

1-1-2013

## Living in Peace: Insights from Buddhism

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### Recommended Citation

Green, Ronald S., and Chanju Mun. *Living in Peace : Insights from Buddhism*. Blue Pine Books: Honolulu, 2013. ISBN: 9780977755394

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**Living in Peace:  
Insights from Buddhism**

Edited by  
**Chanju Mun and Ronald S. Green**

**Blue Pine  
Honolulu, Hawaii**

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Printed in South Korea

Library of Congress Control Number: XXXXX  
ISBN: 9780977755394

We wish to dedicate this humble seventh serial volume on Buddhism and peace to Venerable Jungwoo Seunim who has actively sought to bring peace.



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## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Venerable Jungwoo Seunim Former Abbot of Tongdo-sa Buddhist Temple**

I am honored to write a recommendation for this volume edited by my monastic disciple Seongwon Seunim (Chanju Mun) and his close friend Dr. Ronald S. Green. Seongwon Seunim has conducted research in Buddhism in various religious and educational institutions in Korea and abroad and is currently teaching Buddhist philosophy at the prestigious University of Hawaii – Manoa. Seongwon Seunim and Dr. Green edited and published fourteen articles by renowned scholars in this current seventh volume on religions (Buddhism) and peace. I really appreciate the aforementioned two editors and fourteen contributors for publishing this volume. I sincerely hope that this volume may help Buddhists and other religious believers to remove conflict and violence and improve peace and harmony, even a little bit.

Seongwon Seunim established Blue Pine Books in the United States in 2005 and has academically and religiously contributed to the dissemination and promotion of peace in world. He collected almost one hundred fifty articles from renowned scholars across the world, edited and published them in seven serial volumes on religions (Buddhism) and peace. By so doing, he was able to establish a human and scholarly network for contributing to world peace through academics. He recently decided to extend the theme of the series from Buddhism and peace to religions and peace and planned, edited and published the sixth serial volume on the extended theme.

While some Korean Buddhists hierarchically classified Huayan, vinaya, Yogācāra, Mādhyamaka, Tiantai, Chan, Pure Land, and Tantric Buddhist traditions from their own sectarian perspectives, the majority of Korean Buddhists ecumenically viewed various Buddhist traditions. As a result, Korean Buddhism successfully developed harmony and unity among Korean Buddhist sects and traditions throughout history. In this context, because the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism keeps ecumenism between Chan, doctrinal, and vinaya traditions, between self-cultivation and other-benefitting, between Pure Land and Seon Buddhism, and between doctrinal and Seon Buddhism, it does not make conflicts with and perpetrate violence against other minor Korean Buddhist sects. Korean Buddhists also generally advocated ecumenism between the three traditional East Asian religions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism and contributed to harmony and peace among religions in pre-modern times.

Korean Buddhism should have close relations with other Buddhist traditions. Therefore, I have for a couple of decades continuously made religious connections and promoted religious exchanges with Indo-Tibetan, Chinese-Taiwanese, Japanese and Western Buddhism through my established Guryong-



sa Temple, Yeorae-sa (Buddha) Temple and other Buddhist institutions. I received strong spiritual influence from H. H. the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso (b. 1935) of Tibetan Buddhism and Grand Master Hsing Yun (b. 1927), the founder of the huge Fo Guang Shan Monastery in Taiwan, of Chinese Buddhism. I have had close friendship with the late Kamata Kōmyō (1914-1998), former abbot of Kyōgan-ji Temple, his son Kamata Tetsuo, current abbot of the temple, and Takehara Chimyō (b. 1939), abbot of Shōgyō-ji Temple of Japanese Shin Buddhism.

Buddhism should have close and mutual relations with Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Confucianism, Daoism, shamanism, Bonism, Shintōism, and other religious traditions. Because Buddhism did not philosophically and doctrinally accept dualism and dichotomy, it did not make conflicts and wars with other religions. It reduced conflicts and violence and increased harmony and unity in society and among religions. It did not make and justify violence and conflicts in its name throughout history and all over the world. I think that any religion should contribute to the unity and harmony in society and in the world and should not make any conflict and violence in society and in the world. In this context, I strongly believe that this series may academically and religiously support the construction of unity and harmony in society and in the world.

We Buddhists in particular and we religious believers in general should make peace and harmony domestically and internationally not as an optional religious objective but as a mandatory religious objective. I think that when Buddhists and religious believers build peace and harmony among various Buddhist traditions and among various religious traditions respectively, we are able to naturally and inevitably accomplish peace and harmony among Buddhist traditions and among religious traditions respectively. We Buddhists and we religious believers should gradually, not suddenly, make efforts and disseminate the concepts of peace and harmony in various contexts, for example, in the individual, social, natural, world, and cultural contexts.

Finally, Seongwon Seunim and his coeditor Dr. Green edited and published this seventh volume and firmly located Buddhism in the Korean religious context and in the international religious context. Seongwon Seunim along with his coeditor Dr. Green planned, edited and published this volume and academically attempted to make peace in domestic and international contexts. I sincerely hope that readers come to understand the meaning of peace in different Buddhist contexts through the writings of these eminent scholars. I admire how well Seongwon Seunim and Dr. Green organized the book and strongly wish that they might realize their goal of peace in the world.

## PREFACE

I shall briefly explain the historical and academic background of this current seventh serial volume on Buddhism and peace. Venerable Daewon Seunim initiated the International Seminars on Buddhism and Leadership for Peace, biannually held seven times from 1983 to 1995. He came to Honolulu, Hawaii in 1975 and established Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple at that time. He eventually made it the largest Korean Buddhist temple in North America. He was one of pioneers in introducing Korean Buddhism to the United States. I wrote about him and his peace activities in detail in a paper entitled “Venerable Daewon Ki and Peacemaking” in my edited *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007), pp. v-xxv.

Venerable Daewon Seunim concentrated his peace activities in two areas. First, he focused on making peace in the world by inviting a number of eminent scholars to and holding seven international seminars and disseminating Buddhist teachings on peace and justice. Second, as a Korean Buddhist monk, he dedicated his peace activities to bringing peace between North and South Korea. He visited North Korea eight times between July 1988 and December 1996. Between these visits, he hosted numerous meetings with many of the high-ranking administrators and politicians of the North Korean government and had thirteen official meetings with the Federation of North Korean Buddhists.

In 2005, he assigned to me the task of revitalizing the discussions on Buddhism and peace. Accordingly, I edited and published five serial volumes on Buddhism and peace since then. My close colleague, Ronald S. Green, and I extended the theme of the series from Buddhism and peace to world religions and peace in the sixth volume in the series. We included eleven articles by experts in various religions and recently edited and published the volume entitled *Living in Peace: Insights from World Religions* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2012).

I selected papers from the fifth seminar, held in Seoul, South Korea during November 18-21, 1991 on the theme of “Exploration of Ways to Put Buddhist Thought into Social Practice for Peace and Justice” and published them in my coedited *Buddhist Exploration of Peace and Justice* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The seminar was held under the joint sponsorship of Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Korean Buddhist Research Institute of Dongguk University. More than 60 seminar participants came from Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Vietnam, and the United States.

I selected articles from the seventh seminar, held in Honolulu during June 3-8, 1995 on the theme of “Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice” and edited and published them in my edited *Buddhism and Peace: Theory and Practice* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The seminar was held under the joint auspices of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Department of Philosophy

at the University of Hawaii – Manoa. More than 40 scholars and religious leaders from Asia, Europe and the United States participated in the seminar.

I chose articles from the first and second seminars held in Honolulu during October 22-28, 1983 and in Tokyo Japan during December 2-7, 1985 and published them in my edited *The World is One Flower: Buddhist Leadership for Peace* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2006). The first seminar proceeded under the auspices of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Department of Political Science, University of Hawaii – Manoa on the theme of “Buddhism and Leadership for Peace.” The theme of “Buddhism in the Context of Various Countries” was examined in the second seminar under the joint sponsorship of the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Peace Research Institute of Sōka University. Participants came from China, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States in the first seminar. Individuals from these six nations as well as from Bali, India and Mongolia participated in the second seminar.

I selected papers from the third seminar, held in Honolulu during May 23-28, 1987 on the theme of “Peacemaking in Buddhist Contexts” and edited, included and published them in my edited *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007). The seminar was cosponsored by the Dae Won Sa Buddhist Temple and the Peace Institute of the University of Hawaii – Manoa. Participants included those from China, Japan, South Korea, Mongolia, the Soviet Union, Thailand, and the United States. I also selected excellent papers among the numerous submitted to the editorial board of Blue Pine Books between 2006 and 2007, editing and publishing them.

I was fortunate to have received so many excellent papers between 2007 and 2008 and along with coeditor, Ronald S. Green chose among them to fit the fifth serial book on Buddhism and peace by Blue Pine Books. Because of their lasting importance, I also included in the volume entitled *Buddhist Roles in Peacemaking: How Buddhism Can Contribute to Sustainable Peace* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2009) two articles presented at the sixth seminar held in Honolulu during November 24-28, 1993 on the theme of “A Buddhist Worldview and Concept of Peace,” those by Y. Karunadasa and David Putney.

We issued a call for paper online and off for the sixth serial volume on world religions and peace. Although we received numerous outstanding submissions, an overwhelming number of them focused on Buddhism and peace. This being the case, we decided to reserve many of these for the current seventh serial volume. We also issued a call for papers on Buddhism and peace for the seventh serial volume. We included fourteen articles on them in this current seventh volume, consisting of some high-quality articles submitted for the sixth serial volume and some additional high-quality articles selected among a number of articles submitted for the seventh volume.

Because I discussed Venerable Jungwoo Seunim in an article entitled “Lee Jungwoo and Peacemaking: Theory and Practice” included in the sixth serial volume, I discussed him in a broader context in another article entitled “Lee

Jungwoo (b. 1952), modern Tongdo-sa Temple's vinaya (discipline) masters, and their peacemaking ecumenism" included in this current seventh volume.

Tongdo-sa Temple has been the foundation of Korean Buddhism's vinaya tradition throughout Korean history. I discussed in the article how Lee Jungwoo loyally inherited modern Tongdo-sa Temple's vinaya masters and practically incorporated their ecumenism in his peacemaking. Even though they were vinaya masters, they did not sectarianistically advocate only vinaya tradition of Korean Buddhism but ecumenically considered and practiced various traditions.

Lee Jungwoo applied Korean Buddhism's ecumenical tradition to promote unity and peace among Buddhist traditions in particular and among religious groups in general. He did not exclude any Buddhist doctrine and practice in his Buddhist philosophy and practice and did not place any specific Buddhist philosophy or practice over others. He harmonized various Buddhist practices such as the meditation of Seon (known in Chinese as Chan and in Japanese as Zen), the chanting of Tantric mantras, the recitations of the names of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, the recollection of Buddhist images, and other forms of practice. Nor did he treat doctrines and practices as opposing each other, but as being mutually complementary.

We included in this seventh volume the article entitled "Buddhism and Peace: The Creation of a Saṅgha in London." It was submitted by the Archives Committee of Shōgyō-ji Temple in Fukuoka, informally affiliated with the Higashi Hongan-ji Sect of Pure Land Shin Buddhism in Japan. That temple has a sister relationship with Guryong-sa Temple in Seoul, which Venerable Jungwoo Seunim established. Guryong-sa Temple is affiliated with the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, the largest denomination of Korean Buddhism. Satō Kemmyō, a resident priest of Shōgyō-ji Temple, also kindly allowed us to reuse his published article entitled "D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War" in this volume.

Finally, I extend my deep appreciations to Venerable Daewon Seunim who guided me to the theme of Buddhism and peace and to Venerable Jungwoo Seunim who directed me to ecumenical philosophy and practice. Without the spiritual guidance and financial support of the two masters, I would have been unable to edit and publish the seven serial volumes on religions (Buddhism) and peace. I am also indebted to almost one hundred fifty authors who allowed me to publish their valuable articles in the series. I cannot omit my sincere thanks to Dr. Green, coeditor of my established Blue Pine Books and Ms. Ling-yu Chang, its secretary, who made editorial and administrative matters move smoothly towards this volume's publication at the working level as they have always done.

Chanju Mun  
Honolulu, Hawaii  
February 2013

## NOTES

1. The Pinyin system is used for Chinese terms, the Korean Government Romanization System revised in 2000 for Korean ones, and the Hepburn system for Japanese ones.
2. Diacritics are used on most of Sanskrit and Pāli terms.
3. Foreign terms, those not included in the *Webster English Dictionary*, appear in italics.
4. If authors have Romanized their names in ways contrary to East Asian Standard Romanization Systems, I have adapted their spellings.
5. If names have not previously been Romanized, I have done so using East Asian Standard Romanization Systems.
6. This book is edited based on the 15<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Chicago Manual of Style* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

## INTRODUCTION

### Ronald S. Green

The present volume is the seventh in the series on Buddhism and peace published by Blue Pine Books. The series collects academically sound essays on the topic. It is hoped that the collection will shed light on various movements in Buddhism and peace, and provide grounds for thinking about the issues involved. The series has published articles by Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), who founded the Plum Village in France, by A. T. Ariyaratne (b. 1931), who started the Sarvodaya practice of conflict management in Sri Lanka, and the writings of numerous other Buddhist activists and scholars of Buddhist Studies. The seventh volume continues in this vein by offering fourteen admirable essays toward our continuing goal of sharing the spirit of compassion and thereby transforming conflict.

