that this ethic, based on the fundamental demand that every human being must be treated humanely, offered the possibility of a better individual and global order. Its “Four Irrevocable Directives” (see *A Global Ethic: A Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions*, H. Küng and K.-J. Kuschel, eds. [SCM Press, 1993]) called for:

1. Commitment to a culture of nonviolence and respect for life.

2. Commitment to a culture of solidarity and a just economic order.

3. Commitment to a culture of tolerance and a life of truthfulness.

4. Commitment to a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women.

I do not see this as an attempt to impose a Western ideology. “The global ethic,” as Hans Küng himself says (*A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, p. 109), “is no substitute for the Torah, the Gospels, the Qur'an, the Bhagavad Gita, the Discourses of the Buddha, or the Teachings of Confucius” and other scriptures. It is concerned simply with “a minimal basic consensus relating to binding values, irrevocable standards and moral attitudes which can be affirmed by all religions despite their dogmatic differences, and can also be supported by nonbelievers.”

Certainly the ethical element in a religion has to be understood in the context of the whole and, as Ninian Smart pointed out, there are at least seven dimensions to a religion: ritual, experiential (spiritual), mythic, doctrinal, ethical, social or institutional, and material. To isolate the ethical is to misunderstand the nature of religion. The deepest longing of many devotees is to see God. As the booklet *Poverty and Development*, produced by WFDD, puts it, “The source of vision and motivation for people of religious belief is their experience of the supreme reality, the transcendent, or the divine.” That vision requires inner transformation and purification, which the approach to the holy demands and enables.

Inner transformation also embraces a concern for the well-being of the whole of society. Twentieth-century spiritual leaders of many traditions stressed that it was above all in the service of the poor that God was to be met. As Rabindranath Tagore wrote (*Gitanjali* [Macmillan, pb edition, 1986], No. 11, pp. 8–9):

*Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads!
Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a
temple with doors all shut?
Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!
He is where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where
the path maker is breaking stones. . . .
Put off thy holy mantle and even like him come down on
the dusty soil!*

*.
Meet him and stand by him in toil and in sweat of thy
brow.*

Likewise, Mahatma Gandhi said (in *Harijan*): “The only way to find God is to see him in his creation and to be one with it. This can only be done by the service of all, *sarvodaya*.”

It is also significant that some of the great workers for

humanity in the twentieth century, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Mother Teresa, to name but a few, were inspired by a religious vision.

It is, I believe, true that the nearer we come to God, the more we begin to see the world as God sees it. Those who believe that every single person is valued in the sight of God or is a spiritual being will find intolerable the abject poverty and violation of human rights from which many people suffer. The African stress on *ubuntu*, that our humanity is inextricably bound up with the humanity of others, or the Japanese concept of *kyosei*, which means living and working together for the common good, equally underpin this concern.

Although the paths are different, there are values which are common. It is these that the "Declaration Toward a Global Ethic" tries, with I think some success, to identify. They are not just a modern post-Enlightenment secular "wish list." As I tried to argue in the introduction to *Stepping Stones to a Global Ethic*, the contemporary concern for human rights is grounded in faith traditions. Indeed, Louis Henken has said (*The Rights of Man Today*

[Westview Press, 1978], p. xii) that "all the major religions proudly lay claim to fathering human rights." Likewise Section 4 of the report *Poverty and Development* says that "the present articulation of human rights is a secular formulation of the spiritual notion of the dignity inherent to each person, and thus has its grounding in the basic principles of all the religions."

How to Apply Shared Values to Contemporary Problems

The need now is for far more detailed reflection together by people of different faiths on the application of these values. I am not persuaded that religious leaders are the most suitable participants in the dialogue. We want people with the necessary expertise who are also people of faith to bring together their expertise and their faith. Religious knowledge or leadership is no substitute for detailed technical knowledge, say, about questions of development. But is there something distinctive that faith communities have to say beyond being in favor of peace and against poverty?

There is always the danger that other bodies may want to co-opt and use religious organizations for their purposes.

Photo: PPS

Young traders sit before computer monitors in a high-tech trading floor of the new Taipei Stock Exchange. Economic and technological unification can add to the richness of our lives, whereas the role of faith communities as a monitor of morality becomes more important.

In August 2000, the historic Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders met in the UN General Assembly Hall. It was clear to me that Kofi Annan saw the meeting as part of his emphasis on "We, the People," hoping that through the religious communities, the United Nations might relate more directly to the general public and hence build up popular support to encourage governments to be more supportive of the UN. Many of the religious leaders, however, came to lecture the UN on how it should act. It is equally not clear whether the World Bank—in the dialogue with religious leaders to which I have referred—is really willing to allow its vision of development and financial responsibility, which often seems to lead to the cutback of welfare programs, to be questioned by religious people or whether it wants to use faith communities to support its programs and to give moral respectability to its tarnished image. It needs also to be recognized that religious leaders and their institutions are not immune to the search for religious power.

The literature produced by the World Faiths Development Dialogue does in fact question many of the current assumptions about development and suggests specific alternative policies. It insists (*A Report on Progress, July 1998–December 2000*, WFDD, p. 10) that development should be holistic. "It is an all-embracing process, of which social, cultural, spiritual, political, and environmental aspects are equally as important as the economic." As a Mayan woman from Mexico put it: "Our culture tells us that our economic activities cannot be separated from social and religious life and cannot be reduced to economics" (*Cultures, Spirituality and Development* [WFDD, 2001], p. 5). WFDD makes it clear that the people most involved must be consulted. In Maori parlance, "What are the dreams of the people?" Development plans should not be decided by remote experts. WFDD also stresses that the option for the excluded must be a priority. Development that further marginalizes the poorest people is unacceptable. Further, WFDD questions the trickle-down theory of development and supports small local schemes.

To take another example, on environmental matters the motivation of the business and political world and of the religious world may not be the same. For example, the business world's concern for protecting the environment may be for economic advantage, whereas Islam, for example, "states emphatically that biodiversity must be protected for its intrinsic qualities and spiritual value" (from an unpublished paper: Dr. Lufti Radwan, "The Relationship of Man and the Environment: The Role of Islamic Cosmology in Contemporary Ecological Debate," delivered to the Oxford Abrahamic Group, p. 9).

Can these and other ethical values be brought to bear on political and business life? This certainly is the hope of those who produced the "Interfaith Declaration: A Code of Ethics on International Business for Christians, Muslims, and Jews" and the "Principles for Business" of the Caux

Leaders of the World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRP) meet with Australian Prime Minister Robert Hawke during the fifth assembly of the WCRP held in Melbourne in 1989. Faith communities can speak for the less powerful, urging national governments to recognize and honor their obligations.

Round Table (see *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, pp. 261–64). Both statements agree that companies have responsibilities over and above earning profits. They agree that maximizing profit should not be the sole motive of economic activity. It is suggested that shareholders should see themselves rather as stakeholders with a responsibility for all who have a stake in a business. Companies should recognize that they have a responsibility to their employees, to customers, to suppliers and financiers, to the community (local and national governments), and also to the owners, shareholders, or investors. I would add a responsibility to the environment, and some companies now have an environmental audit. Faith communities, which are close to the people, are in a good position to speak for the suppliers, as the low wages paid to many producers of raw material is a scandal.

Practical Results

There is some evidence that the concern for an ethical approach to business is having some effect. The Institute of Business Ethics (IBE) was established in 1986. Its latest survey shows that a growing number of companies provide a code of ethics for their employees and are also showing an interest in ethical/social audits—although less than half translate the code into other languages for local use overseas. The ethical issue of greatest concern is the source of supplies, which relates to public pressure about the use of child labor and the working conditions in many countries. The IBE gives some examples of good practice. For example, Nestlé is using its marketing expertise to make Russian children aware of the link between diet and health. Nestlé has been sponsoring the Russian TV version of the popular children's show "Sesame Street." It has used the cartoon

characters to produce books for 6–8-year-olds about the importance of healthy eating.

Another initiative is the Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum (PWBLF), which was set up in 1990 to promote “responsible business practices internationally that benefit business and society, and which help to achieve social, economic and environmentally sustainable development, particularly in new and emerging market economies.” Again, there are some results. The sports footwear industry plays a large part in Vietnam’s economy. In 1997, Pentland, one of the major international firms, commissioned a report that showed the dangers of poor ventilation, exposure to hazardous chemicals, and inadequate safety equipment. Subsequently, the PWBLF, after wide consultation, has drawn up a communal action plan, which is now being put into effect. In Mumbai (Bombay), what is said to be the first environmentally responsible hotel was opened in December 1998. All the wood is from Hevea (rubber) trees and treated to take on the properties of more expensive woods such as teak or maple. The Hevea trees are cropped and replanted in a 25–30-year cycle. Room hangers are made of pressed board obtained from recycled wood.

I give these examples to suggest that informed public opinion, which faith communities should help to shape, is encouraging some business enterprises to adopt more ethical policies. Further examples may encourage other companies to follow suit.

Regulation Is Necessary

Ethical behavior should be self-motivated, but companies also want to stay in business and need to be protected from the unscrupulous. This is why regulation is necessary and this is the role of national government and international bodies. But their actions will lack credibility if politicians’ integrity is in question and if they are too close to business leaders. As the French say, “the fish starts rotting from the head.” Equally international agreements are devalued if they either reflect the interests of the most powerful nations or are ignored by them. Here again, faith communities can speak for the less powerful and urge governments to recognize and honor their obligations.

Personal Morality

But while we have to be vigilant against corruption and malpractice, ethics, as I have said, needs to be self-motivated. In October 2001, the 12th International Anti-Corruption Conference was held in Prague—at which, for the first time, there was a panel about the contribution religions can make in the struggle against corruption. I was struck by some words of the secretary-general of Interpol, Ronald Noble. He warned that “if customs, police, and security professionals are corrupt, no expense of high-tech devices will provide our citizens with the securities they deserve. The most sophisticated security systems, best structures, or trained and dedicated personnel are useless

if they are undermined from inside by a simple act of corruption.” This suggests that there is no substitute for the personal integrity not only of political and business leaders, but of people at all levels in society.

Many business and political leaders are people of principle and we should not give in to the current widespread public cynicism. One senior manager, for example, carries with him Mahatma Gandhi’s list of “The Seven Deadly Sins in Today’s World” (quoted in *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, p. 261):

Wealth without work;
 Enjoyment without conscience;
 Knowledge without character;
 Business without morality;
 Science without humanity;
 Religion without sacrifice;
 Politics without principle.

Moral Formation

The importance of personal morality points to the urgent need to stress the importance of spiritual and moral formation. This is an area where faith communities have their biggest contribution to make and seem, at least in recent years in Britain, to have failed badly. Spiritual and moral formation should be the concern of parents and educationists. There is a group in America that produces a magazine called *Spiritual Parenting*, but too many parents give far more attention to physical care, and schools are judged too much on results and not enough on their moral and spiritual ethos.

After I had written this, I read the final section of WFDD’s *Poverty and Development*, which speaks of moral education as the most important issue of all and says that the current emphasis in education as “little more than training for a future job is profoundly mistaken.” Only moral and spiritual education will ensure that technical skills are used for the benefit of all.

Conclusion

A well-known business consultant said (quoted in *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, p. 264) that “to remain in the fast lane of life, one must always believe in something, but it doesn’t much matter what.” He went on, “everything is right, everything is wrong.”

Such moral relativism and indifference is a poison to the life both of the individual and of society. This is why faith communities need to affirm the moral values that they hold in common and try to ensure that these values are lived out in every sphere of life. We need to give a soul to globalization and to see that the benefits of technological developments are used for the good of all. It is an enormous task, but the alternative, a system of economics based upon greed, will create an increasingly violent society, which will bring upon itself its own self-destruction. □

Building a Nuclear-Free World of Peace and Harmony

by Naomi Shohno

A scholar who was born in Hiroshima, but who escaped the city's atomic bombing, describes the life experiences that led to profound changes in his thinking and his role in the antinuclear movement.