For this volume, the editors chose articles that reflect Buddhist peace activism around the world, that characterize their regional activities, and that are presented from a variety of perspectives. Included are those about Korean Buddhism and peace (Mun and Koo), Japanese Buddhism and peace (Ogi, Satō and the Shōgyō-ji Archives Committee), Chinese Buddhism and peace (Lee), Indian Buddhism and peace (Huynh), and Myanmar Buddhism and peace (Long). Readers will also find the topic approached from a variety of perspectives including literary (Holt), comparative (Powell), political (Huynh), philosophical (Thompson), doctrinal (Varghese), and from perspectives of Socially Engaged Buddhism (Long). There are articles that describe actions of ecumenicists (Mun and Powell) and those that reflect the actions of specific Buddhist traditions (Long).

While many of the articles in this collection are written in a tone of approval, some are overtly critical. Regardless of whether we agree with the writers who provide their own assessments, we believe their contributions contain valuable information and are thought provoking. For example, in general

we might find that people consider Buddhism peaceful. However, as seen in these and other articles in the series, within the institutions, some Buddhists are peaceful and some are not. Many radical Buddhists have adopted violent methods throughout the centuries and today. In modern times, Buddhists have thrown stones and burnt buildings in Korea, shouted in demonstrations in America and Myanmar, and burnt their bodies in protest in Vietnam and Korea. Even though they protested for peace, can we call them peaceful people if they adopt violent methods? If not, is it justifiable in these cases to sacrifice the means for the ends? We might also consider a person peaceful at an individual level, but not so at an institutional level. A violent dictator might be a good friend and loving father. We could likely find others prone to drinking and violence, working for a peace movement. Because of the enormity of such issues, we should avoid generalizing the concept of peace or giving peace a foregone definition. With that in mind, let us consider the content of the volume.

**Bruce Long** contributes the first article, titled “**Aung San Suu Kyi: Freedom Fighter and Prophetess for a Free Democracy in Burma.**” His research is primarily based on Alan Clements’ published interviews with her in *The Voice of Hope*,<sup>1</sup> and her own writings published as *Freedom from Fear*.<sup>2</sup> His paper is organized around five major themes: (1) The Nature of Truth and its Discernment, Conceptualization and Implementation, (2) The Dislike for Evil Action but not the Perpetrator(s) of the Evil Action, (3) Violent and Non-violent Tools for Socio-political Change in the Movement toward a Parliamentary Form of Democracy, (4) The Need to Activate the Power of the Powerless and the Most Effective Means of Achieving that Goal, and (5) Thoughts about the Future of the Democratic Movement in Burma and the Survivability of the Planet.

Aung San Suu Kyi has long emphasized the importance of continual cultivation of awareness or mindfulness as the Buddha taught. As Long writes, “Through her immersion in the Buddhist principles of mindfulness, meticulous analysis and emotional self-control, she seems to have successfully created a habitual mind-set to maintain a balanced and open-minded sense of the situation and therefore, to avoid submitting to the power of irrational and emotionally negative forces.” In addition, central to Suu Kyi’s life is the Buddhist idea of *mettā* or loving kindness. This is not an abstract concept but manifests in the way she and those around her live and work. She believes that particularly in times of conflict and threat, *mettā* is strong enough to maintain the bond between people. “The longer we work together,” she says, “the greater our bond of *mettā* grows.”

She also maintains the importance of realizing Dependent Co-Origination in bringing about democracy through the interconnectedness of all people, not only

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<sup>1</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi, *Voice of Hope: Conversations with Alan Clements* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> Aung San Suu Kyi, *Freedom from Fear and other writings*, revised edition (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

those of Myanmar. For her, this interconnectedness implies the necessity of the Buddhist practice of *ahimsā*, non-harming of consciousness-bearing beings. Long writes, “her certification of the universal human need to be free to live a life that is both gratifying and meaningful is exemplified in her declaration, “Thinking and feeling people everywhere, regardless of color or creed, understand the deeply rooted human need for a meaningful existence that goes beyond the mere gratification of material desires.”

**Chanju Mun** contributed “**Lee Jungwoo, modern Tongdo-sa Temple’s vinaya (discipline) masters, and their peacemaking ecumenism**” to this volume. He illustrates how these masters realized peace among the temple’s resident monks by promoting ecumenism and offers this a model that might be useful for peacemaking in other social and cultural contexts.

In the article, he explains the two major vinaya lineages of modern Korean Buddhism and four vinaya masters. In terms of the two lineages, one is the traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism transmitted from Daeun (1780-1841) who revitalized vinaya at Chilbul-am Hermitage on Mt. Jiri. The other is the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism, coming from Guxin (1535-1615), who recovered the vinaya at Fayuan-si Temple in Beijing. These two lineages are not considered mutually exclusive but are seen as supplementing each other. Accordingly, Ha Dongsan (1890-1965) and Yun Goam (1899-1988), two major vinaya masters of modern Korean Buddhism, officially and concurrently received the transmission of both lineages. The author describes the histories and developments of these lineages to modern times.

Chanju Mun also describes the religious lineage of his Buddhist master Lee Jungwoo with reference to three masters, Seo Haedam (1862-1942), Yun Wolha (1915-2003), and Jin Hongbeop (1930-1978), vinaya masters of modern Tongdo-sa Temple. The author debunks the notion that Buddhists make a complete alliance with one master, agreeing to wholeheartedly accept all of the sectarian tenets of the master’s philosophical tradition. Mun argues that this widespread understanding of lineage is based on a Confucian biological model and contrasts with both historical reality and Buddhist principles. Instead, a disciple fully agrees to accept the vinaya code of conduct and makes the promise to do so before the preceptor, the vinaya master who agrees to offer them. Beyond this, a monk or nun is free to choose whatever lessons they wish to study and apply diverse Buddhist philosophical doctrine, meditative, tantric, and/or Pure Land practice. It is not uncommon for Buddhists to undertake trainings from various masters.

Nevertheless, Korea, like other countries, has sometimes seen struggles among Buddhist traditions for theoretical hegemony and government patronage. However, these three masters as well as Venerable Lee Jungwoo inherited the ecumenical tradition of Sino-Korean Buddhism and advocated cooperation among the traditions of meditative Seon practice, doctrinal studies, Pure Land, Tantra, and the vinaya. Because they did not promote a hierarchy by placing any one Buddhist tradition over other traditions, they were able to create harmony in the temple.



**Donghyeon Koo** contributed “**Master Hoedang, Peace and the Founding of the Jingak Order of Korean Tantric Buddhism.**” The written history of modern Korean Buddhism predominately centers on the struggles among Seon and doctrinal Buddhists. Donghyeon Koo’s article is important in that it provides much needed information on the oft-overlooked history of Tantric Buddhism in Korea. In modern times, the official establishment of a Tantric sect was only possible in Korea after laws prohibiting the creation of new religions were lifted in 1962.

Tantric Master Hoedang (1902-1963), also known as Son Gysang, felt that the Mahāyāna principle of Buddha nature embraces every theory that was a part of his background, even Confucianism, modern sciences, and European/American ideas of democracy.<sup>3</sup> Far from only creating adversities, he argues that religious pluralism and sectarian specialization are necessary for world peace. He felt Buddhism could set an example of religions of the world by standing in reciprocally specialized autonomy and serving as a foundation for peace.

This was at the heart of the Jingak Order’s basic teachings and practice based on Hoedang’s Buddhist thought. Thus, he emphasized scriptural study, the Six-syllable Mantra, awakening *Simin* (mind-seal), and putting the Six Perfections (*Pāramitās*) in practice. Hoedang claims that while monastics conform to celibate monasticism of traditional Korean Buddhism, lay bodhisattva practitioners primarily employ skillful means to discipline the public, establish a Buddhist organization, and make articles for regulating it.

Hoedang, meanwhile, insisted on the specialization and cooperation of the Buddhist sects based on his pluralistic thought. He organized a lay practitioner-centered monastic system in lieu of the celibate monastics of traditional Korean Buddhism. It was an epoch-making event in the history of Korean Buddhism. It was the central idea of his reformation and could be well worth comparing with the Bodhisattva movement of Mahāyāna Buddhism against the celibacy-oriented monastic system in ancient India.

Each one of the deities represented in a maṇḍala drawing or arrangement, have separate values but take a position of a being mutually venerated and collaboratively provide assistance. Simultaneously, through their specialized activities, they create and accomplish the Buddha Land of Mysterious Adornment of Mahāvairocana. Mahāvairocana is the central deity represented in the maṇḍala, surrounded by the others and representing the universe. This is the principle of maṇḍala. In this process, centrifugal force and centripetal force come to simultaneously operate. The former is envisioned as the virtues of Mahāvairocana spreading out spirally into all deities of maṇḍala. The latter is that the merits of all surrounding deities converge and embellish Mahāvairocana in the center of the maṇḍala. These two forces account for the appearance of

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<sup>3</sup> Kim Musaeng, *Hoedang sasang gwa Jingak milgyo* (Hoedang’s Thought and Jingak Esoteric Buddhism) (Gyeongju: Uiduk University Press, 2002), 189-193.

activity in the phenomenal world, the “two but not-two” of particularity and universality. This is the bases of Hoedang's idea regarding specialization and collaboration of Buddhism.

Looking at these two articles on Korean Buddhism, the first by Chanju Mun and the second by Donghyeon Koo, we can see the subject from different angles. Mun discusses peace in the context of traditional Korean Buddhism while Koo approaches from the perspective of the founding of a Korean new religion. Master Hoedang might be said to have been sectarian in that he needed to deviate from traditional Buddhism. We can compare Koo's introduction of a sectarian tradition with Mun's depiction of ecumenical tradition.

In his article “**Harmonizing the Visions of Peace among the World's Religions,**” **James K. Powell, II** asks if it is possible to synthesize what appear to be a multitude of diverse views with contradictory visions of peace. He suggests such a synthesis “might contain the human aware of universal law (Judaism), aware of divine grace and love (Christianity), aware of the human need for social justice (Islam), aware again of the divine play (*līla*) of the universe (Hinduism), aware of the need to live on little, to spare life (Jainism), of the hindrance represented by the false ego self (Buddhism), of the natural flow of all things, regardless of one's struggle (Daoism) and finally, of the need for the “gentleman” (and woman) to do his or her utmost to prevent social chaos, to humbly accept one's station in life and do one's duty to preserve the “peace”.

The author also feels science is not incompatible with this synthesis of religions, although it may be seen at odd with certain aspects of religions in general. Powell reminds us, science does not refute universal law (Judaism), Christian love, for which scientists may find neuro-chemical bases, the need for social justice (Islam), the “play” of the universe and the search for total integration within it (Hinduism), or the sanctity of all life and the necessity to live simply (Jainism). He writes, “Scientists have in fact proven the artificiality of the “self” construct that obscures a more true knowing (Buddhism). It has proven as well the efficaciousness of mind/body harmony and the need for kinetic non-action (Daoism). History has proven that the scholar working to improve society is working towards demonstrably effective goals (Confucianism).” Powell expects that people might find a beneficial global perspective by embracing the positive, useful aspects of science and religion.

Powell may be accused of making sweeping generalizations about these religions and thereby leaving his arguments open to fallacies. On the other hand, his schematizations might help readers gain a new insight into certain aspects of world religions. It is because his general picture was deemed potentially useful in this way that his article was included in this volume.

In “**Darkness on the Edge of Dharma: Re-thinking Buddhist views of Violence in light of Aṅgulimāla,**” **John Thompson** explores a famous Buddhist tale. In it, a compulsive killer cuts off the fingers of his victims to make a necklace with them, giving him the name Aṅgulimāla (finger beads). Hearing this, the Buddha seeks him out and calms him by his words and his lack of fear. Thompson suggests that this story may be intentionally puzzling and

lacking of a clear meaning. If so, he says, this very quality may be meant to cause those hearing it to reflect on the nature of violence and *samsāra*. Thompson asks readers to consider that Buddhism may actually have a more complicated relationship with violence than histories typically account. The Buddha himself was of the warrior caste and trained in the arts of war before renouncing that lifestyle. The author points of textual evidence that there may have been a close connection between the *śramaṇa* movements of the Buddha's time, and groups of warrior figures who cultivated the power of *tapas*, internal heat, through ascetic practices. According to Thompson, because the Buddha entered the forest in search of the violent killer, "In a sense he is still following the traditional Dharma (duty) of the *kṣatriya* but in an even more effective way: the Buddha takes Aṅgulimāla on without weapons, literally practicing the "way of the empty hand." Their confrontation is shot-through with violence (or at least the threat of it), and seems to be a duel between champions although there are few actual details."

In "**Peaceful Warrior-Demons in Japan: from Empress Kōmyō's Red Repentant Asura to Miyazawa Kenji's Melancholic Blue Asura**," Jon Holt explores the place of the Asura in Buddhist iconography and its place in the writings of the famous Meiji era Buddhist poet Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933). In Hinduism, the Asura are depicted as demon-like creatures that inhabit the universe. They are in constant struggle with deva (typically called "gods") for domination of the cosmos. However, Holt explains, that in Buddhism they are found close to the Buddha, like Bodhisattva figures. They play the role of guardians of the Dharma. He writes, in Buddhism, "these asura beings first must overcome their warring nature. This warring and angry side of the asura is a legacy from its previous incarnation in Hinduism where they were known to war with Indra. In Buddhist art, an asura appears as having red skin; he shows anger on his face and has multiple limbs (usually containing weapons)." As a model for human beings, the asura "is a product of anger, but he is able to overcome that anger in the process of embracing the Dharma." Buddhism's syncretization of asura is seen in the way one of his multiple sets of arms includes one with palms pressed together out of respect for the Buddha.