The twentieth century has been called “a century of war” and “a century of chaos.” For me, it was a century of greatly varied experiences. My first important experience was the war conducted by Japan in Asia and the Pacific, which started in 1931 and continued for 15 years. Born in 1925 in Hiroshima, I grew up during wartime and was educated under the prevailing doctrine of strong national militarism. On August 6, 1945, nine days before the war ended, the U.S. Army dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. At the time, I was a student in the Faculty of Science at Kyushu University. I returned to Hiroshima on August 9 to find out whether my parents were all right. I learned that they were alive but that many of my relatives, former teachers, and friends had been lost in the bombing. I witnessed with my own eyes the terrible destruction wreaked on Hiroshima. On that same day, another atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. By the end of 1945 the effects of the blast, thermal rays, and radiation had killed about 140,000 people out of Hiroshima's total population of 350,000, and 70,000 out of a total of 270,000 in Nagasaki. Even after 1945 a great many people continued to suffer dreadfully from the radiation sickness caused by the bombs. As a result, by the October 1950 national census, the total number of dead from the bombings was approximately 200,000 in Hiroshima and more than 100,000 in Nagasaki. The differences in the numbers of dead in the two cities arose because the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima exploded at an altitude of 580 meters above the center of the city, which is located on a plain, while the Nagasaki bomb exploded about 500 meters above a valley in the city's northwest section, which was separated from the city center by a mountain.

Hiroshima: The Point of Departure

I graduated from Kyushu University in 1947 and remained at its research facility to work on theoretical physics, studying atoms, the atomic nucleus, and elementary particles. Japanese society was exhausted from the long years of war and was under the occupation of the Allied forces, mainly

those of the United States. It was a time of confusion and shortages of material goods—impossible to imagine for people who have experienced only our present prosperity. This state of affairs continued for more than three years after Japan's defeat. During this time I thought about Japan's future and the mistake our country had made in pursuing a war of invasion. I came to place my hopes in the philosophy of materialism [which holds that everything in the universe can be explained in terms of matter and physical phenomena]. I was attracted to this philosophy because I had painful memories of the spiritualistic doctrines prevalent in Japan during the war years, and also because as a physicist I could easily understand materialism.

In June 1950 I transferred to the Hiroshima University

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Research Institute for Theoretical Physics, located in Takehara City in eastern Hiroshima Prefecture. The dark clouds of the Korean War had begun to gather over Asia. In April 1952 the Allied Occupation of Japan ended and Japan became independent; in July of the following year the Korean War ended. At about that time, however, the global nuclear arms race suddenly began to escalate. In this context, I decided that my mission was to become active in movements seeking to prohibit nuclear arms; in 1953 I transferred to Hiroshima Jogakuin University, located in Hiroshima City.

The main reasons for this decision were that I had lost many loved ones in the atomic bombing, and because I had seen with my own eyes the devastation in Hiroshima three days after the bombing. I was also greatly influenced by being a physicist. Physicists like me had committed the error of developing atomic weapons; thus I could not help being aware of the importance of scientists' role in society. It was a great shock to me when I learned that Dr. Albert Einstein had encouraged U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt to develop the atomic bomb. Einstein was a towering figure in theoretical physics, and his work had influenced my decision to study the subject. Even his appearance fascinated me. So I was extremely shocked when I learned that he had advocated the insane course of developing the atomic bomb as a deterrent to Nazi Germany, where he had been persecuted as a Jew. After the war, however, on learning of the hell that had been unleashed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Einstein was tormented by regrets and led the opposition to President Truman's 1950 orders to build the hydrogen bomb. And in July 1955, several years after both the United States and the Soviet Union had developed the hydrogen bomb, he and ten others, including the British philosopher Bertrand Russell (1872–1970) and the Japanese physicist Hideki Yukawa (1907–1981), published a declaration. It called for the elimination of nuclear weapons, the elimination of war, and a deeper understanding that all human beings are bound together in a common destiny. Einstein signed this declaration but passed away three months before its publication, at the age of 76. Nevertheless, this statement, which was called the "Russell-Einstein Manifesto," communicated his dying wish.

Since 1955 I had been involved in the nationwide movement to prohibit nuclear bombs, as a member of the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Nihon Gensuikyo) until the Council's final split-up in 1965, serving many times as chairman of the steering committee for world congresses. One of the painful impressions I received during my work with the movement was how terrifyingly self-centered political parties and the organizations closely linked to them are. In the midst of these entanglements, I learned that when human beings join an organization, they come to rely on the group's power for their self-preservation, and as a result become inhuman and warlike. Having had this kind of experience, after 1966 I joined the new

citizens' movements for the elimination of nuclear weapons, which were working mainly in Hiroshima, and became a sponsor for several of these groups. During this process I was often assailed by frustration and a sense of powerlessness. I started thinking about religion and the true nature of the human heart.

After 1964, taking part in peace conferences, I visited 22 nations around the world, particularly in Eastern Europe and including the United States. One of the realities I encountered in my travels was that, although our languages and cultures may be different, we are all still human beings, and if we can talk together, we will be able to understand one another. Another thing I felt keenly was that the people of all countries earnestly desire freedom as well as economic prosperity. As I noted earlier, after the war I had believed in materialism. However, doubts about science, which had created nuclear weapons capable of obliterating the human race, and experiences with the breakup of the antinuclear movement in Japan led me to extend my interest to matters of religion. At the same time, my travels in Eastern Europe forced me to think about the limitations of materialistic philosophy.

So, what about spiritualism? What is the true nature of material objects? What is the true nature of spirit? I continued to seek answers to these questions, eventually realizing that both materialism and spiritualism are mistaken, in that they are both extreme arguments. In the course of this thinking, I gained my faith in Buddhism; in 1975 I received the Buddhist name Kozen. Thenceforth I made efforts to pursue, as best as I could, a new epistemological principle in the context of a life in faith. I arrived at a principle of epistemology that I term the "dialectic of matter and mind." Briefly, this theory is based on the true nature of matter, the true nature of mind, and dialectics. It incorporates the principles of the interactive effects of matter and mind, of natural dialectics, and of social dialectics. The principle of dialectics, stated succinctly, is: All existences, both spiritual and material, necessarily undergo change as a result of the mutual effects of their relations, with large-scale changes resulting from strong mutual effects.

History of the Antinuclear Movement

World War II had killed well over 20 million people and given rise to nuclear weapons—the greatest threat ever to humankind. With Japan's unconditional surrender on August 15, 1945, the war finally came to a close.

In October of the same year, the United Nations was created and the debate about nuclear capability began. Relations between the United States and the Soviet Union had been distrustful ever since the birth of the Soviet Union in 1917. Attempting to maintain its dominant position, the United States insisted on conducting nuclear tests while the discussion in the United Nations was still going on. These actions caused feelings of insecurity in the Soviet

Union, which developed its own atomic bomb in September 1949. In response, the United States started work on the hydrogen bomb, which it tested in November 1952. In reaction to that event, the Soviet Union succeeded in testing a hydrogen bomb the following August. Thus began the nuclear arms race between the two superpowers.

Meanwhile, the first large-scale world peace congress took place in April 1949, with simultaneous assemblies in Paris and Prague discussing the same agenda. The background to these conferences was a sense of danger arising from the United States' firm policy of maintaining a monopoly on nuclear weapons, and from the cold war that had been brewing since 1947. The steering committee that was set up during that first world peace congress (which changed its name to the World Peace Council in November 1950) resolved in March 1950 at Stockholm to initiate a petition campaign. The petition called for the unconditional prohibition of atomic bombs, establishment of an international monitoring system to ensure compliance, and institution of the principle that the government officials of any nation that used atomic bombs first would be treated as war criminals. This was the famous "Stockholm Appeal." With the start of the Korean War in June 1950, the petition campaign received immediate support throughout the world. By August of the same year, 300 million people had signed; by 1953, 500 million had signed (in Japan, a little over 6.05 million). This movement prevented the use of U.S.-made atomic bombs in the Korean War and also gave rise to the movement against nuclear weapons in Japan.

On March 1, 1954, however, in the midst of the growing worldwide antinuclear movement, the United States conducted a test of a powerful hydrogen bomb—the "Bravo Explosion"—at Bikini Atoll in the Marshall Islands. The destructive power of that bomb was about 1,000 times greater than the force of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima; in terms of equivalence to the chemical explosive TNT, it measured 15 megatons (one megaton is one million tons). A Japanese tuna fishing boat operating in waters near Bikini Atoll, the *Fukuryu Maru No. 5*, was showered with a large amount of radioactive fallout from the blast. Although it managed to return to its home port in Yaizu, Shizuoka Prefecture, its 23 crew members all came down with serious radiation sickness, and strong radiation was detected in the tuna catch on board. One of the crew members, chief radio operator Aikichi Kuboyama, died on September 23 of that year.

This incident powerfully shocked the Japanese; fear of nuclear weapons again surged among a wide proportion of the population. Both the lower and upper houses of the Japanese National Diet, as well as many local government bodies, adopted resolutions opposing the atomic and hydrogen bombs. The episode also sparked petition campaigns, led mainly by women's groups in Hiroshima

and Tokyo. The movement to prohibit nuclear weapons became more citizen oriented and included all political parties.

This citizen-led movement and the World Peace Council worked together to convene the historic First World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, held in Hiroshima on August 6, 1955. The three-day summit was attended by more than 50 representatives from 11 foreign countries, who brought with them copies of petitions signed by 606 million people. About 5,000 Japanese also participated, with copies of petitions signed by more than 32 million people. I was privileged to be a member of the organizing staff. This event launched the annual peace conferences held every August in Hiroshima; the center for the world movement against atomic and hydrogen bombs came to be located in Japan. In the September following the First World Conference, the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (*Nihon Gensuikyo*) was formed in Tokyo. Its main aims were to work for the elimination of nuclear weapons, to assist victims of the atomic bombings, and to establish regional organizations in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and other areas of the country.

The First World Conference functioned mainly to raise awareness, but after the Second World Conference in Nagasaki more specific and concrete measures were added to the agenda. At the Second World Conference the Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organizations (*Nihon Hidankyo*) was formed, and the movement to assist the atomic bomb victims took a great step forward. In March 1957 the Japanese government established the Medical Treatment for Atomic-Bomb Victims Act. Beginning with the Third World Conference, held in August 1957 in Tokyo, an international preparatory conference took place concurrently.

Meanwhile, however, spurred by the nuclear arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom came to possess the atomic bomb in 1952 and the hydrogen bomb in 1957, making it the third nation to have nuclear weapons.

In October 1961 the Soviet Union, which had not tested any nuclear weapons for more than three years, suddenly carried out a test of an immense, 50-megaton hydrogen bomb. This event caused conflict within *Nihon Gensuikyo* between the Japan Communist Party, which held that nuclear testing by socialist countries was defensive and could not be lumped together with testing by other countries, and the Japan Socialist Party, which held that opposition to nuclear testing by all countries should be a basic principle of the movement. On August 5, 1962, while the Eighth World Conference was going on in Tokyo, the Soviet Union again conducted a nuclear test. After a heated argument, the conference refrained from adopting a resolution objecting to the test. Then, when the Partial Test Ban Treaty (which allows underground nuclear testing) was

The author guiding Dr. Joseph Rotblat, now emeritus president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs and 1995 Nobel Peace Prize laureate, in the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park during the International Symposium on the Damage and After-effects of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1977.

initialed by the United States, the Soviet Union, and the United Kingdom in July 1963, differences in opinion about this issue sharpened the discord between the Japan Socialist Party and the Japan Communist Party. People associated with the Socialist Party withdrew from the Ninth World Conference held at Hiroshima that August, and in February 1965 they launched the Japan Congress Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (Gensuikin Kokumin Kaigi). Subsequently, the Nihon Gensuikyo came to be associated with the Japan Communist Party. As a result of this split, after 1965 Gensuikyo and Gensuikin pursued their activities separately, while movements of citizens unwilling to associate themselves with any political party also came into being. I think it is possible to say, however, that the survival of the antinuclear movement beyond the breakup of its organizational base is of considerable significance.

It is important to add that France obtained the atomic bomb in 1960 and the hydrogen bomb in 1968 and that China acquired the atomic bomb in 1964 and the hydrogen bomb in 1967. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was established under the aegis of the United Nations in March 1970. It called on signatories to prevent countries other than the five existing nuclear nations from possessing nuclear weapons, appealed for continuing, good-faith disarmament negotiations between nuclear countries, and established an NPT conference to be held every five years to review the treaty.

Toward a Postnuclear World of Harmony

In July and August 1977 the International Symposium on the Damage and Aftereffects of the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (ISDA) was held in Tokyo,

Hiroshima, and Nagasaki at the initiative of the NGO [nongovernmental organizations] Special Commission on Disarmament at the United Nations. Gensuikin and Gensuikyo both attended this meeting, as did I and other individuals. After this symposium, cooperation between the Japanese antinuclear groups was revived; a unified Japanese delegation attended the First Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Disarmament (SSD I) in 1978. A united annual World Conference was again held in August. And after 1981, fears about limited nuclear war fostered a resurgence of the antinuclear movement in Europe, which forged links with the Japanese movement. This situation encouraged the continuation of a unified World Conference until 1985, which was also the 40th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Due to problems arising from the management of the World Conferences, a confrontation between Gensuikin and Gensuikyo arose again in 1986; and from 1987 onward a united World Conference again became an impossibility. However, thanks to these two organizations, and to the many citizens' groups working on the issue, the movement to rid the world of nuclear weapons continues in Japan today.

The point I wish to emphasize is that the elimination of nuclear weapons is a vital goal that needs to be realized through UN mediation. The United Nations adopted a resolution in 1972 on a treaty to prohibit the development, production, and stockpiling of bacteriological weapons, and another in 1993 to prohibit poison gas and other toxic weapons. [The present Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxic Weapons and Their Destruction entered into force in 1975.] In 1996 the UN General Assembly adopted a text for the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). The United States, however, refuses to ratify this treaty, and continues to carry out subcritical nuclear tests without explosions. That is, the CTBT has not yet taken effect. This is one reason why both India and Pakistan, engaged in a harsh confrontation over territorial rights in Kashmir, insisted on going through with underground nuclear tests in 1998. Including these blasts, a total of about 2,000 nuclear tests have been carried out so far on our planet. Furthermore, at a UN conference held in 2000 to review the NPT, the nuclear-armed nations made a promise to begin the process of eliminating nuclear weapons, but no timetable was adopted. Pakistan, India, and Israel are now de facto nuclear-armed nations, but none of them has become a party to the NPT.

Considering this history, I believe that if nuclear weapons are really to be eliminated through UN mediation, the country that had the first and now largest nuclear arsenal—the United States—must ratify the CTBT and take the initiative to eliminate its own nuclear arms.

As a Buddhist, I cannot help considering one of the major problems in the history of religion. Although reli-

gions, if they are true to their essence, should promote the cause of peace, they have repeatedly clashed with one another. Governments have also regularly misused religion to promote war since at least 2600 B.C.E., the age of Mesopotamia, up to the present, with differences only in the degree of exploitation. The underlying cause of this situation is the melding of politics and religion, coupled with religious people's tendency to become blindly committed once they have decided to protect their religion.

In its essence, religion is a spiritual activity; we adherents believe in the existence of the glorious gods or buddhas and rely on that faith while searching our own souls. By such introspection, we hope to correct ourselves, as well as to remain kindhearted and live in harmony with others. All religions espouse equality and harmony among humankind, and no religion exists for the benefit of any particular nation or race of people. Anyone who understands the true meaning of religion should be able to judge what is right or wrong about any kind of politics. But when a prominent religion neglects to engage in dialogue with other religions and keeps exclusively to itself, it creates an obstacle to the possibility of harmony among human beings.

To allow humankind to live into the future, all religions should cooperate without delay to establish a world federation of nations. This goal can be achieved if the faithful of all religions arrive at a common understanding of the

true nature of religion. To facilitate this process the UN will need to become a venue for continuing dialogue.

At present there are 192 nations in the world. Of these, 191 are members of the United Nations, and the remaining one (the Vatican) participates as an observer. It is of great significance that, since its establishment in 1945, the United Nations has not fallen apart; in fact, the number of member states has continually increased, finally reaching full participation.

The United Nations' main objective is to preserve international peace. It also plays an important role in promoting international cooperation on social, economic, cultural, environmental, humanitarian, and other issues. Therefore the United Nations should actively take up the important subject of eliminating nuclear weapons through the cooperation of all religions. Furthermore, to establish a world in which human beings live in harmony, the United Nations should be improved and strengthened, and a world federation of all nations should be created as soon as possible. To realize this goal, however, the future policies of the nation with the world's largest nuclear arsenal, which moreover hosts the UN headquarters on its soil—the United States of America—will be of fundamental importance. The solution to the exceedingly grave problem of whether or not human beings will be able to live in harmony is now the responsibility of the United States. □

Photo: Ittetsu Morishita

Members of the Japanese National Delegation to the First Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Disarmament in 1978 join a parade in New York, appealing for the abolition of nuclear weapons.

In Praise of Mildness

by Nichiko Niwano

Shakyamuni's teaching is the teaching of peace. If we could control and cut off anger and violence—and thus conflict and war—then peace and harmony would appear.

Japan is said to have spent the last fifty-odd years in peace. Whether this has been peace in a true sense, however, is questionable. Looking around the world, we can hardly say that it has been peaceful. To find true peace, all people need to create peace within themselves, desiring peace and striving to attain it.

No amount of external power can bring about peace or fundamentally wipe out conflict. True peace is created only when individuals cultivate mildness within themselves. As with the world and society, trouble, strife, and confrontation between individuals can only be fundamentally resolved when they bring mildness to their dealings with each other.

The Seventeen-Article Constitution of the great Japanese statesman and thinker Prince Shotoku (573–621) begins with the famous words “Harmony is to be valued,” which express a basic and universal human desire. The aim of Buddhism too is harmony. That “harmony is to be valued” is the true path for Japan—indeed, for all of

humanity—was articulated by Prince Shotoku some fourteen hundred years ago.

People feel most comfortable, relaxed, and serene when they are in harmony. Replacing “harmony” (*wa*) with “mildness” (*yawaragi*) in the passage quoted above, I feel, conveys the spirit of Shotoku’s words still more clearly: “Mildness is to be valued.” *Yawaragi* connotes freedom, flexibility, gentleness, and tranquillity. It is the state in which self-centeredness has been totally broken down. Awareness of the law of transience opens the way to the realm of tranquillity.

Shakyamuni’s teaching is the teaching of peace. In short, Buddhism equals peace. While it is hard to express what this peace means in just a few words, we can say that where there is violence, there is no peace. Violence takes many forms. Raising one’s fist against another is, of course, violence; so is coercing or dominating others. Attempting to manipulate and control others to make them conform with one’s own selfish thoughts and desires is violence, as well. When others do not do as one wants, one is stirred to anger. This anger is the root cause of violence.

If people could control and cut off anger, then violence—and thus conflict and war—would disappear. If anger were tamed and converted into mildness, the realm of peace would emerge. Conversely, until anger disappears from people’s inner life, there can be no peace. We need to look within and reflect on whether we can really control and cut off anger toward one another. Anger has a major bearing on everything from family peace to world peace.

Article 10 of Prince Shotoku’s Seventeen-Article Constitution has this to say about anger: “Let us cease from wrath, and refrain from angry looks. Nor let us be resentful when others differ from us. For all men have hearts, and each heart has its own leanings. Their right is our wrong, and our right is their wrong. We are not unquestionably sages, nor are they unquestionably fools. Both of us are simply ordinary men. How can any one lay down a rule by which to distinguish right from wrong? For we are all, one with another, wise and foolish, like a ring which has no end. Therefore, although others give way to anger, let us

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Portrait of Prince Shotoku holding a scepter of rank and flanked by two young princes. Thought to date from the late 7th or early 8th century. Colors on paper. Imperial Household Agency.

on the contrary dread our own faults, and though we alone may be in the right, let us follow the multitude and act like men.”²

What should we do when someone displays anger toward us? Prince Shotoku says, “Although others give way to anger, let us on the contrary dread our own faults.” In other words, let us ask ourselves what within ourselves has provoked the other person’s anger. If we face someone who is angry with us and acknowledge our own fault, the other’s anger will fade away.

In most cases, we blame the other person for not understanding our feelings or not knowing the facts. And we react to anger with anger. But as Prince Shotoku says, “Both of us are simply ordinary men.” Neither of us is perfect. The other person may be wrong in some ways, but so are we. Can we honestly say that we have done nothing to make the other person angry? It is important that we take note of this. It all comes down to whether we look at our own or the other person’s faults first. If we reflect on our own errors and apologize for them, the other person’s anger will dissipate.

Generally, when we are tussling, we do not hit someone who is down. And when we see a helpless opponent we are driven to reflect on our own behavior. Mutual self-reflection generates mildness, and conflict disappears. What is important is that both parties, instead of assuming that they are absolutely right and totally without fault, reflect on the fact that “both of us are simply ordinary men.” It is important to realize that we are not perfect but are “ordinary men” in the eyes of the gods and the buddhas. This realization makes people gentle, brings peace to the world, dispels confrontation, and gives rise to harmony. When we leave anger to the other person, quietly question ourselves about our own flaws, and are mindful, the other person’s anger naturally subsides and the realm of mildness and harmony emerges. □

1. W. G. Aston, trans., *Nihongi: Chronicles of Japan from the Earliest Times to A.D. 697*, 2 vols. in 1 (London: Keagan and Co., 1896), vol. 2, pp. 128–33.

2. Ibid.

Lifting a Stone from the Heart

by Ann Rinehard

An American member spoke at Rissho Kosei-kai of Oklahoma on July 4, 2001, describing how her experiences had taught her that what she does affects not only her own life but the lives of all.

We think of certain ages as landmarks. My fiftieth year was a landmark. It began with the end of my marriage and retirement from my work in the oil and gas industry in Oklahoma. My daughter, with whom I'd always been close, had moved out of state a year earlier. My heart still hurt at the thought of her being so far away. So, with no long-term goals, I left Oklahoma City for the countryside and became content to live like a gypsy, staying first with one friend and then with others.

As we know, everything changes. After a year it was time to come back to the city. I still didn't have any plans. But after I moved back, two life-changing events occurred. First, at my sister's suggestion, I attended a weekend seminar on massage therapy. This had been her profession for 15 years, and she still enjoyed it. I found I enjoyed it too, so much that I became a student again for the first time in 30 years. I also became my sister's housemate, something I'm not sure she had in mind when she suggested that I go back to school.

The second change was also brought about by my sister. She had joined Rissho Kosei-kai and invited me to come to the services. For a long time I listened to the words of the chant—just the sound of the words—before I tried to begin to understand the meaning of the *Kyoden* [Sutra Readings]. But as I began to study the teachings, the meaning became clearer.

When our minister talked about the law of cause and effect, I realized that I am always the cause of what happens in my life. I was as responsible as my ex-husband for the end of our marriage. When I began to stop blaming him it was as though a stone were being lifted from my heart.