In Miyazawa Kenji's portrayal of the asura is not angry or demonic. Instead, the asura is peaceful creature that examines the nature of existence. Holt writes, "One might construe that he is, like Kenji, a vegetarian, from the fact that he eats "cosmic dust" and not meat and thereby he indicates that the asura is peaceful rather than barbaric or warlike." For Holt, as in Kenji's other writings, the asura illustrates the poet's wide cosmic view than takes in both Buddhism and science and also indicates that assumed opposites have more in common that we ordinarily acknowledge.

**Jonathan H. X. Lee** contributes an informative chapter on "**The Global and Civil Dimensions of Tzu Chi Compassion Society's Peace Work in America**." Formed under the leadership of Taiwanese Master Cheng Yen (b. 1937), this Buddhist society has played important parts in alleviating suffering

in various contexts in the US. In its many humanistic endeavors, its work has effectively dissolved some of the boundaries often found in American society, including ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural. Lee believes that in so doing, it is a model for global relief of suffering.

Some of the work of the Tzu Chi Compassion Society discussed by the author includes the establishment in 1993 of its free medical outreach clinic in Alhambra, California, that offers care through Chinese and western medicine. It also offers dental care in Los Angeles. In 1997, the society founded an additional free clinic in Honolulu that offers vaccines and healthcare to schoolchildren. In 1997, they established a medical outreach program in New York City. Ven. Cheng Yen also created a bone marrow bank in Taiwan that is connected to other countries of the world. Lee's article highlights an impressive array of other humanitarian medical, educational, and other activities of the society, including programs that helped victims of 9-11 in New York. In light of these widespread actions, Lee wonders if Tzu Chi can be called "American civil religion." He writes, "Is Tzu Chi's work part of a larger growing "global civil society" based on an emerging reality of global civil action and global inter-connectedness?"<sup>4</sup>

In "**The Concept of Engaged Buddhism in Shinran: Reflections on Living as "Neither a Monk nor a Lay Person,"**" Naoyuki Ogi makes an interesting comparison between the Socially Engaged Buddhism of Thich Nhat Hanh and the activities of the medieval Japanese Buddhist Shinran (1173-1262), founder of what would become Jōdo Shinshū. In both cases, Ogi suggests the concept comes from awakening and is related to revitalizing Buddhism. For Shinran, the realization that he combines Buddhism with social conditions is seen in his idea of "Neither a Monk Nor a Lay Person," a self-conception with broad implications for others. Ogi believes that Thich Nhat Hanh's social engagement requires that one examines his or her own nature in order to bring about a compassionate response to suffering, even if this examination brings into question our understanding of Buddhism. In contrast to Nhat Hanh's advocacy of meditative practice for the realization of innate Buddha-nature, Shinran taught that people should say "the Name," that is the nembutsu: "*Namu Amida butsu*" (praise Amida Buddha). Accordingly, the Buddha Amida made a primal vow to save all sentient beings from suffering. However, saying the Name is more than calling on Amida for salvation from suffering. Ogi writes "Shinran explains that saying the Name breaks "all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations." However, the true reason for describing the importance of saying the Name connects to Shinran's strong devotion to living in Buddha's teaching which was at the root of his Buddhist understanding. That is, eliminating ignorance is the practice of benefiting others through "turning"

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<sup>4</sup> Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius, "Global Civil Society in an Era of Regressive Globalization," in Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius, eds., *Global Civil Society 2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

one's self-mind." Looked at from this perspective, Shinran's practice does resemble at least that aspect of Thich Nhat Hanh's Socially Engaged Buddhism.

**Kemmyō Taira Satō** contributes an article titled "**D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War**," in collaboration with **Thomas Kirchner**. In it, he examines the original quotations of D. T. Suzuki (1870-1966) that were used by Brian Victoria in his influential book titled *Zen at War*. While Satō finds much to admire in Victoria's book, he was motivated by his close acquaintanceship with Suzuki to question some of the opinions expressed in it. Satō worked under Suzuki's guidance from 1964 through 1966. Readers do not have to agree with Satō's criticism of Victoria's book. However, the editors wanted to present another side of this important, topical issue. The article also makes us think about the function of religion.

Based on his firsthand knowledge of Suzuki, a study of his writings, and reports from others who knew him, Satō argues that Victoria misrepresents him. Specifically, *Zen at War* depicts Suzuki as a right-wing supporter of the imperial war campaign, and claims he enlisted Zen Buddhism in this as well. In contrast with this image of Suzuki, Satō quotes Suzuki and those who heard him speak and teach at Ōtani University as follows.

As the war continued, student deferments were eventually halted, and many young men from the universities were conscripted and sent to the battlefields. The university held a sending-off gathering for its departing students, with Suzuki chosen to give the address. As he stood at the podium, he was silent for a time, perhaps at a loss for words to say to the young men about to depart for the fields of death. His silence must have impressed a sense of gravity upon the students. Finally, he began to speak, saying, "How tragically unfortunate this is. What possible reason do young Americans and young Japanese have to kill each other? How long will this absurd war go on? However, someday it will come to an end. When it does, it will be the job of you young people to create a new world and a new age. Therefore, you must not die during this war. You must come back alive, even if that means being taken prisoners of war."

Rev. Satō also provides full quotes from Suzuki partially cited by Victoria, in effort to demonstrate misrepresentations. D. T. Suzuki was held up by English readers as an awakened master who may have done more than anyone to propagate the Zen teachings for many years outside of Japan. Over the past ten or fifteen years however, his writings have been discredited as those of a Japanese nationalist. So deep has this belief run that even Suzuki's translations have lost favor, which is likely a mistake to say the least. Satō's article is an attempt, in his words, "to set the record straight."

**Nathaniel C. Michon** contributed an article titled "**Training Minds for Peace: The Use of Buddhist Meditation in Conflict Transformation Training**." In it, he speaks of the potential for meditation practices to transform conflict. Quoting David J. Selsky from an earlier volume in this series, Michon reminds us "Meditation is the key to realizing the nature of the mind, and

furthermore produces a greater sense of calm in the practitioner, obviously something in short supply during a conflict.”<sup>5</sup> Michon argues there is more that mindfulness training can contribute to the process. He writes, “The more mindful one is in the act of speaking, the greater one’s ability to recall the act later and reflect upon the skillfulness of that act, thus providing the grounds not just for making more wise choices in the moment, but for better recalling and improving on those acts in daily life.” He also believes that since mindfulness trains practitioners to realize when they are making judgments, this awareness can be helpful in understanding personal reactions during social situations, one’s own and others. It can further help mediators realize the interconnectivity of those in conflict and formulate actions based on loving-kindness.

In their article **“Buddhism and Peace – The Creation of a Saṅgha in London,”** **The Shōgyō-ji Archives Committee** relates the history of the Saṅgha of Perfect Harmony in Europe, beginning in the United Kingdom. They do so, in part, by telling the story of the dedication of Mr. Kenji Toda, who as a young student took it upon himself to clean the hand-washing basin at the entrance of the Buddha Hall at Shōgyō-ji temple in Japan. After being sent to Britain to establish a pharmaceutical center as the youngest person ever to be appointed president of Eisai Europe Ltd., he was asked by the Provost of University College in London about inviting a traditional Gagaku music group from Japan. Because Mr. Toda had studied Gagaku music, he recommended the College to contact his teacher at Shōgyō-ji, Venerable Chimyō Takehara (b. 1939). The Committee writes, “Gagaku music has a special meaning for Shōgyō-ji as a prayer for Peace. When one listens to the Gagaku music of Shōgyō-ji, one can sense its mysterious power to transport us beyond the walls of race, religion, and language to where all such distinctions are brought into harmony. Gagaku music was indispensable for the Buddhist services to the Three Treasures, of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.”

Later, at the request of Master Takehara, the Buddhist scholar Reverend Kemmyō Taira Satō came to London and became a Visiting Professor at the College. Along with Mr. Toda, he began to hold gatherings to discuss the Dharma at Mr. Toda’s house. After Mr. Toda returned to the Japan, with the help of Vice-Provost John White of the College, these gatherings moved to a new location that became Three Wheels, a Shin Buddhist center in London. Today, under the leadership of Reverend Satō, Three Wheels remains a center for expounding the Dharma as a way of spreading peace. As the Archives Committee writes, “the phrase ‘*All dharmas are without self*’ is a fundamental axiom of Buddhism. Nothing exists independently of all other existences; all things are interdependent and mutually support one another. Accordingly, for the realization of peace in the context of Buddhism, there is no need for us to turn to an external set of laws or principles to guide us. Everything that we need

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<sup>5</sup> David J. Selsky, “Languages for Peace: Intersection of Thought in Buddhism and Conflict Transformation,” in Chanju Mun, ed., *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007), 247-248.

is already here within ourselves; it only requires our careful attention to nurture it.”

**Trung Huynh** (Ordination Name: Thich Hang Dat) contributed the article titled **“Why did Ambedkar Choose Buddhism to Liberate His Depressed Classes? Was His Failure in Politics Leading Him to Buddhism?”** B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956), also known popularly as Babasaheb, was born into the untouchable caste, a group ostracized by all other castes. In childhood he was the target of prejudice, but came into contact with social reformers. By making connections with such people, he was able to secure finance and earn a Ph.D. from Columbia University, a D.Sc. degree from the University of London, and the title of barrister at Grey's Inn in London. Even so, when he was a professor, people were afraid to touch notebooks and papers he used. He was not allowed to drink from public water fountains, refused service, and subjected to many other indignities due to his caste. With this background, he began to stand up for untouchables and demand election rights. He started with a study of Marxism and at first cooperated with communists in his country, even though they were in the Indian Congress, they supported caste discrimination. Later, he rejected the communists due to what he saw as their violent and terroristic methods.

He also rejected Hinduism because, as Huynh writes, “The Vedic society was based on the principle of graded inequality.<sup>6</sup> Specifically, by following the scheme of Manu, Hinduism does not recognize equality of men because it follows a ranking system and/order of gradation.” Likewise, he rejected Christianity for promoting a hierarchy in both church and society while promising equality only after death. He was also put off by Islam’s treatment of women. Eventually, he found in Buddhism a value of the relationships among people. He mixed this morality with Marxist principles in order to fight inequality.

While English speakers are typically familiar with the current portrayal of Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1949) as a saintly liberator of India, only a small percentage of them know of B. R. Ambedkar (1891-1956). Ambedkar wrote the draft for the Indian Constitution and not knowing him for Indians is the rough equivalent of Americans not knowing Thomas Jefferson or John Adams. The editors hope that by including this article, more people will come to understand something of his importance and see a contrast between him and Gandhi. From the perspective of untouchables, Gandhi, who was of a high caste, maintained the unequal caste system through his support of Hinduism. Gandhi's famous hunger strike in 1933 was against the Poona Pact in the draft Indian Constitution that proposed the right of untouchables to elect their own leaders. So much did he oppose this that Gandhi almost died from his hunger strike. To untouchables today, Gandhi remains today one of the most hated people of his time. Likewise,

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<sup>6</sup> D. C. Ahir, “Dr. Ambedkar’s Pilgrimage to Buddhism,” in A. K. Narain and D. C. Ahir, eds., *Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Change* (Delhi, India: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1994), 6.

Gandhi's alienation of Muslims and the partitioning of India and Pakistan are seen by many as unfortunate political moves based on sectarian religious ideas.

The concluding article in this volume is "**Mādhyamika Philosophy on Humans and Androcentrism**" by **Mathew Varghese**. He argues that androcentrism, the belief that people, particularly males, have the inalienable right to dominate all other things, it turning out to be the downfall of humanity due to the resulting destruction of the environment, natural resources, and beneficial social structures. Varghese turns toward Nāgārjuna's fourfold analytic method and his philosophy of emptiness and no-self as a solution. Accordingly, if people come to understand interconnectivity and throw away their misconstrued sense of ontological certainty, they would lose their feelings of superiority.

From these articles, we hope it is clear that peace is not a conclusion but it is a process. The danger in codifying a definition of peace is that by so doing it ceases to be peace we are talking about. With these considerations in mind, we ask readers to look at peace as a living process and to consider living as an embodiment of that process. We will, however, leave this and other decisions about these contributions to the readers. Using a Zen metaphor, our book can be likened to a pointing finger. A finger is a finger, but it can point things out. If we are careful not to concentrate too much on the finger, we may arrive at our anticipated destination, living in peace, via insights from Buddhism.





# **AUNG SAN SUU KYI: FREEDOM FIGHTER AND PROPHETESS FOR A FREE DEMOCRACY IN BURMA**

**Bruce Long**

*Half the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm; but the harm does not interest them.*

T. S. Eliot

*The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.*

Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Many of the greatest heroes and heroines in the modern world have been freedom-fighters, who, at considerable risk to their familial and social reputations and often at great risk to their physical survival, have stood up to colonial and post-colonial regimes throughout the world and demanded liberation from their oppressors, the withdrawal of the colonial powers and the establishment of some form of freely-elected democratic government. The most notable liberators would include Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) in India, Nelson Mandela (b. 1918) in South Africa, Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) in America and in Burma (now known as Myanmar) Aung San, renowned and revered as the father of modern Burma and the birth-father of Aung San Suu Kyi (b. 1945), (henceforth referred to as Suu Kyi), the winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize and the subject of this paper.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an illuminating presentation of the life and work of numerous Nobel Laureates, including Suu Kyi, see Jeffery Hopkins, *The Art of Peace: Nobel Peace Laureates Discuss Human Rights, Conflict and Reconciliation* (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion, 2000). A full transcription of her "Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech" and her subsequent reflections on the impact of that prize on her life and work, "The 1991 Nobel Prize for Peace," can

Suu Kyi's entry into the fray of the popular struggle for freedom and democracy was somewhat fortuitous.<sup>2</sup> In March 1988, while residing in Oxford with her husband (a British scholar of Tibetan Studies) and their two children, she was summoned to the bedside of her dying mother in Rangoon. In July of that year, Ne Win, the imperialistic leader of the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) announced his resignation and called for a free election to determine Burma's political future. However, the BSPP party members opposed the election and set about reestablishing the supremacy of BSPP.