This same teaching makes me think about what I'm doing when I make decisions. The law of cause and effect tells me that what I decide will affect my life as well as the lives of others. I hope that, through this teaching, I am becoming kinder and more careful in my choices.

From the Three Treasures [of the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha] I learned that while we honor only the Buddha

and the Buddha's teachings, there is also a Sangha, a community of believers, and we help each other uphold the teachings. We don't practice alone. And in the second of the Three Seals of the Dharma [all things are impermanent, nothing has an ego, and nirvana is quiescence] we

Ann Rinehard, a massage therapist, is always ready to help others.

see that all sentient beings are interconnected. So the community of believers reaches out not only to each other, but to the rest of the world. Our member's vow states that "we pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way to bring peace to our families, communities, and countries, and to the world."

These words come back to me when I think of the 1999 tornadoes that ravaged Oklahoma City and of the bombing of the Murrah Building in 1995, which hurt not only our city but the rest of the nation as well. But I also think of the people here, who helped each other through both disasters. And I think of the Dharma Center we have built here, a place of peace.

With the Eightfold Path the Buddha gave us a guide for living. One of the ways we meditate is with eyes half-open and half-shut, so that we see both internally and externally. This gives us a bridge between ourselves and the world around us. The Eightfold Path teaches us to consider what the Buddha has taught us, and what is for the good of all beings, rather than what we may desire for ourselves. This seems simple, but it means practicing the teachings every day, in everything we do. Old habits die hard, so it's not easy. These days I often see myself as a very busy person with a lot to do. I have a full-time massage business, for which I am grateful. But at times it becomes a chore to consider the needs of each client, and not just process them through my office like products on an assembly line, so that I can get on to the next one. The Eightfold Path says that "right living" is earning a livelihood that does not harm others; this teaching reminds me that I am here to be of service to my clients, who come to me in an effort to maintain their health.

It's easy for me to be this busy person in the rest of my life as well. But there again is the Eightfold Path, reminding me to see through the Buddha's eyes, think as the Buddha would think, live in a way that won't hurt others, even speak in a way that does no harm. And if I ignore this teaching? I am responsible for what happens. It's not easy; I am a work in progress and always will be.

Of all the teachings, however, those that had the most impact on me were the Three Seals of the Dharma, the Four Seals of the Dharma, and the Four Noble Truths. From these teachings, we learn that everything changes; that there is no ego (me versus you), only the interconnection of all sentient beings; that if we resist change we will suffer, but that if we can accept reality, suffering will end.

The Buddha said, "Everything dear to us causes us pain." Last year my daughter and son-in-law joined the Peace Corps and moved to Suriname, a small country in South America, to teach and help build a village school. Although I was happy that they could fulfill their dream and proud that their work would help others, I was also sad to realize that they would be even farther away than the four-hour flight to their home in the United States. This feeling was

like a little dark cloud growing over my good feelings for them. I wondered why they couldn't help people in their own country, so that they could live closer to me. As time went on, I began to resent the Peace Corps, my daughter and her husband, and family and friends who congratulated them and wished them well. My ego saw everyone as "them," pitted against poor "me," who would have to miss my children for two and a half long years.

I knew that I would suffer as long as I maintained this attitude. So I tried to look at the situation from my children's perspective. As I did, I realized that we were, indeed, all on the same side. My daughter and her husband know about Buddhism only through their relationship with those of us who try to practice it to the best of our ability. But they were giving up attachment to the comfortable life they knew, trusting that they were on the right path and that, whatever changes they encountered, they were in the place they were supposed to be. With this guidance from the teachings, I finally accepted that they were not leaving me, but were expanding and strengthening our connection to the world around us. In *Invisible Eyelashes* Founder Niwano talked about the words *of* and *and*. He said that it is not about "the world *and* I." It is about "I *of* the world."

In talking to you today I have tried to explain in some small way how my coming to Buddhism and to Rissho Kosei-kai has helped me. Since becoming a member I've started a new career from which I've received more than I can ever give, and I'm grateful for that. I'm thankful to the wise words of "right living," which remind me to appreciate my livelihood. I'm trying to learn compassion and patience. And I'm grateful for the awareness that I'm a work in progress, through many physical lifetimes, and for the compassion of the Buddha, which never judges but only gives "gentle words of wisdom."

Finally, I'm grateful for the Sangha, the people who have come into my life and are my spiritual family. I so much appreciate the Japanese ministers and members who started Rissho Kosei-kai in Oklahoma. You have worked hard to make it a home for all of us. Thank you!

I don't have enough words to thank Kris Ladusau, who worked with our ministers to create an English-speaking group here and to build this center.

In America we are many different people culturally and sometimes our spiritual family is different from our biological family. I am blessed that my physical and spiritual family are the same. As you know, my sister brought me into Rissho Kosei-kai. When she did, our roles reversed; my little sister became my big sister in Buddhism. She now has the sometimes tough task of being my guide to the Way. Our mother has been a lifelong support to us. So she was already a friend of Rissho Kosei-kai when I joined. She is here helping today, as she's always here when I need help.

To my mother and my sister I can offer only love and gratitude that we are all here together.

Thank you.



Breaking the Silence on Violence

—A Report on the Third International Think Sangha Meeting—

by Jonathan Watts

From February 4 to 9, Think Sangha held its third international meeting in Chiang Mai, Thailand, on the topic “Buddhist Responses to Modern Violence.” Sixteen people from Thailand, the United States, Japan, Indonesia, India (Ladakh), Sri Lanka, Germany, Australia, and Shan State of northern Burma took part. This was our first meeting in Thailand since our inaugural Dhammic Society Meeting in 1996, which predated the formation of Think Sangha. After meetings in Japan and Hawaii, Thailand was a significant choice of venue, because it marked a shifting emphasis in Think Sangha to nurture more actively the grassroots-activist, or compassion-in-action, aspect of our identity. For the last few years, our theoretical-analysis, or wisdom-in-action, identity has been dominant.

This analytical emphasis has meant that most of our writings and work have emerged from a more deductive approach; that is, we have generally started with a deep understanding of various Buddhist conceptual tools (such as not-self or dependent origination) and worked outward, applying these tools to social issues to create a Buddhist form of social analysis. While this approach has its merits, all good Buddhists know that wisdom and compassion form an indivisible pair that mutually enrich each other. In this way, inductive approaches to confronting social issues from a Buddhist perspective are needed—that is, to begin with our daily struggles as Buddhists to confront suffering and work inward toward developing principles and practices that have arisen from these struggles. In this

third Think Sangha meeting, for the first time, Asians formed the greater majority, most having grassroots experiences in the South. As such, it was natural that the group took a more inductive approach to confront the issue of violence.

In this way, the group began with their own personal experiences of Buddhist practice in relation to violence and worked outward over the next five days to include gender and family violence, religious and ethnic violence, and national and global violence. After exploring our basic Buddhist identities, we broke into small groups to share a violent event (experienced or witnessed) that had had a direct impact on us. We were asked to share how our understanding and practice of Buddhism helped us to respond to, or

Jonathan Watts (fourth from left in the back row) and other participants in the Think Sangha meeting in Chiang Mai.

cope with, the experience. Finally, we were instructed to record any principles that were revealed by these stories and to report them back to the main group. Not surprisingly, one set of principles that emerged was compassion (*karuna*)—love and forgiveness in confronting the perpetrators of violence. However, these principles immediately led to deeper contentious issues concerning the boundary between forgiving and forgetting, and to questions about what a Buddhist concept of justice might be. Buddhism is often stereotyped as being socially passive toward social injustice. While this may be positive in that Buddhism has rarely if ever created holy wars, according to Gandhi's understanding of nonviolence, such passivity can be equally damaging when it allows, and thereby supports, the violent actions of others. Buddhists often think that it is better to do nothing than to act out of anger or be forced into violent action through engagement, which creates more bad karma. However, as Bhikkhuni Dhammananda from Thailand noted, if one is in a situation to help another and doesn't, then one transgresses one's own precepts. Karma is not only what one has done but also includes what one hasn't done and what one can do as intentional, moral action. This initial discussion exposed a deep, common theme for the following days concerning the difference between passivity and equanimity (*upekkha*) and the interpretation of the doctrine of karma as a kind of retributive justice.

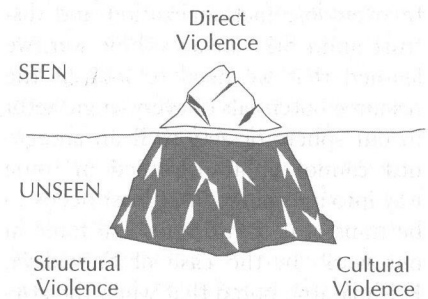
Concerning gender and family issues, we learned from our host Ouyporn Khuankaew of the International Women's Partnership (IWP) about the popular teaching of karma that perpetuates an inferiority complex among women toward not only their spiritual capabilities but also their worth in daily society. In her conference paper, Ouyporn noted that if a woman seeks out a monk for advice concerning physical beatings by her husband, she will usually be told that this violence is caused by karma and that "she cannot do much except be patient and kind to her husband so that one day the karmic force will cease and everything will be fine." In this way,

women are dissuaded from ever leaving abusive husbands. Ouyporn spoke of this situation as a kind of "structural karma" in that prevailing attitudes about women, their power, and their worth build a structure (or more precisely a culture) into which both women and men are inculcated.

Concerning ethnic and religious violence, we learned from Khuensai Jaiyen of the Shan Herald Agency for News how the doctrine of karma is used to instill passivity toward violent oppression. In Shan State of northern Burma—where the Shan people share a common Buddhist heritage with the majority Burmese who dominate the military government, Khuensai noted that most monks in the region are Burmese and have links to the military. They tend to emphasize patience or equanimity toward the trouble in this region, and also teach karma as the reason for present sufferings. There is a prevalent view among the Shan people inculcated by Buddhism that to recruit soldiers to resist the Burmese military is evil, because it means taking part in killing and the creation of more bad karma in the future. In turn, they have developed a sense of fatalism that their suffering is due to bad karma from past lives. Khuensai said the idea of past karma has been used to make the people submissive, so they are waiting for a savior, unable to liberate themselves. He also commented that nonviolence has been interpreted here as passivity, so instead of fighting for their rights, the people choose to flee.

Concerning national and global issues, these issues of passivity and resignation were further encountered in stories from the North. Participants from the United States and Japan spoke of the deep fear and emotional paralysis that most citizens in these countries confront in their repressed awareness of complicity in environmental destruction and structural violence through economic development and militarism. Our responsibility for direct forms of violence is integrally related to our complicity with structural and cultural violence. This was something we learned on the first day of the meeting from Yeshua Moser, director of the South-

east Asia Office for Non-Violence International in Bangkok. He provided us with our one theoretical model to reflect upon during our conversations—the triangle matrix of direct-structural-cultural violence developed by Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung.



With direct violence as the apex of the iceberg poking out of the water, structural and cultural violence form its bases, usually hidden from sight beneath the water. In this way, to confront the roots of direct violence in their structural and cultural forms means also to confront one's own unconscious patterns of belief, thought, and action in our daily lives. In his conference paper, Yeshua spoke of the Buddhist precepts (*sila*) in terms of examining one's own personal connections with systems of killing and living in a way that removes complicity with them. As examples, he cited from personal experience his having become vegetarian, not paying taxes that support government spending on the military, and taking part in various kinds of nonviolent social activism.

Concerning the experience of fear and emotional paralysis in the face of violence, the group used some of Buddhist teacher Joanna Macy's practices in her workshops dealing with despair and empowerment. Using the Buddhist insight of nonduality and interconnectedness, participants were asked to draw webs of interconnection between their own activities and partners and further outward toward other like-minded groups to see the deep solidarity of people working for transformative awareness and social justice. At the same time, participants were instructed

to fill in the other half of these webs with the groups who oppose the work of the participant's web of solidarity. Finally, we were asked to choose two or three of these "antagonists" and explore ways in which they could be transformed into allies. Drawing on the experiences of Arjuna Krishnaratne of the Sarvodaya movement in Sri Lanka to overcome factionalization and distrust amid Sri Lanka's ethnic war, we learned that we need to look at the resource potentials of every single actor in our sphere of action. If an antagonist cannot be transformed in some way into a resource, it at least needs to be transformed into a neutral force in our work. In the case of Sarvodaya, Krishnaratne noted that when the government is opposed to you, if you provide a service that they don't or can't, and then you can gain their respect, they will have to deal with you.

In our short time together, it was certainly impossible to resolve all issues regarding violence. The discussion about how to confront the military regime in Burma represents an ongoing challenge for Buddhism as to how to respond to extreme violence while maintaining one of the deepest practices of nonharming. Phra Paisal, who teaches nonviolent methods to border police in Thailand, called on the group to perceive situations more widely, and not just as political struggles. Buddhism can work perhaps most effectively in these areas of structural and cultural violence. He said you may fight and kill, but you can't use Buddhism to legitimize it. It is essential to not make the Dhamma serve your own ends, but to use it to challenge yourself to grow.

Using the Dhamma to challenge ourselves to grow, I believe, is very much at the heart of the inductive approach we used at this meeting. Ironically, our one Christian participant, Gerhard Koberlin of Hamburg University in Germany, best summed up this approach as "ecumenical learning," which uses personal interaction and communication as the basis for transformation. This may sound simple, yet it has extremely significant ramifications. Such interaction and communication do not mean simply to "be present" with those peo-

ple we meet. Rather, they are a more active engagement of reaching out to the suffering and the marginalized. This outreach to the marginalized means creating spaces for breaking the silence concerning the experiences of marginalization, because perhaps the greatest injustice that the marginalized experience is the fact that their histories go unrecorded and their voices go unheard. In our short meeting, we attempted to honor this spirit by giving all the participants the stage for telling their stories to the group. This act of speech is a first step in empowering various types of Buddhists to rearticulate the teachings in a historical and social context that meets their needs—rather than as decontextualized principles that engender resignation to karmic destinies.

In conclusion, the group committed itself to various "ecumenical learning" activities through mutual visits in support of each other. Principally, this will involve visits by the Thai women and *bhikkhuni* in the group to Indonesia and an exposure trip for young Indonesian Buddhists to Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka. Most participants have also committed themselves to recording their stories in written form. In addition, others have committed themselves to writing more deductive, theoretical papers on Buddhist responses to violence. We are also developing a short declaration on the meaning of karma as intentional, moral action rather than retributive justice. Finally, many in the group have taken up the challenge to further reduce their complicity with forces of violence by engaging in direct, nonviolent protests against the war in Iraq. □

Jonathan Watts is a research fellow at the Jodo Shu Research Institute at Zojoji in Tokyo. He is also coordinator for Think Sangha, a socially engaged Buddhist think tank affiliated with the Buddhist Peace Fellowship (BPF) in the United States and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (INEB). It uses a Buddhist Sangha model to explore pressing social issues and concerns. For more information, visit their website, at: <<http://www.bpf.org/think.html>>.

Interreligious Conference on Environment Issues Is Convened in Rome

by Eva Ruth Palmieri

Religions and the Environment: Thought, Projects, and Collaboration between Cultures and Religions" was the title of an international, interreligious conference organized in Rome on April 29 by the World Brothers Association, in cooperation with WCRP/Europe and WCRP/Italy.

Speakers included religious representatives, scholars, and environmentalists from four historically great world religions (Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam). The program included quotations from the Holy Scriptures of these four traditions.

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. (Genesis 1.31—Judaism and Christianity)

If the Messiah comes while you are planting a tree, first finish planting it and then go to greet Him. (Talmud—Judaism)

Every living thing has sprung from water. (Sura 21, 30—Islam)

He who follows the road of Illumination, abstains from harming seeds and plants. By abandoning the poison of ill will, with a purified heart, he lives with compassion and respect for every living thing. (Anguttara-Nikaya—Buddhism)

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (Luke, 12.27—Christianity)

In addition to speakers from Italy, others came from Algeria, Tunisia, Israel, and Jordan. The one-day meeting covered religious thought on humankind's interaction with the environment as presented by speakers of the different faith traditions, and concrete examples of cross-cultural and interreligious projects in the Middle East and Asia.

Tamar Keinan from Tel Aviv and Feda Hajir from Amman spoke about

the "Good Water Neighbors Project" sponsored by the Friends of the Earth, Middle East Section. Offices of the organization are based in Tel Aviv, Bethlehem, and Amman. Supported by both the European Community and the "Wye River" program of the United States government, the project involves cooperation among villages in Jordan, Palestine, and Israel in the shared-water problems of the three nations. The objectives of the program are: "to ensure a fair water supply for domestic use for all people in the region; to encourage people to conserve water, to recycle it, to reuse it, and to use water resources responsibly and carefully; to prevent water pollution and to set up appropriate sewage treatment facilities; and to allocate water for streams and nature reserves in order to rehabilitate them."

Ms. Keinan and Ms. Hajiir related their personal experiences in promoting educational activities "to encourage communities to understand the relationship between good neighborliness and shared responsibility for joint action to ensure a fair supply of water for all." Their work was described as, above all, a commitment to reaching out and educating people to the common values shared by the different religious and national traditions living in the region.

David Kahan, a senior officer for agricultural economics at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), spoke of his experiences in directing a project in which technical know-how from the Middle East "was applied to address environmental problems in the Buddhist country of Myanmar (Burma) in Asia." The FAO project, entitled "Environmentally Sustainable Food Security and Income Opportunities," has been operating since 1996 in the dry zone of Myanmar. Food insecurity and lack of safe drinking water are serious problems there. The issues faced "were very similar to the conditions found in other arid zones and in particular the problems of the Middle East. The Israeli experience was seen to be most relevant and something to be replicated." So the FAO facilitated a collaboration between the Center for International Agricultural

Development Cooperation and the Institute for Desert Research of the Ben Gurion University of the Negev.

"Pioneering research has been conducted in Israel in water harvesting over the last four decades," Mr. Kahan said. "It began as an attempt to reconstruct the ancient farming systems in these countries that sustained themselves by utilizing this combination of rainwater and runoff. Water harvesting was also needed in the dry zone of Myanmar, as both surface and ground water sources are not readily available, and where they are not available it is not economic to develop them. Thus a water harvesting and soil conservation strategy was adopted as the main thrust of the development approach."

The project has been successful in reducing the rate of land degradation, soil erosion, and deforestation, and through this, in raising the quality of life for the people of Myanmar. A greater awareness of the need to protect the environment was created, and community members were trained through courses offered to them.

"The lesson learned," Mr. Kahan said, is that "cooperation and partnership among all ethnic groups, peoples, cultures, races, and religions [can lead to] learning from the past to address the problems of the present and provide hope for all people in the future."

The contributions of the religious representatives to the conference, which preceded these concrete examples of interfaith and interethnic commitment to safeguarding the environment, were essential in providing the spiritual basis for this work.

Maria-Angela Fala, president of the European Buddhist Union, stressed the Buddhist principles of the interdependence of all human beings and of human beings with nature. Her contribution, she said, was "tied to a tradition that comes from the East, while elaborated in an 'advanced' culture." Today's "advanced" culture accentuates "having" as opposed to "being" (Erich Fromm), and we must return to realizing the primary importance of "being" above "having."

"Since," she added, "the predominant system of values in contemporary

society attributes greater importance to what a person possesses rather than what he is or can do, [only a] profound change of heart and imagination can save our futures." To achieve this, Buddhism provides the concepts of "distancing, interdependence, and compassion."

"Distancing, as taught by Lama Yeshe, does not mean a total renouncing of everything; it means only to lose the greed of taking, the obsession of always acquiring new things. It consists in not attributing to them the power to make us happy. Happiness can only come from the simplicity of the spirit."

She then spoke of "interdependence, or interconnection, nonduality, emptiness." "The teaching of the Buddha offers us two precious instruments: . . . a minute analysis of the psychological origins of human suffering, . . . and a detailed path of moral and mental training." "Greed, hatred, and illusion" are the three mental factors called "the three poisons." "From a Buddhist perspective," Ms. Fala said, "I would say that what is needed above all is a new manner of perceiving . . . that enables us to consider others as essentially no different from ourselves. . . . We . . . embrace a 'world-centric' ethic that will give priority to the well-being of all."

Three rules, taken from the teachings of the Buddha, she said, are "1) to overcome greed through global generosity; 2) to replace hatred and revenge with behavior based on kindness, respect, and forgiveness; and 3) to recognize that our world is an interdependent composite."

"Now that we are entering a new millennium," she concluded, "the teachings of the Buddha offer all of us a way to make our world a more peaceful and pleasant place in which to live."

Amadeo Spagnoletto, a professor of the Rabbinical College of the Rome Jewish Community, began his speech by quoting a blessing for trees contained in the Babylonian Talmud: "Blessed be Thou, King of the Universe, who has provided everything for His world, and created in it good beings and good and beautiful trees so that man might rejoice."

He also quoted a biblical verse that

says, "See the work of God: who could ever straighten what He has created bent?" interpreting it with another quotation from a Jewish Midrash, "When the Lord, Holy be his Name, created man he led him before all the trees in Eden and said to him: look at my works, how they are beautiful and graceful; all I have created is at your service. Be aware and take care not to damage and ruin my world. If you do, no one after you will be able to mend it."

In his speech, Professor Spagnoletto emphasized that all of creation belongs to God, and humankind's duty is to safeguard this creation which is owned not by humanity but by God.

"The Sabbath, the seventh day of creation, when God rested, is a day of rest for humanity, and in the tradition of the Sabbatical Year (every seventh year), fields must remain uncultivated to permit the earth to rest and to reconfirm that the earth belongs to God, not man. In normal times, the produce of a seventh part of every cultivated field must be given to the widow, the stranger, the orphan (the needy). Fruit trees must never be cut down, not even during a war. In rabbinical tradition a comparison is made between the death of a man and the death of a tree: 'Six voices go from one end of the earth to the other, even if it is impossible to hear them. . . . In the moment one cuts a tree that bears fruit the voice is released and goes from one end of the earth to the other, even if it cannot be heard, . . . and in the hour in which the spirit leaves the body, the voice goes from one end to the other of the world even if it cannot be heard.'"

"In conclusion," he said, "according to the Torah and the teaching of the masters of Jewish literature, the safeguarding of nature passes through the recognition of God as Creator of the universe."

Mohamed Mzoughi, who teaches the Arabic language and Islamic thought at the Pontifical University of Arab and Islamic Studies in Rome, traced the history of the concept of God and God's expectations of humanity in his speech, "Creation, Man, and Peace."

In the Bible and the Qur'an, in contrast to all preceding world views, in-

cluding those of Plato and Aristotle, God appears for the first time as creator of the universe. God gave us life and all the joys of creation, "but the greatest gift of all . . . was His gift to us of intelligence. . . . If God created the world and placed man on the highest level of living beings, this is not a privilege but an immense responsibility."

Professor Mzoughi recalled that anti-humanism has existed throughout the ages and that the insanity of "racial purity" dominated Europe for a period, and warned that a new "anti-Islamic nationalism, which has to some extent replaced anti-Semitism, is invading Europe and a great part of the Western world." He added that "not all humans are believers . . . and not all believers are good, and at times those who do not believe are the first to respect nature and man. . . . Religion must create peace between man and nature and lead to peace among all. . . . Conflicts between those who held that they possessed the One True Religion and all others have been disastrous for humanity and created only hatred and destruction, not only between different religions but even within the same religion. . . .