Subsequently, a popular uprising developed that led to millions of citizens marching peacefully in every city and town in the country. As these peaceful demonstrations gathered strength and power, the military commanders responded by sending thousands of infantry troops with orders to shoot on sight. The results of what came to be known as "The Massacre of 8-8-8" were tragic beyond compare. Several thousand unarmed demonstrators were killed and hundreds of others were injured. Afterward, thousands more were imprisoned, without recourse to a public hearing.

It was at this point that a new voice for freedom and dignity appeared on the scene. On August 26, 1988, Suu Kyi announced her decision to enter the struggle for a free Burma at a rally held on the grounds of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Rangoon.<sup>3</sup> Addressing a huge and enthusiastic crowd estimated to number 500,000, Suu Kyi declared, "This great struggle has arisen from the intense and deep desire of the people for a fully democratic parliamentary system. I could not, as my father's daughter, remain indifferent to all that was going on."

This inaugural speech by the future leader of what came to be known as the National League for Democracy (NLD), came after some months of continued care of her mother and her remaining a strongly supportive but publicly inactive member of the "moral majority." In the meantime, the "retired" dictator, Ne Win worked behind the scenes to prepare to take over the country once more by means of a military coup. He established his new rulership by establishing a twenty-one member group of military commanders known as the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC). Again, many thousands more citizens were arrested by the SLORC.

Meanwhile, Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest on July 20, 1989 and other members of her party leadership were imprisoned. As a result of the national referendum on May 27, 1990, the NLD party won an overwhelming victory, taking 392 of the 485 seats in parliament that were contested. However, instead of transferring power to the elected representatives as promised, the

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be found in Michael Aris, ed., *Freedom from Fear and Other Writings* (New York: Penguin Books, 2010), 228-239.

<sup>2</sup> There is a brief narrative concerning Suu Kyi by Theua Gunawardhana, entitled "A Woman of Conscience in Burma," in Kama Lekshe Tsomo, ed., *Buddhist Women Across Cultures. Realizations* (Albany: State University of New York, 1999), 259-267.

<sup>3</sup> For a transcription of this historic speech, see Chapter 8 of *Freedom from Fear*.

SLORC initiated a nationwide purge and imprisoned many of the new members of parliament. Many fled the country to escape imprisonment or death, others were silenced by more subtle means.

Quoting Alan Clements, an American monk in Burma, who spent six months interviewing Suu Kyi about her life and work, “From those turbulent days onward many events have occurred within Burma, far too many to recount here. One fact stands out. Despite her release on July 11, 1995, following six years under arrest, Aung San told me quite frankly in our first conversation four months after her release: ‘Nothing has changed since my release.... Let the world know that we are still prisoners within our own country.’”<sup>4</sup>

These mad and murderous events and more form the framework of the story of Suu Kyi’s leadership as co-founder and head of the NLD. The SLORC’s Burma was, in effect, a totalitarian prison and a nation held in hostage. From within that prison, her voice of defiance and hope emerged and set the stage for a liberation movement that continues to strive for complete success to this day.

There is, in existence, a significant body of literature, treating various aspects of Suu Kyi’s life and work. This paper will focus, principally, on the “philosophical” principles that underlie and inform her life and work; specifically, the familial, social, political and spiritual themes that emerge from selected chapters in Alan Clements’ published interviews, *The Voice of Hope* and the volume of her own writings, *Freedom from Fear*.

The body of the paper will be organized around five major themes: (1) The Nature of Truth and Its Discernment, Conceptualization and Implementation, (2) The Dislike for Evil Action but not the Perpetrator(s) of the Evil Action, (3) Violent and Non-violent Tools for Socio-political Change in the Movement toward a Parliamentary Form of Democracy, (4) The Need to Activate the Power of the Powerless and the Most Effective Means of Achieving that Goal, and (5) Thoughts about the Future of the Democratic Movement in Burma and the Survivability of the Planet.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Nature of Truth and Its Discernment, Conceptualization and Implementation**

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<sup>4</sup> Most of the material for this paper has been taken from the published interviews of Aung San Suu Kyi by Alan Clements, entitled *The Voice of Hope: Conversations with Alan Clements* (1997, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008) or from the published collection of her writings *Freedom from Fear*. Hence, all references that are cited merely by a page number come from Clements’ book. References from other sources will be cited by an abbreviated form of the title of the book or article. This quotation can be found on page 19 of *The Voice of Hope*.

<sup>5</sup> For ease of reference, these five themes are discussed most extensively, but not exclusively, in chapters 3, 8, 9, and 13 in *The Voice of Hope* and in chapters 5, 6, 18, 19 and 20 of *Freedom from Fear*.

Suu Kyi manifests in everything she says and does, an uncompromising commitment to speak and represent the truth at all times and under all circumstances, regardless of the cost. The results of truth-telling always have implications for the safety and happiness of others. Speaking the truth often presents a threat to those in power who are bent on pursuing evil goals. What then is Suu Kyi's understanding of the truth to which she is immovably committed?

Truth is based on a person's doing one's utmost to be rational and sincere in evaluating the existing situation, making an honest distinction between good and evil, right and wrong and acting on behalf of "the right" as one understands it. Underlying these conscious principles is the need to maintain one's search for the truth with humility and critical self-reflection. Given the limitations of the human mind, even at its best, it must be acknowledged that human beings cannot, under any set of circumstances, know the Absolute Truth. All human truth is, in essence, relative truth. Hence, the search for truth is something toward which we struggle for the duration of our lifetimes.

It should be added that, in spite of Suu Kyi's deep immersion in philosophy, Eastern and Western, Ancient and Modern, her working-concept of truth is always based on practical needs. In her mind, "applied truth," in the last analysis is the form of truth that she pursues most vigorously, both in her family life and in the political arena. When truth is on the line, she declares with full confidence, "...I've always been sincere in my dealings with SLORC.... I've never lost my goodwill toward them.... But I'm not afraid of facing them at any time."<sup>6</sup>

Her commitment to "hard-nosed realism" is further revealed in her recognition that "in an authoritarian state, it can be dangerous to ask questions." If one declines to ask questions because of the potential risk involved, this hardens the tendency of the imperialists to make even greater demands on a person's complicity with their unjust policies and, thereby, further curbs personal and collective freedom. Thus, in order to avoid arousing the animosity of the authorities, most people simply comply with their demands. But, it is important to recognize that the expansion of freedom demands that, either a small group in a position of power or a critical mass of the populace, stand down the authorities, question their policies and, if possible, propose more equitable and just alternatives. In the final analysis, she recognizes that "there are certain situations where you can't expect people to stand alone. We've all got to help. The whole country has to stand up against cruel practices."<sup>7</sup>

On the basis of what principle, then, might such questioning of "cruel practices," legitimately, take place? Her response is that people must learn to question people in authority who order them to take a course of action that is counter to justice and existing laws. This is, the English philosopher, John Locke's (1632-1704) philosophy on the essence of freedom and the central

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<sup>6</sup> Clements, ed., 62.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 67, 70.

ideals of democracy, in general, namely, the rule by law and not by divine right or political advantage. Whether it be an individual or a group, the unjust set of demands has to be countered with the question, “. . . according to which law are you forcing me to do this? What right do you have to make me do this? They’ve also got to ask themselves, should we do this? People must ask questions and not just accept everything.”<sup>8</sup>

Many times, when one is centrally involved in political situations, in order to represent the truth, as one sees it, a person may be compelled to speak out on behalf of painful truths. This truth-speaking often creates distress (and in extreme cases, anger and hatred) among those in power. In order to deal with the painful truth that has been spoken against them, they may feel it necessary to lash out at those who are immediately around them, regardless of who caused the pain.

On the other hand, there those who are more fully aware and rational, who identify the source of the pain, analyze its causes and handle threatening situations in a rational and intelligent way. It must be said that Suu Kyi is a dazzling representative of the rational and intelligent path. Through her immersion in the Buddhist principles of mindfulness, meticulous analysis and emotional self-control, she seems to have successfully created a habitual mindset to maintain a balanced and open-minded sense of the situation and therefore, to avoid submitting to the power of irrational and emotionally negative forces. And, for her, the truth is always a product of personal perception. In essence, holding to the truth demands the maintenance of a pragmatic, practical ability to deal with the situation at-hand, from a position of moral and spiritual clarity and power.<sup>9</sup>

The Buddha’s core emphasis on the continual cultivation of awareness or mindfulness (Pāli, *mahāsatiipatthana*) is a central factor in determining the nature and implications of the truth at any given moment and within ever-changing situations. Fundamentally, this involves living in the ever-receding present, in other words, “be here now.” Living with expanded consciousness in the moment empowers the mind to avoid lingering with regrets and worries in the past and thereby, creating a fantasy future that seems, at the moment, to be preferable to the future that is actually in development.

Suu Kyi’s principle for being deeply rooted in the ever-moving present is to attempt, at all times, to be engaged in work that engages the mind and/orients the will toward effective action and work that satisfies and brings joy to the agent of the action. She once over-heard a conversation in which one person asked another, “I’m so frustrated. How about you?” The other responded, “I’m just too busy to feel frustrated.” She adds, “If you have a lot of work to do and you believe in the work you are doing, you do live in the present. There is no

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 215.

question of learning how to live in the present, you just do it.” It follows from this that busy people are happy people and idle people are unhappy people.<sup>10</sup>

### **Dislike for Evil Action but Not for the Perpetrator(s)**

Suu Kyi makes it a practice never to talk in public about her private life: “I only talk about things that concern the public.”<sup>11</sup> This protectiveness of her privacy extends to her colleagues as well. This is the reason her people have never launched personal attacks on anybody or even referred to their foibles. She does, however, feel compelled to speak about other people negatively when unjust political actions are involved. Even after entering politics where invectives often fly like snowflakes in the winter wind, she realized that she did not have the capacity for genuine hatred but admits that it is something that she can see in her captors.<sup>12</sup>

She shared with Alan Clements in the course of one of their many interviews, “I never learned to hate my captors, so I never felt frightened.”<sup>13</sup> This is truly a model exemplification in self-control and public composure. Clements inquires as to whether she’d gained this attitude through mental reasoning or by means of intuitive insight. She responded that it was largely due to her upbringing. Her mother, also an embodiment of internal discipline and self-control, never encouraged her to hate even those who had killed her father, nor did her mother speak ill of them.

Suu Kyi also demonstrated the capacity to “dislike the sin but not the sinner.” She accomplished this remarkable feat by separating, in her own mind, their evil actions, necessitated by their governmental and military positions, from their personal qualities. Rather, she viewed her captors as human beings and “like all human beings, there’s a side to them which must be likeable.”

Through her clear thinking and capacity for rational analysis, she has always been able to see a positive side to everything, even her own arrest. She reasons that had the SLORC not put her under house arrest, the NLD movement would not have attracted such great interest worldwide. She further observes that it’s always risky for authorities to repress someone whom they see as their enemy and who are without weapons. (This is surely one of the strongest “weapons” of all non-violent movements, from Mahatma Gandhi, to Nelson Mandela to Martin Luther King, Jr.) She continues, “the SLORC, by being so harsh and oppressive in the way they have handled the situation, has brought the

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<sup>10</sup> This statement calls to mind the popular Christian saying, “Idleness is the devil’s workshop.”

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 142.

NLD a lot of sympathy in the country, as well as, throughout the rest of the world.”<sup>14</sup>

She reports that there was never any melodrama in her family. They traditionally focused on the practical aspects of every situation that confronted them and demanded a rational decision and appropriate action. She states the matter flatly, “One has to live life on an even keel.” This is a modern expression of the Buddhist ideals of a life based on discipline of the mind and body, self-control and a balanced attitude toward all matters that come one’s way. She states, further, that she tries to avoid emotional responses altogether and to act out of a rational frame of mind, if at all possible. She says in her usual sagely manner, “How is getting emotional going to help? It just uses up energy.”

She remains emotionally distanced even from the notion that she has sacrificed her dearest treasures (family, career, many of her professional principles, etc.) in order to remain in Burma to promote the struggle for freedom for her people. She continues that others have sacrificed far more than she, such that, “...because their sacrifices are so much bigger than mine, I cannot think of mine as a sacrifice. I think of it as a choice.” A choice that she did not make happily but one that she made without a moment’s reservation or hesitation. More pragmatic than this, it is difficult to imagine.<sup>15</sup>

### **Violent and Non-violent Tools for Socio-political Change in the Movement toward a Parliamentary Form of Democracy**

Suu Kyi has never promoted the pursuit of political change through military force or warfare. The reason being, that she’s always been afraid that if democracy were to be achieved in this way, the country would never free itself from the idea that the most effective means of bringing about necessary social

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 139-140. There are numerous passages in the Gospels in which Jesus is reported to have brought to humankind a new ethic of love (*agape*), which transcended the Hebraic ethic of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” Despite the many religious and cultural differences that distinguish Christianity and Buddhism, the moral content of this teaching of Jesus resonates deeply with many of the teachings of the Buddha and specifically, the statement of Suu Kyi about never learning to hate her captors. What follows is the fullest articulation of Jesus’ doctrine of love to be found in the New Testament: “You have heard that it was said, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” However, I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.... For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? Moreover, if you greet only our brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” Matt. 5. 43-48. This is a teaching that, with slight revision, could have come from the mouth of Suu Kyi. In addition “This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, than to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.” John 15. 12-3. See also Mark 12.31 and John 13. 34-5.



and political changes is through violence. Violence, however morally upright the ultimate goal might be, simply breeds more violence. “The very method would be threatening us all the time.”<sup>16</sup> Hence, violence is not the way to democracy, but rather through collective decisions and legitimate public elections. “We have chosen the way of non-violence simply because we think it’s politically better for the country in the long run, to establish that you bring about change without the use of arms.” And she adds, “we’re not thinking of spiritual matters at all but rather social and political procedures. Perhaps, in that sense we’re not the same as Mahatma Gandhi, who would have probably condemned all movements that were not non-violent.”