"To be ecological, every religion must overcome its fundamentalisms, because fundamentalism, from wherever it may come, is an attitude against nature and against man and therefore against God. Every religion must initiate a dialogue with other religions, knowing it can learn something new and teach something to others."

The Algerian writer Amara Lakhous delivered a speech on "Muslims and the Conservation of Nature—An Anthropological Approach." "To preserve nature means above all to save and protect it, and to manage its resources in the best possible manner," Mr. Lakhous said, recalling that the term "conservation of nature" dates back to the nineteenth century, when the United States became concerned over the excessive exploitation of wood from forests.

"There are two reasons why protecting nature is an obligation for every Muslim. One is that nature is a Divine Loan from God; the second is that humans must protect their health—spir-

itually, physically, and psychologically," Mr. Lakhous said. Man is considered "God's vicar" on this earth and has been entrusted by God with the care of the earth during his lifetime. "This is an enormous responsibility because on the Day of Judgment, man will be called to account" for his treatment of all of God's creation.

Antonello Senni, the Italian government's director general for civilian protection, spoke at length on Saint Francis of Assisi and Saint Anthony of Padua's love of nature, of their deep bonds with all living things—from plants to animals and even inanimate things—that characterize the Catholic Order of Franciscans. Mr. Senni said that "in the name of a god of profit, the false majority culture has driven man toward unrestrained consumerism and degrading materialism."

The only solution to this painful situation, for Mr. Senni, is for "religion to be committed to the environment and to reconstruct the supreme values."

He called for all religions: "Our one and only God requires this of us. Our one and only God demands that between nature and the Divinity there must be an inseparable union, connected and cemented by love."

Other Catholic speakers included Father Renato Gaglianone, professor at the Pontifical Urbanian University, the Rev. Marco Gnani, director of the Office for Interreligious Dialogue of the Diocese of Rome, and Giovanni Maria Pirone, director general of the Italian Institute of Social Medicine.

All speakers concurred that the definition of the word "environment" included all human beings on this earth, and that relations between all human beings are essential for the well-being of all creation. The disrespectful exploitation of God's gift (or loan) to man of nature, his creation, can only exacerbate the alienation of a predominantly materialistic and destructive value system in which the greed of "having" replaces the spirituality of "being." □

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

Cunda's Offering

by Hajime Nakamura

Having heard that Gotama was staying in his mango grove in Pāvā, the blacksmith Cunda went to greet him. In gratitude for Gotama's teaching him the Dhamma, Cunda invited him to his house and offered him some cooked mushrooms.

Cunda's offering is one of the most important incidents of the Buddha's biography. According to the Pāli text, the Buddha next went to Pāvā (Skt., Pāpā).

"(13) The Venerable Master, having stayed at Bhoganagara as long as he wished, said to the young Ānanda: 'Come, Ānanda, let us go to Pāvā.' 'Yes, Master,' replied the young Ānanda. Then, the Venerable Master went to Pāvā together with a large company of *bhikkhus*. At Pāvā, the Venerable Master stayed at the mango grove of Cunda, son of the blacksmith."

Staying in a mango grove on the outskirts of a settlement appears to have been Gotama's custom. Another sutra records that at another time when the Buddha was traveling to the Malla city of Pāvā he stayed in the mango grove (*ambavana*) of Cunda, the son of a blacksmith.

"(14) Cunda, son of the blacksmith, heard that the Venerable Master had arrived in Pāvā and was staying in his mango grove in Pāvā. Then Cunda, son of the blacksmith, went to where the Venerable Master was. Drawing near, he greeted the Venerable Master and sat down to one side. Then the Venerable Master taught him who sat down to one side by means of a lecture on the Dhamma, instructing him, encouraging him, and delighting him.

"(15) Then Cunda, son of the blacksmith, instructed, encouraged, and delighted by means of a lecture on the Dhamma, said to the Venerable Master: 'May the Venerable One consent to eating a meal at my house tomorrow, together with his company of *bhikkhus*.' The Venerable Master gave his assent by silence.

"(16) Then Cunda, son of the blacksmith, understanding the Venerable Master's assent, rose from his seat, saluted him, passed by him on the right, and departed" (*Mahā-parinibbāna-suttanta*, IV, 13–16).

The text suggests that Cunda alone went to see the Buddha. However, the Sanskrit version here has the words: "The Mallas of Pāpā, having heard that Śākyamuni had arrived, went to see him." Furthermore, word of the arrival

spread from group to group. The Tibetan version is identical, while the Sarvāstivādin text is greatly similar. These represent the legend as it had grown in later times. It is certainly more likely to be true that, given the minor nature of Buddhism during the Buddha's lifetime, he should have been greeted by Cunda alone.

Cunda's Offering

Gotama was then offered a meal by Cunda.

"(17) That evening Cunda, son of the blacksmith, prepared a meal of fine-tasting soft and hard foods, and a dish of mushrooms, at his home. Then he went to the Venerable Master and announced that the meal was ready: 'It is time, Venerable One. Your meal is ready.'

The late Dr. 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).

“(18) 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 Cunda, son of the blacksmith. When he arrived, he sat down in the place prepared for him. Having sat, he said to Cunda, son of the blacksmith: ‘Cunda, give me the dish of mushrooms you have prepared for me. Give to my *bhikkhus* the other hard and soft foods you have prepared.’ ‘I understand,’ replied Cunda, son of the blacksmith, to the Venerable Master, and he gave the dish of mushrooms to the Venerable Master, and the other hard and soft foods he had prepared to the *bhikkhus*.

“(19) Then the Venerable Master announced to Cunda, son of the blacksmith: ‘Cunda, you should bury the remaining mushrooms in a hole, for I can see no one in this world with its devas, māras, Brahmās, *bhikkhus*, and Brahmins, and all living beings including devas and human beings, who could eat them and thoroughly digest them other than the Fully Perfected One [the Tathāgata].’ ‘I understand,’ replied Cunda, son of the blacksmith, to the Venerable Master, and he buried the remaining mushrooms in a hole and then drew near the Venerable Master. Drawing near, he saluted and sat down to one side. When Cunda had sat down to one side, the Venerable Master taught him by means of a lecture on the Dhamma, instructing him, encouraging him, and delighting him. He

then rose from his seat and departed” (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, IV, 17–19).

The Four Types of Ascetics

The Pāli version (Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta) gives no indication of the type of discourse the Buddha gave Cunda; the Sanskrit, Tibetan, and Sarvāstivādin versions, however, contain a verse passage at this point, which is found also in the Sutta-nipāta.

“(83) Cunda, the son of the blacksmith, said: ‘I ask the sage of great wisdom, the enlightened one, lord of the Truth, he who is free from craving, supreme among human beings, excellent charioteer: “How many types of ascetics are there in the world? Please instruct me in this.”’

“(84) The Master [the Buddha] replied: ‘Cunda, there are four types of ascetics, Cunda, there is no fifth. Being asked to my face, I will make it clear to you: he who is victorious in the Way, he who teaches the Way, he who lives according to the Way, and he who defiles the Way.’

“(85) The blacksmith Cunda said: ‘Whom do the Awakened Ones call “one who is victorious in the Way”? How is a student of the Way unequalled? I ask, too, what is meant by living according to the Way? And explain to me please the meaning of one who defiles the Way.’

“(86) ‘One who has transcended doubt, who is without suffering, who delights in calm [Pāli, *nibbāna*], who does

not cling to greed, who guides devas and humankind, such a person do the Awakened Ones call “Victorious in the Way.”

“(87) ‘One who knows what is best in this world as the best, and who teaches and analyzes the Dhamma here, that sage who dispels all doubts and is undisturbed by thoughts of desire, that person is called the second of the practitioners, one who teaches the Way.

“(88) ‘One who lives in the Way, the well-taught words in accordance with the Dhamma, self-restrained, calm, and mindful, speaking without error, that person is called the third of the practitioners, one who lives according to the Way.

“(89) ‘One who only pretends to maintain the vows well, who is shameless, a defiler of families, arrogant, a deceiver, lacking self-restraint, a prattler imitating the true, that person is one who defiles the Way.

“(90) ‘An excellent lay believer hearing [the characteristics of these people] and understanding them clearly, knows “They [the four types of ascetics] are all as such.” Though he observes and sees them in this way, the faith of the believer does not disappear. How could he equate the defiled with the undefiled, the pure with the impure?” (Sutta-nipāta, 83–90)

The above-mentioned verses are what scholars in later times compiled as the essence of the Buddha’s discourses at the time.

Here the description about the four types of ascetics appears as the Buddha’s discourse given to Cunda. It does not, however, appear in the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta, which contains a detailed description of Cunda, though it is found more or less intact in the Fo-pan-ni-yüan-ching and the Pan-ni-yüan-ching in prose form. The use of prose rather than verse was probably a device by the Chinese translators concerned to transmit the content over the form. Translators of the early period were in fact more concerned with what was meant than to providing a direct translation. Perhaps the reason the Mahāparinibbāna-suttanta omitted details of the discourse here, as it did in many other instances as well, was a concern with overall balance. Since the discourse was noted in all of the other versions, it is very likely that some similar discourse was actually given at this point.

It is not hard to imagine why the Buddha gave his discourse about the distinction among the various types of ascetics (*śramaṇa*), who were to be found in large numbers in his time. Powerful metal craftsmen like Cunda possessed the newest technology, came into contact with many different kinds of people through selling their wares, and, if they were men of wealth and honor, they would doubtless have been approached by numbers of religious practitioners. Thus the Buddha outlined a method for Cunda to distinguish the true ascetic from the false. It is not clear, though, what kind of life he himself regarded as being supreme. From the context we can say that he appeared

Trees grow on a small hill where the home of Cunda is thought to have been located.

to respect most highly the one who is victorious in the Way or the one who lives according to the Way. He did not advocate any particular philosophy or metaphysics, but sought to understand and live by the true human Way, and he actually followed it to the end.

Cunda is described as the “son of a *kammāra*.” Though this term is usually interpreted as “blacksmith,” it actually covers a far greater range of occupations, including goldsmith, silversmith, blacksmith, and coppersmith. It would, therefore, perhaps be preferable to translate *kammāra* as “metalsmith.”

Since Cunda succeeded in inviting the Buddha and his followers to a meal, he must have been a wealthy and respected person. In the caste system, blacksmiths and metal craftsmen were considered to be of low standing and were regarded with contempt by those of higher castes. More precisely, a goldsmith (*suvarṇakāra*) who made gold and metal jewelry and other ornaments was a member of the *śūdra* caste, within which there existed both “touchables” and “untouchables.” Metal workers were classed as “touchables.”

The fact that the Buddha accepted an invitation from a metal craftsman suggests two important points about the society of his time: (1) Despite an expansion in the ranks of wealth, there remained many of the newly rich who had not yet received social acceptance. Such people were seeking new spiritual leaders. (2) The activities of Gotama Buddha responded to the demands of the socially oppressed.

Gotama was not here teaching something called “Buddhism”; rather he was instructing his listeners about the way a person could become a true “ascetic.”

To be continued

Enku and the Two-Headed Warlord

by Takeshi Kuno

A powerful warlord of the Hida region, Ryomen Sukuna opened Senkoji temple some 1,600 years ago. Then, 400 years ago, the building was rebuilt as a Buddhist temple.

The itinerant priest Enku stayed briefly at the temple during the Edo period, carving buddha statues during his stay. Some 60 statues of his—including Ryomen Sukuna's image—are kept at the temple.

The statue shown here of the two-headed Sukuna founder of the temple Senkoji, was carved by Enku, an itinerant Buddhist priest-sculptor who made many Buddhist and Shinto images in compliance with the requests of the people he met. Active in the seventeenth century, Enku carved this statue of Sukuna in the Takayama area of Mino Province (now Gifu Prefecture), where the legend of this fierce warlord is widespread. Clad in armor, he holds a large battle-ax in both hands, resting it on his knees. He wears a frightening expression, enhanced by his swept-back hair. This 88-cm-high statue reveals Enku's characteristic economy of form and strength of expression.

There are many theories concerning Enku's year of birth. Based on a colophon written by Enku himself in a copy of the Daihannyakyo (Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra), which states that he was born in Mino in the Year of the Elder Water Monkey, he may have been born in 1632. The *Kinsei kijinden*, an ancient document that contains the oldest biographical record of Enku, says that he was born in the village of Takegahana in Mino, which is close to the present-day Hashima. Nevertheless, we have no knowledge of his life before his thirty-second year. The earliest known examples of his work are three statues, including one of Amaterasu Omikami (Great Divinity Illuminating Heaven), made for Shinmei Shrine in the Gujo district in Gifu in 1663. They already show the seeds of Enku's style, such as large eyes and sharply carved folds of clothing. In the course of his life, Enku produced over 100,000 images, but that of Amaterasu Omikami must be his first carving. Another work, which dates from 1664, is the statue of the Tathagata Amida that belongs to Hakusan Shrine, also in the Gujo district.

Enku went to the still largely unexplored Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan, in 1666, where he continued to disseminate Buddhist teachings. In 1666 he made statues of the Bodhisattva Kannon for the Kannon Hall at

Lake Toya and the Kai Shrine in Suttsu. However, these were not made on site, for during his time it was not possible to go so far inland; he carved them in a cave in Keboroi near Oshamanbe and inscriptions on the back of each statue state that perhaps they would appear at sacred sites a hundred years later.

On his return from Hokkaido, Enku made a number of statues in 1669 for the Nata Yakushi Hall in Nagoya. These were the twelve divine generals that traditionally guard Yakushi, but iconographically they exhibited a unique style, completely different from the norm. With the eyes and noses carved on the corners of a *hinoki* (Japanese cypress) log split into four, he achieved a very powerful style. Together, they constitute one of the greatest of Enku's works. In 1675 he made a statue of En no Gyoja at Mount Omine, south of Nara. This is important in that it indicates that Enku was a *shugenja* (practitioner of Shugendo). In 1676 he carved statues of Horse-headed Kannon (Hayagriva) and the thousand buddhas at Fukusenji in Nagoya, and more than five hundred of these can still be found there.

In his later years, Enku made a 180-cm-high statue of the Eleven-headed Kannon for Taiheiji in Shiga in 1689. An inscription on the back reads: "On the fourth, I cut the wood; on the fifth, I undertook purification; on the sixth, I made the statue; and on the seventh, a ceremony was observed to invoke its spirit." Thus this large statue was completed in just three days. In 1690 he made three Eleven-headed Kannon images at Kanakido in the Yoshiki district of Gifu. It was recorded on one of these that it represented the fulfillment of his vow to complete 100,000 images. For Enku to have made this many images over some thirty years, he must have completed around ten statues a day.

Enku probably continued to carve images after this as well, but there are no inscriptions postdating 1690. Enku's health began to decline in 1695, and he died on the 15th of the 7th month that year at the age of 64. His last days were spent near Mirokuji at Ikejiri (Seki, in Gifu). It is said that, knowing he was approaching death, Enku had the villagers prepare an underground chamber and enclose him in it so that he might attain buddhahood in his very body. □

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The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law

Chapter 7

The Parable of the Magic City (2)

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

TEXT Bhikshus! After the lapse of ten minor kalpas, the Buddha Universal Surpassing Wisdom attained the Law of all buddhas, and Perfect Enlightenment was revealed to him. Before that buddha left home he had sixteen sons, the eldest of whom was named Wisdom Store. Each of his sons had various kinds of valued amusements, [but] on hearing that their father had accomplished Perfect Enlightenment, they all gave up the things they valued and went to pay their regards to the buddha, their weeping mothers escorting them.

COMMENTARY *Each of his sons had various kinds of valued amusements.* They encountered numerous things that attracted their interest in the course of life. Life was filled with the pleasures inherent in the five desires. The sixteen princes gave up those kinds of pleasures and renounced the world.

The expression “renounce the world,” often used to mean “be ordained as a Buddhist priest,” is very much misunderstood. I would like to devote a little space here to discussing its meaning. The first, important point to consider is the purpose of renouncing the world. Above all else, this is undertaken in order to pursue the truth, and it means sacrificing secular life to a greater or lesser extent. Even today there are some scholars who occasionally disregard their family, so intent are they on their study, and in a sense this may be unavoidable. It can be forgiven if abandoning worldly life enables a person to lay the foundation of all people’s happiness. If this is not the purpose, abandoning secular life is merely a form of self-satisfaction, and all that remains is the great sin of having caused distress to one’s family.

Western scholars call Shakyamuni’s renunciation of the world the “Great Renunciation.” Indeed his was a great renunciation of his secular life, in order that all living beings might benefit. By doing so, he became one with his wife, his child, his father, his aunt, and all other beings.

This is evident from the fact that after his enlightenment he instructed his family and brought them true happiness. To abandon lay life because of loss of hope in the world or to escape worldly troubles is not true renunciation, only something undertaken to benefit the self. In Japan in the past, there was a custom among the nobility of avoiding assassination by taking Buddhist orders and of having their younger sons all become Buddhist priests. This was conventional, not true, ordination.

We are no longer required to abandon everyday life in order to lead the Buddhist life. Because Shakyamuni sacrificed his own life to attain the truth of human life and to point it out to all people, it is enough that we learn the truth from him and make his enlightenment live in our own lives. This is the way we gain happiness, and bring happiness to other people and to society as a whole. This is the point that Shakyamuni’s Mahayana teachings stress.

However, bringing happiness to others and to the world as a whole necessitates sacrificing our own pleasures to some extent. It is asking too much to assume that we can bring relief to others on top of fulfilling our own sensuous desires. The higher a person’s spiritual greatness, the more he or she is willing to sacrifice worldly life. Teachers who educate children living deep in the mountains or on isolated islands, nurses who give up their youth to care for people with intractable diseases, young men and women who volunteer to go and provide technical guidance to villagers in the far corners of developing countries—such people are noble examples of the Buddhist “renunciation of the world” today. Dr. Albert Schweitzer, who devoted himself to helping the sick and suffering in the forests of equatorial Africa, is to my mind perhaps the greatest of them all. It is probably impossible for everyone to attain such heights, yet all who have religious faith will be willing to sacrifice themselves to some extent by giving up part of their life for the happiness of all. This is the action of a true human being.

There is nothing wrong with falling in love, marrying, and enjoying life. Working hard at one's job too is an important duty that must not be neglected. Yet within that life we must observe the Buddha's teaching and live in accordance with it, giving up all selfishness and trying in every way possible to be of service to others and to the world. This is the true form of lay Buddhist renunciation of the world, which I have long advocated. It is in this sense that we must all renounce the world, for it is the essential element of being a Buddhist.

TEXT Their grandfather, Sacred Wheel-rolling King, with his one hundred ministers and also a hundred thousand myriad kotis of his people, all surrounded and followed them to the terrace of enlightenment, all desiring to draw near to the Tathagata Universal Surpassing Wisdom and to serve, revere, honor, and extol him. After their arrival they did homage before his feet with their heads, and after making procession around him, with folded hands and in one mind, they gazed up to the world-honored one and praised him in verse, saying:

COMMENTARY *Grandfather.* Sacred Wheel-rolling King was the grandfather of the sixteen princes and thus the father of the Buddha Universal Surpassing Wisdom. It is right that the utmost respect and honor be given to anyone who becomes a buddha, whether a blood relation or not. This respect is to honor the Dharma. Before the Dharma there is no junior or senior in family relationships.

- *Making procession around him.* It is etiquette in India to circumambulate that which is to be venerated. The general custom today is to circle the object of veneration three times clockwise.

TEXT "The World-honored One of Great Might, / To save all living beings, / After measureless kotis of years / Thou hast now become a buddha / And perfected all thy vows. / Good indeed is our fortune unsurpassed, / For rarely do world-honored ones appear. / At one sitting ten minor kalpas have passed, / Thy body and limbs / Still, peaceful, and motionless, / And with mind ever tranquil, / Never distracted; / Thou hast completed eternal nirvana / And dost calmly dwell in the faultless Law.

COMMENTARY *All thy vows.* This phrase refers to the four universal vows of the bodhisattva. (See the May/June 1995 issue of DHARMA WORLD.) The Buddha Universal Surpassing Wisdom became a buddha by perfecting those vows.

- *Tranquil.* The mind is serene and contains no self-centered emotions. Nor does it seek the praise of others or depend on others.

- *Distracted.* The mind is not concentrated on what is important but is scattered. "Distracted" also has the conno-

tation of being lost, separated from the Buddha Dharma.

- *Completed.* This means having reached the ultimate.

TEXT Now, seeing the world-honored one / Who has calmly accomplished the Buddha Way, / We have attained good fortune / And congratulate ourselves with great joy.

COMMENTARY *We have attained good fortune.* This does not refer to the attainment of concrete benefit. Seeing before them a buddha, one who had shared their lives in the same palace or in the same state, they had clear proof that a living person could attain buddhahood. They knew therefore that if they too undertook religious practice, they too would eventually become buddhas. This is a benefit above all others, and the reason they felt such great joy.

TEXT All the living are ever suffering, / Blind and without a leader, / Unaware of the way to end pain, / Knowing not to seek deliverance. / Through the long night evil ways have increased, / Diminishing the heavenly throng; / [The world] has passed from darkness into darkness, / Never hearing a buddha's name.

COMMENTARY *Knowing not to seek deliverance.* Many people wish to be delivered from their suffering, but they struggle desperately against it, not knowing where to turn for true deliverance. This is the state of ordinary people, who do not try actively to seek the true way to liberation from suffering. The only way to achieve this is to reconstruct the heart and mind and eliminate all fundamental delusions. People do not seek this way, however, but merely worry about escaping the immediate, concrete sufferings that engage their attention. This is like treating a tumor by applying ointment to its surface rather than ridding the body of that which has caused the tumor. If we do not seek out the fundamental causes of suffering, the disease of human suffering will never be cured.

This kind of folly is all around us. Look back over the way of life of yourself and those around you. You will find that the majority of people are only concerned with attempting to escape immediate sufferings, such as poverty, poor business, and family discord. This is not the way to achieve permanent happiness. Even if one source of worry is eliminated, another soon appears in its place. And so it goes on, new kinds of suffering constantly emerging. What a waste it is for people to spend their very important time in this life burdened in such a way.

We must stop chasing after phenomenal things and letting them influence us. Once we reconstruct our minds, where the root of suffering lurks, and change our ways of thinking and attitude toward things, our lives immediately take on the tranquillity of paradise. A good model for such an outlook is the "wondrously virtuous person" Saichi

Asahara, whom I discussed at the end of the commentary on chapter 5, “The Parable of the Herbs.” Saichi, a poor maker of wooden clogs, lived an extremely comfortable and peaceful life.

When we have a hard time, we must be in no hurry to escape actual suffering. It is essential rather that we seek the basic path by means of which we can eliminate all human suffering. This is what is meant by “seek deliverance.” Shakyamuni taught that path, known as the Four Noble Truths, in his first discourse.