She stakes out her piece of turf as a *moderate*, (and, as always, as a practical-minded politician), when it comes to positing violence and non-violence as polar absolutes. A subtler issue surfaces at this juncture: Would it not be legitimate to choose certain forms of violence out of compassion rather than using it as an option to cowardice? Isn’t it conceivable that the attachment to non-violence could become an act of violence towards one’s own people, when the non-violent approach ceases to be effective? She responds, “I certainly do not condemn those who fight the ‘just fight’, as it were. My father did that and I admire him greatly for it.... We keep all our options open. It is very important that one should be flexible.” Her father envisioned a far more propitious future for Burma by building a democratic state through political means and negotiation, rather than through military action. And the imperialists assassinated him for taking that stance. In the end, she reasons that by choosing the non-violent way (in her case, that would *not* preclude the maintenance of a standing army as a means of keeping the peace), it “would mean that fewer people will get hurt.”

She makes the astute observation that we often make the mistake of polarizing the violent and the non-violent principles and locking them into closed and inflexible boxes, “judging ‘the violent’ to be the antithesis of *ahimsā* or non-violence.” She considers the possibility of finding a way not to divide the two categories so sharply, those who use weapons “justly” from those who would never use violent means under any circumstance. This additional call for rational analysis is, once again, her practical and fine-grained intellect showing itself to good advantage. She takes note of the fact that even Jesus Christ, who was a peacemaker, when left with no alternative, used force to drive the money changers out of the precincts of the holy temple. And, I would add, he also said on one occasion, “I bring not peace but a sword.” This is a thorny text, the meaning of which, Christian theologians have debated for over two thousand years.

Clements inquires as to what does love mean to her? She relates the word “love,” within a Buddhist context to *mettā* or loving compassion and never regards love in an abstract form. *Mettā* manifests itself in the manner in which

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<sup>16</sup> Clements, ed., 154.

Suu Kyi and her colleagues live and work together. They work together like a family, with genuine concern and affection for one another. She contends that only *mettā* is strong and resilient enough to maintain the bond between people, especially when they are constantly working under threatening circumstances, particularly the constant threat of being hauled off to prison. And, in her mind, “the longer we work together, the greater our bond of *mettā* grows.”<sup>17</sup>

Suu Kyi emphasizes the importance of making the mass of people understand that the struggle is about them. In specific terms, “Democracy is about your job and your children’s education; it’s about the house you live in and the food you eat; it’s about whether or not you have to get permission from somebody before you visit your relatives in the next village; it’s about whether or not you can reap your own harvest and sell it to the person you want to sell it to. The struggle is about everyday life, etc.”<sup>18</sup>

I will conclude this section with a deeply poignant story about Suu Kyi’s Uncle U Kyi Maung, who, while under detention, was asked by one of the Military Intelligence officers, “Why did you decide to become a member of the National League for Democracy?” He replied, “For your sake.” That, then, is what the struggle is all about everybody’s everyday lives, etc., including the Military Intelligence officer.

### **The Need to Activate the Power of the Powerless and the Most Effective Means of Achieving that Goal**

The question inevitably arises: how could such a cruel and self-serving government arise in a country that has been nurtured for hundreds of years by the teachings and practices of Buddhism? Suu Kyi responds that a similar question could be raised about the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia. The fact that a particular country nurtures a good, compassionate religion cannot count for much if a significant number of its populace do not practice it and live by it, particularly, persons in positions of power and authority.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>19</sup> The same question could also be raised about a number of other countries in various parts of the world. For example, Imperialistic Japan in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its employment of the Zen establishment provide expertise in the training of minds to be put to evil ends with ruthless efficiency. Also, there is the example of “Christian America,” and its wholesale ruthless slaughter and uprooting of hundreds of thousands of Native Americans, and all in the name of Christian purity and Western civilization. And, for that matter the conquest of a good portion of the Middle East and North Africa, to say nothing of much of India under the Moghuls from the 12<sup>th</sup> century until the time of the coming of the British around the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, all by “God-fearing Muslims.” An even more glaring example is the Catholic initiation and sponsorship of eight Crusades in an attempt to re-capture the Holy City of Jerusalem from the Muslim “infidels.” And, finally, the case of the Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453) which pitted Catholics and

Concerning the factors necessary for democracy to materialize, the primary motive force has to be “for the people to understand that they are not powerless in an absolute and irresolvable sense. They’ve got to learn “the power of the powerless,” (a phrase originally formulated by Vaclav Havel (1936-2011), President of Czechoslovakia and adopted by Suu Kyi). Her remarks on what has impressed her the most about Czechoslovakia, are most revealing, both about the Czechoslovakian Revolution and about her own personal integrity. She reports that what impressed her the most was “the intellectual honesty that some of the best people maintained. They would rather be plumbers, road-workers, street-cleaners and bricklayers than compromise their intellectual integrity by joining a university or government. They accepted the superiority of the mind over the body and placed the importance of intellectual integrity far above that of material comfort.... this is a wonderful example of what can be achieved when you try to maintain your spiritual and intellectual integrity.”<sup>20</sup>

She declares further that the people “should not see themselves as helpless and totally in the hands of the powers that be.” On the one hand, the people have to be convinced that their current “powerless” position need not be viewed as an absolute and irresolvable situation. That, by getting behind strong, committed and charismatic leadership and banding themselves together, they can, slowly but surely gain power and position, perhaps by small degrees, slowly realized, but progress in a forward motion. The statement, “Divided we fall, united we stand,” could be the watchword of this position.

Undoubtedly, Suu Kyi has been such a strong, committed and charismatic leader, who has enjoyed the support of a majority of the population of Burma from the time of her first speech at the Shwedagon Pagoda in 1988. She has achieved “political greatness” by inspiring other people to join in “the great cause.”

On the other hand, the authorities in positions of power will have to implement their vision of a better future in practical programs of education, professional training and other policies that will create jobs that will help the mass of people get on their feet. There is a folk saying that articulates this fact clearly and succinctly: “If you give the hungry a fish, they will have fish for only one day; but if you teach the hungry how to fish, they will have a chance to have fish for the rest of their lives.” That is, in a nutshell, the key to activating “the power of the powerless.”

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Protestants in a do-or-die warfare for over a century, supposedly for the purification of Christendom, caused by the presence of the opposite sect.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 217.

## Thoughts on the Future of the Democratic Movement in Burma and the Survivability of the Planet

With a glance from the present to the future, arising from a 200-year struggle to achieve a free and independent Burma. The first question addressed to Suu Kyi is (1) how confident you are that democracy will be achieved in Burma. Not surprisingly she responds, “I am confident that we will achieve democracy eventually if we can maintain our struggle until the opposition sees their mistakes or decides that theirs is a lost cause in the long run with the continued fragmentation of the status quo and the augmentation of popular unrest.” Regarding the second question, (2) what are the essential factors needed for that goal to be achieved?” She resists the inclination to try and predict when democracy will become a living reality. There are too many variables (i.e., the constantly changing socio-politico-religious circumstances) to reasonably adopt a timetable.

And this goal can be accomplished, only by practical means, namely, not only by telling the people, “You can protect your rights,” but actually informing them, that they can protect their rights by establishing a democratic form of government, which will protect and safeguard the people’s rights “in accordance with existing laws.” It is an onerous task to adopt the attitude that those who try to arrest them unlawfully have no legitimate right to do so because no law has been broken.

Suu Kyi is confident that her case rests upon the people’s ability and readiness to adopt the attitude that those who try to arrest them unlawfully have no legitimate right to do so because no law had been broken. She is convinced that this principle of “rule by law” rather than “rule by fiat and repression” has been accomplished by the various public demonstrations and most recently by a legitimate election in which Suu Kyi and a number of members of her NDL party successfully won seats in the Burmese Parliament. Though still in the minority, this has been a promising beginning.<sup>21</sup>

With regard to her thoughts on the future of the planet and the potential for survival of humanity, she declares that her efforts to “make the world a better place” demonstrate the fact that she has hope. This position of hope is made possible by the conviction that “... those who are working to bring about positive changes are always more powerful than those who are sitting and letting things take their course.”<sup>22</sup>

One of the most powerful principles, undergirding her tireless campaign to usher in a democratic form of government is her belief in “the

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<sup>21</sup> A brief but insightful article appeared in the *Smithsonian* magazine (September 2012, 25-31) regarding “the power of Buddhism” in Suu Kyi’s personal and political struggle over the past quarter of a century to bring about the development of a stable and enduring democratic form of government in Burma.

<sup>22</sup> Clements, ed., 221.

interconnectedness of all countries and all of the citizens of all those countries.” “We are all one,” she declares. Doctrinally speaking, the whole of humanity must be viewed to have come from the same source and/originated by means of the same process of Dependent Co-Origination (Pāli, *pratīca-samutpanna*, Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda*). Hence, not only is the whole of humanity interconnected, but according to the Buddhist practice of *ahimsā* (no harm to any sentient creature), all beings that possess the element of consciousness are interlinked. Hence, all sentient beings are one, in essence and fundamental nature.

When this principle of quintessential interconnectedness is translated into socio-political terms (which is necessary in order to properly understand her ethic), it requires that all human beings regard all other human beings as equal and hence, to be related to in terms of universal love and compassion. Not only all other human beings should be so treated but all consciousness-bearing creatures, as well. This would necessarily include animals, birds, marine life but also insects and perhaps, even larvae. But in specifically practical terms, all humans should be viewed as equal and hence treated with equanimity, acceptance and honor without discrimination or prejudicial treatment of any kind.<sup>23</sup>

## Conclusion

The lengthy quotation which follows is taken from the Preface to the New Edition of *The Voice of Hope*, issued in 2008, and could be viewed as Suu Kyi’s political manifesto and world view. I have included it here as a kind of addendum because of my sense that it is perhaps the most succinct and compelling summary of her life and work.

We have faith in the power to change what needs to be changed but we are under no illusion that the transition from dictatorship to liberal democracy will be easy, or that democratic government will mean the end of all our problems. We know that our greatest challenges lie ahead of us and that our struggle to establish a stable, democratic society will continue beyond our own life span. But we know that we are not alone. The cause of liberty and justice finds sympathetic responses around the world. Thinking and feeling people

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 220. A most informative and insightful article appeared in the August 6, 2012 issue of *The New Yorker* magazine, the remarkable change in the attitude of the imperialist government of Ne Win. In brief, this involves the relinquishment by the imperialist government of their prolonged refusal to allow free elections. Based on this article, it would appear, that, at least for present, free elections will once again be held and hopefully usher in a new and freer era in Burmese politics. But note should be taken of the fact that, on numerous occasions in the past, the imperialist government has taken a public position that would allow for free elections, after which they have reneged on this more open policy. See Evan Osnos, “Letter from Rangoon. The Burmese Spring. Why did the regime change tack?”, *The New Yorker*, August 6, 2012, pp. 52-61.

everywhere, regardless of color or creed, understand the deeply rooted human need for a meaningful existence that goes beyond the mere gratification of material desires. Those fortunate enough to live in societies where they are entitled to full political rights can reach out to help their less fortunate brethren in other areas of our troubled planet.

This “postlogue” can provide the basis for the conclusion to this paper. I will highlight a few points for emphasis:

- (1) Her faith in “the power to change what needs to be changed” is both impressive and enduring. She has maintained her uncompromising determination to resist the imperialistic government of Ne Win from the time of her first public speech at the Shwedagon Pagoda in 1988. Her resistance among other forms of inhumane treatment at the hands of the existing government was a nearly twenty-year house-arrest.
- (2) Her adherence to an ethic of *moderation* and *realism* is most clearly and compellingly exemplified in her declaration that “we are under no illusion that the transition from dictatorship to liberal democracy will be easy, or that democratic government will mean an end to all of our problems.” That position, alone, reflects her attempt to, in her words, “live lives on an even keel.”
- (3) Her view that “each country is linked to the others through the bonds of humanity” is a politically powerful commitment to work for democracy and world peace on behalf of the whole world and not Burma alone.<sup>24</sup> In addition to the obvious socio-economic and political basis of this perspective, it is undeniably expressive of the core Buddhist principle that every human being, every animal, fish and fowl, yes, every sentient being, but ultimately every entity in the universe is interconnected, according to the doctrine of Dependent Co-Origination. Hence, as she declares, “Those fortunate enough to live in societies where they are entitled to full political rights can reach out to help their less fortunate brethren in other areas of our troubled planet.”
- (4) And, finally, her certification of the universal human need to be free to live a life that is both gratifying and meaningful is exemplified in her declaration, “Thinking and feeling people everywhere, regardless of color or creed, understand the deeply rooted human need for a meaningful existence that goes beyond the mere gratification of material desires.” There is an *unstated* but *assumed* belief in this creedal statement that the possession of beneficial social, economic, political and religious values are not sufficient to serve as the basis of a

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<sup>24</sup> Chapter 6 of *Voice of Hope*.

“meaningful existence” without an underlying and pervasive maintenance of an active spiritual life.