- *Through the long night evil ways have increased.* “The long night” is a metaphor for the life of suffering. “Evil ways” are the “evil paths”: the realms of hell, hungry spirits, animals, and asuras. Struggling in the darkness of suffering for long periods, people’s minds become more and more depraved, producing only anger, greed, ignorance, and selfishness. As long as we try impatiently to escape the immediate sufferings that abound around us, such “evil ways” will only increase and we will spend our whole lives getting angry when things do not go as we wish (hell), impatiently chasing fleeting desires (hungry spirits), repeating folly by giving in to our instinctive urges (animals), and enmeshing ourselves in constant conflict as a result of confrontation caused by our selfishness (asuras). How meaningless it all is!

- *Diminishing the heavenly throng.* Taken literally, this phrase means “the number of people living in the realm of heaven is decreasing.” The realm of heaven refers to a realm of peace and joy; the phrase therefore means that the number of people who can spend their lives in a peaceful and joyful state of mind diminishes.

- *Never hearing a buddha’s name.* In Buddhism, it is generally believed that a world where the Buddha’s name is never heard is the unhappiest of all realms. There is nothing more unfortunate than neither knowing of the existence of the Buddha Law nor understanding that this Law brings deliverance from suffering. In this sense we are truly fortunate. Though we live in the period known as the Last Law, when it becomes more and more difficult to hear the Buddha’s teaching, we have been able to encounter the Buddha Law. How can we dismiss this good fortune? Let us meditate on this happiness together, and in the process deepen it.

TEXT [But] now the Buddha has attained the supreme, / Pacific, faultless Law, / And we as well as gods and men / Gain the greatest fortune. / Therefore we all prostrate ourselves / And offer our lives to the peerless honored one.’

COMMENTARY *Offer our lives.* This is a translation of the Sanskrit *namas*, which means to take refuge in the Buddha, to offer him our faith with our whole bodies and minds. We offer our lives to the Buddha, and follow his teachings. *Namas* also has the sense of unconditionally depending on the Buddha.

TEXT “Thereupon all these sixteen royal sons, when they had extolled the buddha in verse, entreated the world-honored one to roll the Law wheel on, saying: ‘World-honored One! Preach the Law, and abundantly comfort, have compassion for, and benefit both gods and men!’

COMMENTARY *Entreated.* This word translates two Chinese characters meaning “urge” and “appeal.” It is to entreat the Buddha with all one’s heart to impart the Law and to beg him to abide in this world forever and deliver living beings from their suffering. In Japan today the word is used widely to mean enshrining a buddha or a deity at a new place of worship. It is also used to mean invoking a buddha or a bodhisattva to descend to be present at a religious ritual or ceremony.

TEXT Repeating it in verse, they said:

‘Hero of the world! Incomparable! / Adorned with a hundred auspicious signs! / Who has attained to supreme wisdom: / Be pleased to preach to the world, / For deliverance to us / And to all classes of the living; / Discriminate and reveal it / So that we may obtain this wisdom!’

COMMENTARY *Hero of the world.* This title means the greatest being in the world.

- *Adorned with a hundred auspicious signs.* The Buddha’s limitless virtues adorn his appearance and being; he is said to be endowed with auspicious signs, such as the thirty-two primary marks and the eighty kinds of excellence on his face and body. (See the September/October 1992 issue.)

- *Deliverance.* This term has the same meaning as “salvation” (crossing to the other shore of enlightenment) and “liberation” (emancipation from suffering).

- *Discriminate and reveal it.* This expression means “May the Buddha explain his teaching with supreme wisdom in detail [discriminate] so that we, of meager wisdom, might understand clearly [reveal].”

TEXT If we attain buddhahood, / All other living beings will also [attain it]. / World-honored One! Thou knowest what the living / In their deepest minds are thinking, / The ways in which they walk, / Their capacities for wisdom, / Their pleasures and past good works, / The karma their former lives produced. / World-honored One! Thou knowest all these; / [Pray] roll along the peerless wheel.”

COMMENTARY *The karma their former lives produced.* One’s destiny is dependent on one’s actions in former lives. In the simplest terms, karma means “deed” or “action.” A deed is an action that is undertaken with a particular will, motive, or purpose. However brief, an action is a deed if it has been considered in the mind, its quality determined, and its course decided. Action, on the other hand, can occur even without any consciousness of acting. Examples of such action are the involuntary movements of hands and

Chapter 7, "The Parable of the Magic City," from one of the ten scrolls of the Threefold Lotus Sutra copied by Founder Niwano. The ten scrolls are housed within the statue of the Eternal Shakyamuni Buddha enshrined in the Great Sacred Hall.

mouth when eating, or movement toward the telephone when it rings; that is, it is the reaction to internal and external stimuli. By contrast, voluntary physical movement, like exercising for health, falls into the category of deeds.

In action there is neither good nor evil, and therefore no moral responsibility. Deeds, though, being voluntary, can be judged as good or evil and so carry with them a moral responsibility. In Buddhism, generally the object of karma is deeds—bodily, verbal, and mental acts; deeds therefore include not merely physical activity or the spoken word but also what is in the mind. Since this differs from what is usually considered deeds, it is an important point to note.

Whatever we do results in something. If we go to a bookstore and buy a book, that book is then ours; when we read it, we may be moved by its contents or gain knowledge as a result. When we get very angry, the blood rises to our faces and our arms and legs may tremble; we may also make the person who has made us angry feel embarrassed or revolt against us as a result of our anger.

Our condition at the present moment is the outcome of the balance between the positive and the negative in all our past deeds and experiences. This present moment, as you are reading these words, is the result of the various causes and conditions in the past that have resulted in your acquiring this publication in the first place. People tend to think of karma as something dark, even weird, yet it is no more than this very clear-cut law of cause and effect.

Nevertheless, it is no simple matter for us to discern clearly the causes and results of karma. Many complicated and serious factors are involved. The bodily, verbal, and

mental acts that make up our deeds, however trivial, leave their traces in our minds, bodies, and surrounding environment. The traces left in the mind can be divided broadly into two. First are the traces left on the surface of the mind, such as memory, knowledge, habits, intelligence, and personality. Since they are formed from our long-term deeds and experiences, and, furthermore, remain on the mind's surface, their causes and results are relatively easy to distinguish. Second are the traces remaining in the hidden mind. Since they have been deposited without our conscious knowledge, it is frequently very difficult to identify their causes and results when they later reveal themselves in one way or another. The traces of our deeds remain thus partly in memory, knowledge, habits, intelligence, and personality, and partly in the deep recesses of the mind.

Also lying deep in the subconscious mind are the influences received unconsciously from the outer world and those of all the experiences of our forebears since life appeared on earth. For example, it is said that the fact that we become sleepy at night and long to rest is due to the experience of our distant ancestors, who, when night came and there was no light, could do nothing but rest and sleep. This remains firmly rooted in our subconscious, despite the differing conditions in which we now live. If even the experiences of untold millennia remain embedded in the recesses of the mind, how much stronger must be the influence of the deeds and attitudes of our more recent ancestors.

So far I have discussed the matter in terms of modern

psychology; the Buddhist idea of the karma of a former life (the good or bad deeds done in a past existence) is somewhat more profound. This indicates that we must consider not only the influences described above but also the karma produced as we ourselves have gone from one rebirth to another since the distant past. There are two ways that traces of our deeds remain in our physical makeup. The first concerns those causes and results that are immediately obvious to anyone. For example, neglect of health will result in illness, while appropriate exercise will nurture a strong body. The second relates to traces whose causes and results are not immediately apparent. For instance, however beautiful a person's face may be, something dark and base clouds the features of one who is mean-spirited or who has acted in an evil manner over a great length of time. Likewise, someone who is always quick to anger tends to look grim. On the other hand, a tenderhearted person, or a person of great virtue, though not necessarily endowed with conventional good looks, will appear happy and cheerful, while a virtuous person will have a dignified appearance, whatever his or her features.

This will be readily apparent to all, but when the situation becomes deeper and more complicated, most people will not be able to perceive the links. In the case of someone of high position, wealth, and fine appearance, it is not at all easy to see the traces of that person's past deeds, or the true state of his or her mind. Nevertheless, a person who has the ability can perceive them. There is a well-known story of how, when Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated president of the United States, a close friend recommended someone for a high government post. After meeting the man, Lincoln refused to appoint him, citing his "ill-natured features." "Surely a person's features are what he was born with and cannot be held to have any connection with his essential character," the friend protested. Lincoln did not agree. "By the time a person is forty, he must bear responsibility for his face." The person recommended must have been excellent at his work, a well thought of gentleman of his time, but there can have been no doubt that he was twisted and vicious, and this showed in his face. In such a fashion do our bodily, verbal, and mental deeds invariably leave traces, which then become sources for the various other happenings in life. This is karma.

We also need to consider what the idea of karma teaches us. There are many who profess to take no responsibility for what they are, saying that everything that contributes to their makeup—intelligence, personality, physique—is inherited from parents and ancestors. There is some logic in that view, but it does not go far enough. It is undeniable that a certain part of a person's makeup is attributable to parents and ancestors, but most is the responsibility of the person himself or herself. While the matrix of one's body, nature, and ability has been bequeathed genetically,

this is no more than biological heredity; what a person becomes after childhood is a direct result of the person's present karma, which builds on the good or bad karma of the previous life.

Further, as I mentioned in the discussion of the meaning of the theory of transmigration (see the November/December 1998 issue), we are reborn according to the good or bad nature of our karma in the previous life. Karma can therefore be said to be entirely our own responsibility. The biblical maxim "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" expresses the essence of the idea of karma. To think that what we have become is the fault of others only causes complaint and irritation; how much more satisfying it is to know that it is the result of our own deeds. Not only is it satisfying; it also gives us great hope for the future. Since we understand the principle that the more we improve ourselves the more good karma we accumulate, we are able to make the decision to accumulate good karma. When ordinary people hear the admonition to do good, they do not grasp that it is for their own benefit and therefore do not pursue it. It is because we clearly understand the teaching of karma that we can courageously and joyously act for the best, with hope not only for this life but for future lives as well.

For those who do not know the Buddha's teaching, death is greatly to be feared. But when we understand the true meaning of transmigration and realize the development and the working of karmic retribution, we can face death with composure, whenever it may come. This is because we are able to have hope regarding the next life, having grasped firmly the principle of improvement and progress, the natural outflow of the accumulation of good deeds.

Such accumulated good does not affect the individual alone but also to some extent those who come after us. To grasp this is to take responsibility for our own deeds now. We must remember that parents whose minds are pure and who act always for the best will create an influence for good for their child. After birth, too, the child will be influenced positively by the parents' positive attitude to life. As parents we must resolve to say and do all that is best to give our children a correct and loving upbringing.

Karma has tended to be regarded as an ominous force, somewhat dark and frightening in its power, due to errors in the way it has been taught and understood. We should instead consider it positively and optimistically; indeed, knowing how it arises, could we think of it in any other way?

To be continued

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

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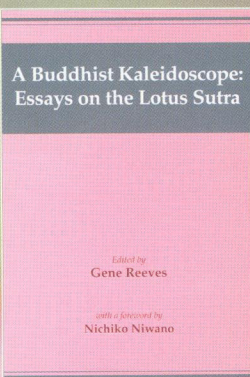
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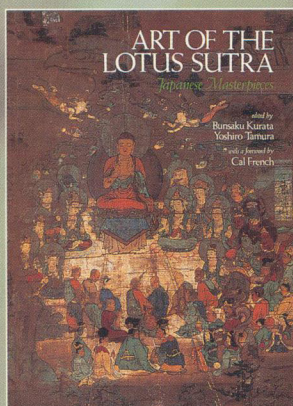
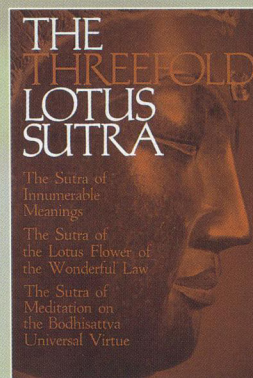
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