# LEE JUNGWOO, MODERN TONGDO-SA TEMPLE'S VINAYA (DISCIPLINE) MASTERS, AND THEIR PEACEMAKING ECUMENISM

**Chanju Mun**

## A prologue

The majority of current Tongdo-sa Temple's resident monks consider themselves Dharma descendants of Kim Seonghae (1854-1927). Kim Guha (1872-1965)<sup>1</sup> and Kim Gyeongbong (1892-1982),<sup>2</sup> two eminent disciples of Kim Seonghae, provided guidance for the temple after him. Yun Wolha (1915-

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<sup>1</sup> Han Dongmin, "Geundae bulgyo-gye wa Tongdo-sa juji Guha seunim ui dongnip undong" (Modern Korean Buddhism and Kim Guha's Participation in the Independence Movement), in Tongdo-sa Temple, ed., *Yeongchuk chongnim Tongdo-sa geun-hyeondae bulgyo-sa haksul jaryo-jip* (The Collection of the Research Articles on the History of Modern Tongdo-sa Temple) (Yongsan: Tongdo-sa Temple, 2010), 11-46.

<sup>2</sup> Kim Hyeonjun, *Babo ga doeora: Gyeongbong dae-seonsa ildaegi* (The Biography of Grand Zen Master Kim Gyeongbong) (Seoul: Hyorim, 1993); Jeongdo Seunim (Seo Wangmo), "Gyeongbong seonsa ui seonsasang ilgo" (A Brief Research on Kim Gyeongbong's Seon Thought), in *Bojo sasang* (Journal of Bojo Thought Research Institution) 30 (2008): 177-218; Jeongdo Seunim, "Gyeongbong seonsa ui sasang-jeok gyoryu gochal: Bojo guksa, Han'am seonsa wa Yongseong seonsa leul jungsim euro" (Research on Kim Gyeongbong's Influence from Jinul, Bang Han'am and Baek Yongseong," in *Bojo sasang* 32 (2009): 55-82; Jeongdo Seunim, "Gyeongbong seonsa yeon'gu" (Research in Zen Master Kim Gyeongbong), Ph.D. dissertation, Dongguk University, 2010; and Kim Gwangsik, "Gyeongbong seunim ui suhaeng · gyohwa · bulbeop suho ui wonyung-sang" (Kim Gyeongbong's Ecumenical Approach to Personal Practice, Social Propagation and Dharma Protection), in Tongdo-sa Temple, ed., 51-85.



2003),<sup>3</sup> Kim Guha's disciple, and Bak Byeogan (1901-1987),<sup>4</sup> Kim Gyeongbong's disciple, lead the temple after their masters. The disciples and grand-disciples of Kim Guha and Kim Gyeongbong currently guide the temple. Some eminent monks such as Yongak Hyegeon (1830-1908) and Seo Haedam (1862-1942) were active at modern Tongdo-sa Temple prior to the dominance of Kim Seonghae's Dharma lineage. The abovementioned masters guided modern Korean Buddhism in general and modern Tongdo-sa Temple in particular.<sup>5</sup>

This article academically discusses two major vinaya lineages of modern Korean Buddhism and vinaya masters of Tongdo-sa Temple, considered to be the most prestigious vinaya center of Korean Buddhism. It locates my religious master Lee Jungwoo (b. 1952)<sup>6</sup> in the temple's vinaya context. Bak Manha<sup>7</sup> bestowed the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism to Seo Haedam at the temple in 1897; Seo Haedam to Cha Seonghwan in 1935; and Cha Seonghwan to Yun Wolha in 1944. Seo Haedam served as the temple's vinaya master in the colonial period and Yun Wolha in the post-colonial period. Lee Jungwoo transmitted the lineage received from his grand-master Yun Wolha through his master Jin Hongbeop (1930-1978).

Seo Haedam, Yun Wolha, Jin Hongbeop, and Lee Jungwoo, the vinaya masters of modern Tongdo-sa Temple, who are academically investigated in this article, loyally inherited the ecumenical tradition of Sino-Korean Buddhism and sincerely advocated ecumenism among Seon/Chan/Zen, doctrinal, Pure Land,

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<sup>3</sup> Kim Gwangsik, "Yun Wolha ui bulgyo jeonghwa undong" (Yun Wolha and the Purification Buddhist Movement), in *Han'guk hyeondae bulgyo-sa yeon'gu* (Research on the History of Contemporary Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Bulgyo sidae-sa, 2006), 443-472; and Yi Gyeongsun, "Wolha seunim ui jongdan jeonghwa undong gwa gyodan gyebyeok hwaldong" (Yun Wolha's Activities in the Purification Buddhist Movement and the Jogye Order's Reform), in *Tongdo-sa Temple*, ed., 89-120.

<sup>4</sup> Bak Buyeong, "Byeogan-dang Beobin dae-jongsa ui jongdan-gwan gwa saengae" (Bak Byeogan's Life and View on the Jogye Order), in *Tongdo-sa Temple*, ed., 125-165.

<sup>5</sup> Tongdo-sa Temple, ed., *Yeongchuk chongnim Tongdo-sa geun-hyeondae bulgyo-sa: Guha · Gyeongbong · Wolha · Byeogan dae-jongsa leul jungsim euro* (The History of Modern Tongdo-sa Temple: Centering on Grand Masters Kim Guha, Kim Gyeongbong, Yun Wolha and Bak Byeogan), 2 volumes (Yangsan: Tongdo-sa Temple, 2010).

<sup>6</sup> If I strictly apply the Korean Government Romanization System revised in 2000, I should Romanize his name as I Jeong-u (or I Jeong'u). Some scholars might Romanize the name as Yi Jeong-u (or Yi Jeong'u). However, I adopted his Romanized spelling of Lee Jungwoo in this article. I recently discussed him in an article, "Lee Jungwoo and Peacemaking: Theory and Practice," Chanju Mun and Ronald S. Green, eds., *Living in Peace: Insights from World Religions* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2012), 39-72.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, I could not identify the dates of Bak Manha. I include in parentheses the dates of all figures when I refer to them for the first time, with the exception of a few I could not identify.

Tantric, and vinaya Buddhism.<sup>8</sup> Because they did not locate any particular Buddhist tradition including vinaya tradition over other traditions, they did not make conflicts but harmony among the traditions at the temple. Ecumenism through which they realized peace among the temple's resident monks might be able to contribute to peacemaking tremendously in the various areas including society, world, nature and culture. Therefore, this article introduces their ecumenical philosophy as a potential element in peacemaking processes.

## Two modern major vinaya lineages<sup>9</sup>

Modern Korean Buddhism has two major lineages of vinaya. There is the traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism transmitted from Daeun (1780-1841) who revitalized vinaya at Chilbul-am Hermitage on Mt. Jiri. There is also the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism, originating from Guxin (1535-1615) who recovered the vinaya at Fayuan-si Temple in Beijing. The lineages are not considered exclusive but are seen as supplementing each other. Accordingly, Ha Dongsan (1890-1965) and Yun Goam (1899-1988), two major vinaya masters of modern Korean Buddhism, officially and concurrently received the transmission of both lineages.

Based on the self-ordination ceremony prescribed in the 23<sup>rd</sup> precept of the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*,<sup>10</sup> Daeun and Guxin revitalized vinaya tradition in Korean and Chinese Buddhism respectively. While Daeun revitalized the vinaya tradition of Korean Buddhism in the late Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910), during which time Buddhism had become degenerate, Guxin recovered the vinaya tradition of Chinese Buddhism in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1662), when Buddhism had declined. The *Brahmā Net Sūtra* introduces two kinds of ordinations: formal and informal ordination. While the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, the *Pusa yingluo benye jing* (Sūtra of the Original Acts that Serve as Necklaces for the Bodhisattvas)<sup>11</sup> and *Zhancha shane yebao jing* (The Book on Divining the Requital of Good and Evil Actions)<sup>12</sup> advocate informal ordination for both monastics and laypersons, the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*<sup>13</sup> accepts informal self-vow ordination only for laypersons, not for monastics.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I could not, unfortunately, discuss Cha Seonghwan, who transmitted the Tongdo-sa Temple's vinaya lineage from Seo Haedam to Yun Wolha, due to the lack of textual information on him.

<sup>9</sup> I slightly revised and cited in this section Chanju Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement, 1954-1970: The struggle to restore celibacy in the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2011), 83-91.

<sup>10</sup> T.24.1484.1006c5-18.

<sup>11</sup> T.24.1485.1010b2-1023a10.

<sup>12</sup> T.17.839.901c6-910c12.

<sup>13</sup> T.30.1579.279a2-882a14.

<sup>14</sup> T.30.1579.589b6-594c18.

Yi Ji'gwan (1932-2012) systemized Korean Buddhism's vinaya tradition. Drawing extensively on source materials on the vinaya tradition of Korean Buddhism, he describes the sixteen kinds of ordination certifications used in modern Korean Buddhism.<sup>15</sup> Examining these, we find that while Tongdo-sa Temple, Beomeo-sa Temple, Woljeong-sa Temple, the Center for Seon Studies (Seonhak-won) and the nectar precept platform of Haein-sa Temple inherited the vinaya lineage of Guxin,<sup>16</sup> Songgwang-sa Temple, the Diamond Precept Platform of Haein-sa Temple, Daeheung-sa Temple, Mang'wol-sa Temple, Hwaeom-sa Temple and Yonghwa-sa Temple inherited the vinaya lineage of Daeun.<sup>17</sup> As mentioned above, modern Korean Buddhists have generally accepted the two vinaya lineages in ordaining monastics and laypersons.

The Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism, including Tongdo-sa Temple, Haein-sa Temple and Beomeo-sa Temple, its three large monasteries, generally accepted the vinaya lineage of Guxin, the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism. The Taego Order of Korean Buddhism, officially established in 1970 by married monks who separated from the united Jogye Order, generally inherited the vinaya lineage of Daeun. Guk Mukdam (1896-1981) served as the supreme patriarch of the Taego Order four times, inherited the vinaya lineage continued from Daeun through Geumdam Bomyeong (1765-1848), Choui Uisun (1786-1860), Beomhae Gag'an (1820-1896), Kim Jesan (1862-1930), Ho'eun Munseong (1850-1918) and Geumhae Gwan'yeong (1856-1926) to Song Man'am (1876-1956).<sup>18</sup>

Korean Buddhist monks were traditionally supposed to inherit the vinaya lineage of Vinaya Master Jajang (590-658) who transmitted vinaya from China and established the vinaya tradition in Korean Buddhism, and to receive precepts from vinaya masters. However, if Bak Manha of Yongyeon-sa Temple in Daegu transmitted the vinaya lineage of Guxin from Vinaya Master Changtao Hanpo at Fayuan-si Temple in Beijing, China in 1892, handed them to Seo Haedam of Tongdo-sa Temple and O Seong'wol (1866-1943) of Beomeo-sa Temple at the Tongdo-sa Temple's Diamond Precept Platform in 1897 and established a new vinaya lineage in Korean Buddhism, logically we should negate the authenticity of the traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism

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<sup>15</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, *Han'guk bulgyo gyeyul jeontong: Han'guk bulgyo gyebeop ui Jaju-jeok jeonseung* (Korean Buddhism's Vinaya Tradition: Korean Buddhism's Autonomous Transmission of the Vinaya Teaching) (Seoul: Gasan bulgyo munhwa yeon'gu-won, 2005), 139-221.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 254-256.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 256-258.

<sup>18</sup> See Han'guk bulgyo chongnam pyeonjip wiwon-hoe (The Editing Committee for the Comprehensive Collection of Source Materials of Contemporary Korean Buddhism), ed., *Han'guk bulgyo chongnam* (The Comprehensive Collection of Source Materials of Contemporary Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Daehan bulgyo jinheung-won, 1993), 221-223. The Taego Order enlists its supreme patriarch from the independence from Japan on August 15, 1945. Guk Mukdam served as its 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> supreme patriarch.

that originated from Vinaya Master Jajang and pre-existent before the acceptance of the new vinaya lineage.

However, we cannot clearly dissect the two lineages in modern Korean Buddhism. If we take the genealogical aspect of vinaya lineage to the extreme, we cannot properly comprehend the vinaya lineages in modern Korean Buddhism. Many vinaya masters did not consider themselves to be exclusive but were inclusive in transmitting their vinaya lineage. Ha Dongsan and Yun Goam concurrently inherited two lineages. If a vinaya master exclusively inherited the authentic vinaya lineage of Guxin of Chinese Buddhism, he should logically negate the authenticity of vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism prior to the introduction of Chinese Buddhism's new vinaya lineage. He also should negate the authenticity of Korean monks who had received precepts from traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism.

The two major modern Korean vinaya lineages of Daeun and Guxin directly and indirectly interconnected and mutually influenced each other. Yun Wolha officially stated that he inherited in 1944 the vinaya lineage of Guxin from Cha Seonghwan who transmitted the vinaya lineage from Seo Haedam in 1935.<sup>19</sup> Before officially receiving the vinaya from Bak Manha in 1897, Seo Haedam became a monk under the traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism continued from Vinaya Master Jajang. Because he did not negate the authenticity of the vinaya lineage of Daeun, it seems that he re-received the vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism that Bak Manha inherited, and supplemented the vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism that he had already received.

### Critical review of the vinaya lineages

The majority of Seon Buddhists, the Korean equivalent of Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen, argue that they are a part of the historical lineage of that tradition and see themselves as loyal successors of the historical Seon patriarchs. However, even though they argue that they are decedents of the Imje (Chn. Linji, Jpn. Rinzai) Seon sectarian lineage, in actuality and in terms of theory, they follow the ecumenism between doctrinal traditions of Buddhism and the practical, meditative tradition of Seon.<sup>20</sup> There are contradictions between their lineage and philosophy and they have responded to these in a variety of ways.

When we interpret Buddhist Dharma or vinaya lineages from the perspective of Confucian biological and genealogical lineages, the contradictions of the Dharma and vinaya lineages became extreme. Unlike Confucian lineages, we cannot unilaterally define relations between masters and disciples in Buddhist Dharma and vinaya lineages. The biological relation

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<sup>19</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, 139-144, 145-147.

<sup>20</sup> For a critical review of the Linji/Imje/Rinzai Seon dharma lineage in modern Korean Buddhism, see Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement*, 35-54.

between parents and children is necessarily one-sided because children are born from their parents. In contrast, relations between masters and disciples are multi-sided because disciples are subject to receiving influences from a number of teachers and colleagues who contribute to their understandings.

If we deconstruct our one-sided assumption about Dharma and vinaya lineages, and approach the situation instead according to social and historical contexts, we may be able to understand the nature of lineages more clearly. Even though we cannot ignore influence from a master to his disciple, we also cannot neglect influence from numerous figures including other masters and colleagues in the disciple's case.

Chinese Buddhism adopted the family genealogical record system from aboriginal Confucianism and established the vinaya lineage systems of Buddhist monasticism. However, if we literally apply the vinaya lineage system in Buddhist monasticism, we can find a lot of logical problems in it. Confucian genealogical records are very effective for biologically tracing family background because we are born to only one set of parents. Even though we cannot deny that we typically develop a significant part of our thinking as a result of our parents, we also receive influence from a number of friends, colleagues, teachers, and others.

It is incorrect to assert that a disciple inherits his thought and lineage from a single master. A monk receives influence philosophically from a number of figures, including his seniors, colleagues and even juniors. Even though he might receive influence from his teachers, he might also exert influence on them. Likewise, the vinaya lineage system of Korean Buddhism from a Confucian, biological perspective oversimplifies the dynamics involved. For example, if we view Bak Manha's vinaya lineage as being only from Guxin, we neglect the reality of his connections with preexistent vinaya tradition in Korea.

The Confucian biological and genealogical system was applied widely throughout East Asia. Accordingly, family is interpreted a community of politics, economy and biology. Pre-modern Buddhists in East Asia adopted the Confucian model to organize their temple hierarchies and to define their individual political and religious loyalties. Modern Korean Buddhists actively utilized the biological vinaya and Dharma lineage systems from pre-modern Korean Seon Buddhism and effectively established their own political and religious factions. Monks are united under their tonsure master who ordain them and/or their Dharma master who transmits their lineage to them. The followers of a biological lineage affiliate themselves with a temple and protect their religious and political interests from the followers of other biological lineages. In this way, the biological lineage system has strong political and economic connotations in modern Korean Buddhism.

We can find an example of these issues by considering the Dharma lineage of Jinul (1158-1210), who had a tremendous impact on the formation of modern Korean Buddhism. Jinul was influenced by Huineng (638-713), Li Tongxuan (646-740), Zongmi (780-841), Dahui (1089-1163), and others in forming his

thought. He did not attain enlightenment under the guidance of a particular Seon master but by himself. Therefore, he was not given official recognition of his enlightenment from a master. That being the case, we cannot interpret his enlightenment and Dharma lineage from a Seon sectarian perspective that emphasizes a Seon master's recognition of enlightenment and a transmission poem to the disciple. Jinul verified his enlightenment through textual evidence. He was not a Seon sectarian but an ecumenist who equally emphasized doctrinal and Seon Buddhism.

Jinul became a monk under Sin'gwang Jonghwi of the Seon lineage established by Beomil (810-889) on Mt. Sa'gul. If we consider that he inherited the Dharma lineage of Sin'gwang Jonghwi and overemphasize his tonsure Dharma lineage, we cannot clearly understand his thought. He might have directly received philosophical influence from his master. Even so, we cannot ignore that he was also indirectly influenced by Huineng, Li Tongxuan, Zongmi, Dahui and other masters. It is necessary to approach Jinul in multiple contexts to properly understand his thought.

A second example is the Dharma lineage of Ha Dongsan, a renowned master of modern Korean Buddhism.<sup>21</sup> He became a monk under Baek Yongseong (1864-1940), received his master's recognition for his enlightenment, and inherited his master's Dharma lineage of Imje Seon sectarianism. Baek Yongseong was a tonsure master and also a Dharma master of Ha Dongsan. He also received from Baek Yongseong the vinaya lineage of Daeun, who revitalized vinaya, degenerate in Korean Buddhism, at Chilbul-am Hermitage on Mt. Jiri. He also received another vinaya lineage from Yeongmyeong Boje of Beomeo-sa Temple, that of Guxin. He transmitted the orthodox vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism from Vinaya Master Yeongmyeong Boje of Beomeo-sa Temple and also inherited the authentic vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism from his master Baek Yongseong.

Even though we cannot ignore the fact that Ha Dongsan inherited the Imje Seon sectarian Dharma lineage from his master Baek Yongseong, we also cannot fail to notice the extent to which he was ecumenical in his thought. He strongly received influence of ecumenism between doctrinal and Seon Buddhism from previous major Sino-Korean ecumenists Zongmi, Yanshou (904-975), Jinul, Hyujeong (1520-1604), Zhuhong (1535-1615), and so on and formed his ecumenical philosophy. Even though he was an Imje Seon sectarian in the Dharma lineage, he was an ecumenist in his philosophy.

From these examples we find that to understand and interpret Jinul, a pre-modern master and Ha Dongsan, a modern master we must consider their lives and thoughts from multiple angles and in a variety of contexts. Even though Jinul philosophically and in the Dharma lineage received influence from his tonsure master Sin'gwang Jonghwi, we cannot ignore that he also received influence from other figures. Even though Ha Dongsan philosophically and in

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<sup>21</sup> See Chanju Mun, *Ha Dongsan and Colonial Korean Buddhism: Balancing Sectarianism and Ecumenism* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2009).

the Dharma lineage received influence from his master Baek Yongseong, he also received influence from a number of masters, pre-modern and modern.

While parents and children definitely have biological and genealogical continuations, they are not guaranteed to have continuations in their thought. The relations between masters and disciples are not biological but are based on social situations in East Asian Buddhism. A disciple may or may not accept and continue his master's thought. We should understand the vinaya and Dharma lineages of East Asian Buddhism in the contexts of the tensions between continuation and discontinuation. If we adopt the concept of continuation from masters and disciples, we dogmatize the vinaya and Dharma lineages. If we accept the concept of discontinuation from masters and disciples, we negate the necessity and validity of the lineages.

Bak Manha went to China and inherited the vinaya lineage of Guxin, the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism, from Vinaya Master Changtao Hanpo. But, if we dogmatize the vinaya lineage, we are naturally supposed to neglect influence from other religious figures in his case. If we institutionalize the vinaya lineage in Korean Buddhism, we are supposed to negate the authenticity of traditional Korean vinaya lineage prior to Bak Manha. If we adopt the biological and genealogical aspect of the vinaya lineage actually originated from Confucianism and interpret Guxin's vinaya lineage, we are not able to contextualize him in Korean Buddhism's context.

### **Japanized married monasticism<sup>22</sup>**

With the opening of Korea's borders to foreign nations, Korean Buddhists were exposed to Japanese Buddhism, which allows priests to marry. As time passed, Japanese Buddhist influence on Korean Buddhism increased in all areas. According to the January 30, 1907 issue of the daily newspaper *Maeil sinbo*, in his public speech at the Bong'won-sa temple, Go Yeongpyo proposed Buddhist monastics accept marriage and increase population while Kim Heungso argued against his suggestion.<sup>23</sup> The newspaper reported on the arguments about married monasticism between the two.

In December 1908, Gang Hongdu sent a petition asking the Japanese puppet government to allow monastic marriage. In March<sup>24</sup> and September 1910, Han Yongun (1879-1944) petitioned the government twice to allow freedom for monastics to choose marriage. Yi Min'u also petitioned the cabinet of the

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<sup>22</sup> I slightly revised and cited in this section Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement*, 187-189.

<sup>23</sup> See *Maeil sinbo*, January 30, 1907, S.2.1.149. *Sinmun euro bon Han'guk Bulgyo geun-hyeondae-sa* (The History of Modern Korean Buddhism Seen through New Paper Articles), 4 volumes (Seoul: Seon'u Doryang Press, 1995 and 1999), edited by Seon'u doryang will be cited as the capital letter of S hereafter.

<sup>24</sup> See *Hwangseong sinmun*, March 29, 1910, S.2.1.239.

government to permit monastic marriage in April 1910.<sup>25</sup> Some daily newspapers<sup>26</sup> reported that the Japanese puppet government was supposed to issue an ordinance to allow monastic marriage around May in 1910. However, this did not happen. On August 29, 1910, Japan annexed Korea and established the Japanese Government-General Office as the chief administrative unit for Japanese rule in Korea.

There is no statement on the monastic marriage system in the Ordinance of Korean Buddhist Temples of 1911. On May 28, 1912, the thirty abbots of the association of the thirty parish head temples met to standardize the articles and bylaws of the thirty parish head temples. They decided to not allow married monks to get any positions at temples, to not give full ordination to married monks and to not permit their wives and children to live at temples. They strictly prohibited monastics from marriage and eating meat.

After the failed March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement of mass resistance against Japanese rule, many Korean temples sent a large number of monastics to engage in advanced Buddhist Studies in Japan. While they were studying, just after they finished studying and just before and after coming back to their homeland, many of them married due to the strong influence of Japanese Buddhism. After coming back to Korea and being reassigned to their original temples, many of these young married monastics began to protest against what they now considered misconducts of the abbots and the senior monastics, charging that the elder Korean Buddhists had monopolized temple properties and blocked measures to reform Buddhism in their country. The conservative senior monastics criticized the younger group for being married.

In November 1919, just after the March 1<sup>st</sup>, 1919 Movement, Gang Daeryeon (1875-1942), the abbot of Yongju-sa Temple and a representative pro-Japanese Korean Buddhist leader, submitted his written opinion on the development of Korean Buddhist organizations in nine items to the Japanese Governor-General Saitō Minoru (1858-1936). In it he positively evaluated married monasticism, asked the governor-general to popularize marriage among monks and to promote international marriages between Korean monks and women of Japanese noble families as well as between women of Korean noble families and Japanese monks on the Korean Peninsula.<sup>27</sup>

A person under the pen name of Si Ilsaeng wrote an article entitled “Joseon Bulgyo cheongnyeon jegun ege” (To Young Korean Buddhists) that was published in the July 4, 1920 issue of *Dong'a ilbo*. The article suggested young Korean Buddhists should not adopt married monasticism and should not wear Western clothes, grow their hair long or eat meat. Instead, he said, they should preserve original Buddhist precepts of celibate monasticism and vegetarianism,

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<sup>25</sup> See *Hwangseong sinmun*, April 26, 1910, S.2.1.244.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to *Daehan maeil sinbo* and *Hwangseong sinmun*, May 17, 1910, S.2.1.248.

<sup>27</sup> Gang Daeryeon, “Bulgyo gigwan hwakjang uigyeon-seo” (A Written Opinion on the Development of Korean Buddhist Organizations), in *Joseon bulgyo chongbo* 20 (March 20, 1920): 1-10.



shave their heads and wear monastic robes.<sup>28</sup> He said they should not justify married monasticism for Buddhism by adopting the model of Martin Luther (1483-1546) who initiated the married priesthood of Protestant Christianity.

In the monthly announcement section of the October 1924 issue of *Bulgyo* (Buddhism), we can see how popular it was for Korean monks who studied Buddhism in Japan to get married, “We are allowed to present our ideas without restriction nowadays. Even though we did not financially support monks who studied Buddhism and other disciplines for several years in Japan, we strongly anticipated that they would do their jobs very well. Even so, immediately after they graduated from their schools in Japan and returned to their nation, they took wives. Even though they studied Buddhism and respected noble scholars in the beginning, they became degenerate and married. So, their masters disliked educating disciples in Buddhism abroad.”<sup>29</sup>

Around 1925, the married group became prevalent. Some married monastics who studied in Japan tried to change the articles and bylaws of each parish head temple to which they belonged in order to get the abbotship at some head temples, represented by Yongju-sa Temple. On October 16, 1925, some abbots of the association of the thirty-one parish head temples asked the government to change their articles and bylaws in order to allow for married monks to become abbots. However, because some abbots strongly objected, they failed in this effort.

Because Korean Buddhism traditionally followed celibate monasticism prescribed in the regulations of each temple, married monks could not become abbots. However, as the number of married monks increased, they pushed their parish head temples to revise the regulations in 1925. On October 16, 1925, the Association of the Thirty-one Parish Head Temples held a general meeting and discussed how to revise the temple regulations on the qualification of abbot candidates. Abbots of Beomeo-sa Temple, Haein-sa Temple and Seog’wang-sa Temple strongly opposed the revision of the temple regulations and made it impossible.

However, in May of the following year, the governor-general issued official instructions to provincial governors, stating that they should direct the provincial head temples and their branch temples to change the temple articles and bylaws, making it possible for married monks to become abbots. The office pushed the head temples to revise their regulations. In November 1926, more than ten parish head temples revised their laws and the Government-General approved them. With this, Korean Buddhism began to legalize and accept married monasticism.

The Japanese Government-General could control Korean Buddhism through married abbots more easily than celibate ones. To begin with, many of them had been educated in Japan. In addition, if they were not loyal to the government,

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<sup>28</sup> S.1.1.43.

<sup>29</sup> *Bulgyo* (Buddhism) 4 (October 15, 1924): 60-61.

they would lose the jobs on which their families depended. Married monks competed for good positions and privatized temple properties as much as possible. The monastic marriage system allowed the Japanese to control Korean Buddhism more effectively. It damaged the independence of Korean Buddhism and led to the loss of numerous temple properties.<sup>30</sup>

### Seo Haedam (1862-1942)

Vinaya Master Bak Manha transmitted the vinaya lineage of Guxin, the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism, to Vinaya Master Seo Haedam at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month of 1897. Vinaya Master Seo Haedam transmitted the vinaya lineage to Vinaya Master Cha Seonghwan in 1935 and Vinaya Master Cha Seonghwan granted it to Yun Wolha in 1944.<sup>31</sup> When we interpret the historical fact that Vinaya Master Bak Manha transmitted the vinaya lineage of Guxin, we must minimize the genealogical and biological aspect of the vinaya lineage in our interpretation.

Seo Haedam who revived vinaya at modern Tongdo-sa Temple transmitted the vinaya lineage to Cha Seonghwan and Yun Wolha received Seo Haedam's vinaya lineage through Cha Seonghwan. Kim Gyeongbong also received monastic and bodhisattva precepts from Seo Haedam on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (Buddha's Birthday) of 1911. The *Joseon bulgyo wolbo* 17 (June 25, 1913) recorded that Seo Haedam presided over the ordination ceremony and offered precepts to 200 laypersons at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple on the eighth day of the fourth lunar month (Buddha's Birthday) of 1913.<sup>32</sup> As seen above, it seems that he annually provided precepts at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple on the Buddha's Birthday.

Seo Haedam advocated ecumenism between Seon, doctrinal and vinaya Buddhism. He educated Kim Guha and Kim Gyeongbong based on ecumenism. He taught doctrinal Buddhism to Kim Guha and educated Kim Gyeongbong in vinaya and Seon Buddhism. He also transmitted his vinaya lineage to Bang Han'am (1876-1951), a Dharma disciple of Son Seokdam. Son Seokdam and Kim Seonghae were Dharma brothers. Bang Han'am had a good relation with a Dharma cousin Kim Gyeongbong and Yun Wolha, a Dharma nephew of Kim Gyeongbong, learned Seon Buddhism from Bang Han'am.

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<sup>30</sup> See "4. Daecheoseung ui bopyeon-hwa wa sachal jaejeong" (The Generalization of Married Monks of Korean Buddhism and the Korean Buddhist Temple Finances) in Kim Gwangsik, *Han'guk geundae bulgyo ui hyeonsil insik* (Understanding of Society in Modern Korean Buddhism) (Seoul: Minjok-sa, 1998), 174-182.

<sup>31</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, 139-147.

<sup>32</sup> *Joseon bulgyo wolbo* 17 (June 25, 1913): 71.

Seo Haedam was born on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth lunar month of 1862, became a monk under Chundam at Tongdo-sa Temple in July 1880, studied doctrinal Buddhism under Yongho Haeju (d. 1887) on Mt. Sobaek for more than ten years, and inherited the Dharma lineage of Jeon Suwol (1855-1928) at Goun-sa Temple on Mt. Deung'un in 1894. Jeon Suwol represented Seon Buddhism, became a monk under Taeheo Seong'won at Cheonjang-sa Temple in Seosan, South Chungcheong Province and inherited the Dharma lineage from Song Gyeongheo (1849-1912) who revitalized Korean Seon Buddhism in modern times. Until his death in 1942 after coming back to his home temple of Tongdo-sa Temple in December 1895, Seo Haedam trained monks at the temple.

Before Bak Manha transmitted the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism to Seo Haedam, Seo Haedam was ordained under the vinaya tradition of Korean Buddhism. He loyally inherited the tradition continued from the time of Vinaya Master Jajang, founder of the Tongdo-sa Temple and later also transmitted the vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism from Bak Manha. He strengthened the vinaya tradition of Korean Buddhism with that of Chinese Buddhism.

Seo Haedam received religious influence from Yongak Hyegyeyon. Yongak Hyegyeyon, the Dharma master of Kim Guha, entered intensive prayer for one hundred days from January 15 to April 25, 1897 at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple, in effort to make the printing of the Korean Tripitaka of Haein-sa Temple successful. Yongak Hyegyeyon stayed in a room near the Tripitaka Hall of Tongdo-sa Temple and passed away at the temple on the fifteenth day of the second lunar month of 1908.

Seo Haedam wrote and published *Tongdo-sa sajeok* (The History of Tongdo-sa Temple) in 1912. He became the director of the vinaya center at Bosang-am Hermitage in 1915, was installed the spiritual leader of the Seon Center at Anyang-am Hermitage, was appointed the highest doctrinal teacher in 1917,<sup>33</sup> and was appointed the 1<sup>st</sup> director of the nun seminary of Ongnyeon-am Hermitage at Tongdo-sa Temple in 1918.<sup>34</sup> He served as a Seon master, Vinaya master and doctrinal master. He ecumenically approached vinaya, Seon and doctrinal Buddhism without excluding any tradition. Seo Haedam was a specialist in the *Huayan Sūtra*, emphasized Pure Land Buddhism, practiced Seon Buddhism, and preserved precepts.

Kim Guha, Kim Gyeongbong and Yun Wolha inherited ecumenism from their senior Seo Haedam and ecumenized the three major traditions of Korean Buddhism, vinaya, doctrinal and Seon. All of the abovementioned three eminent masters did not adopt the radical soteriology of sudden enlightenment and sudden practice that sectarian Imje Seon Buddhists advocated but the moderate soteriology of sudden enlightenment and gradual practice that ecumenists

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<sup>33</sup> *Joseon bulgyo chongbo* 3 (May 20, 1917): 54.

<sup>34</sup> *Joseon bulgyo chongbo* 10 (July 20, 1918): 90.

between Seon and doctrinal Buddhism supported. They did not accept Seon absolutism but ecumenically considered doctrinal, vinaya, Pure Land, Seon, and Tantric traditions.

Seo Haedam received and preserved precepts under the vinaya tradition of Tongdo-sa Temple and reinforced his vinaya lineage with the vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism that Bak Manha newly introduced. Yun Wolha loyally inherited the vinaya lineage of Seo Haedam through Cha Seonghwan. The vinaya lineage of Daeun, the authentic vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism, and the vinaya lineage of Guxin, the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism, should not be considered mutually exclusive but inclusive in the vinaya lineage of Yun Wolha, in order to not exclude the long vinaya history of Tongdo-sa continued from the temple's founder, Jajang, to Seo Haedam.

Baek Yongseong asserted that he inherited the vinaya lineage of Daeun from Vinaya Master Seon'gok at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple in 1884. Because we cannot find historical and textual information on the vinaya master, we cannot explain who he was. Unfortunately, we do not know how the vinaya lineage of Daeun was transmitted at modern and pre-modern Tongdo-sa Temple. Because Baek Yongseong received the vinaya lineage of Daeun from Seon'gok in 1884 and Seo Haedam transmitted the vinaya lineage of Guxin from Bak Manha in 1897, we can safely presume that the vinaya lineage of Daeun had been transmitted at Tongdo-sa Temple before 1897. So, Seo Haedam seems to have received precepts and became a monk under the vinaya lineage of Daeun in 1880 and to have inherited the vinaya lineage of Guxin from Bak Manha in 1897.

We can speculate that Seo Haedam united the two different vinaya lineages of Daeun and Guxin. Even though we need to prove textually and historically this supposition, we can presume that he did not exclude the vinaya lineage of Daeun from the position of the vinaya lineage of Guxin. If he excluded the lineage, he would have negated the authenticity of the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple that Jajang established, and the authenticity of Jajang whom the vinaya lineage of Daeun considered as its founder. He seemed to base his identity as a vinaya master on the vinaya lineage of Daeun and to supplement his emphasis of vinaya with the vinaya lineage of Guxin.

### **Yun Wolha (1915-2003)**

Yun Wolha, one of the five major leaders of the Purification Buddhist Movement, 1954-1970, restored celibate monasticism in the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism that adopted married monasticism during Japanese occupation period, 1910-1945. The other four leaders were Yi Hyobong (1888-1966), Ha Dongsan, Jeong Geumo (1896-1968) and Yi Cheongdam (1902-1971). He served as the order's supreme patriarch and guided the order from May 3, 1994 to December 30, 1998. He established the Praxis Complex at his resident Tongdo-sa Temple in 1984 and actually guided the temple as its spiritual leader

under his directions until his death in 2003. He was one of the major key leaders in modern Korean Buddhism in general and the spiritual leader of Tongdo-sa Temple in particular.

He was the vinaya master of the temple's Diamond Precept Platform, the most prestigious ordination platform in the country, and attempted to revitalize celibate monasticism and vegetarianism in Korean Buddhism in general and at Tongdo-sa Temple in particular. After the transmission of the vinaya lineage from Cha Seonghwan in 1944 until his death in 2003, he and his junior vinaya masters ordained innumerable monks and lay Buddhists at Tongdo-sa Temple. Even though he was the vinaya master, he did not sectarianistically exclude other Buddhist traditions such as doctrinal, Seon and Pure Land Buddhism but ecumenically incorporated them in practice.

The two ordination certifications which Yun Wolha used at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple on Mt. Yeongchuk in South Gyeongsang Province detailed the vinaya lineage of Yun Wolha from the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism in India, and Vinaya Master Daoxuan (827-898), founder of Chinese Vinaya tradition, through Guxin who revitalized Chinese vinaya tradition to Bak Manha who revitalized the vinaya lineage in Korean Buddhism.<sup>35</sup> Yun Wolha clarified his vinaya lineage and indicated in the certifications that he inherited the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism.

However, even though Vinaya Master Jajang, the founder of Tongdo-sa Temple, established the temple's Diamond Precept Platform at which he offered precepts and later vinaya masters continuously inherited the vinaya lineage, Yun Wolha did not mention the authentic vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism and Tongdo-sa Temple in the certifications. All of the monks at Tongdo-sa Temple, including Seo Haedam who revitalized the vinaya tradition in modern Tongdo-sa Temple, across its history were ordained under the authentic vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism initiated from Jajang. If we literally interpret the vinaya lineage in the certifications, we should understand that Yun Wolha negated the history of the authentic vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Temple from the temple's foundation until 1897, when Seo Haedam inherited the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism.

Even though Yun Wolha clarified his vinaya lineage originated from Guxin of Chinese Buddhism in the certifications, we could not find any textual evidence that he clearly negated the authentic vinaya lineage of Daeun of Korean Buddhism who considered Jajang as the founder of Korean vinaya tradition. He also did not state that the vinaya lineage of Guxin was authentic and that of Daeun was not authentic. He seemed to not have a sectarian preference towards the vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism. He did not make the lineage absolute but needed to back up his authenticity as a vinaya master.

Even though Yun Wolha officially transmitted the vinaya lineage of Guxin through Cha Seonghwan from Seo Haedam, he strongly emphasized the

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<sup>35</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, 139-147.

importance of Jajang whom the vinaya lineage of Daeun considered as its founder in Korea.<sup>36</sup> He highly evaluated Jajang and the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple Jajang established. So, we can say that he could not logically negate the vinaya lineage of Daeun. To understand this we should deconstruct assumptions about his formal vinaya lineage of Guxin and objectively and neutrally consider his vinaya lineage and thought.

As Buddhism ecumenically emphasizes vinaya preservation, meditation practice and doctrinal research, Yun Wolha also did not vertically evaluate these three concerns.<sup>37</sup> Because he did not hierarchically evaluate vinaya preservation as more important than the other two practices, we cannot categorize him as a vinaya absolutist or as a vinaya sectarian. Even though he practiced Seon Buddhism and was called a Seon master, he did not emphasize Seon Buddhism over other Buddhist practices. He was not a Seon sectarian. He was basically an ecumenist, equally considered three kinds of learning of vinaya preservation, meditation practice and doctrinal research and did not ask his followers to exclusively practice one of them.

He also defined the teaching of vinaya as a way to enlightenment and precepts as being inherent in, not being external to, our minds.<sup>38</sup> He ecumenically approached the two different traditions of the preservation of precepts and the practice of Seon Buddhism. He interpreted precepts as being inherent in our minds from the perspective of Seon Buddhism. He did not consider precepts as social regulations but autonomous regulations. Yun Wolha contended that as we could not seek for enlightenment outside ourselves, we could not find precepts outside our minds. He emphasized the autonomous, not social, aspect of precepts.

He also interpreted Confucian moral virtues of state loyalty, filial piety, trustfulness and rightfulness from the perspective of Buddhist precepts. He was an ethical ecumenist in terms of Confucianism and Buddhism, "If we respect our parents and seniors, we can move Heaven. If we are loyal to our nation and trust in our friends, we can naturally subdue barbarians. If we accumulate wholesome deeds, we can produce a hundred fortunes. Therefore, we can call this phenomenon retribution."<sup>39</sup>

He also emphasized the filial piety explained in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* and Confucianism. He succeeded to the spirit of filial piety in the scripture that defined filial piety as a Mahāyāna Bodhisattva precept.<sup>40</sup> He mentioned, "Mahāmaudgalyāyana generated a good mind, moved around eighteen hells and saved his mother. When sons and daughters are obedient to their parents,

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<sup>36</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe (The Publication Committee for the Seon Talks by Seon Master Yun Wolha), ed., *Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok* (Seon Talks by Seon Master Yun Wolha) (Yongsan: Tongdo-sa Temple, 1999), 1: 293.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 1: 129.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1: 152.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1: 186-187.

<sup>40</sup> T.24.1484.1004a23-28.

preserve the purity of their minds and sincerely practice precepts, they can return their indebtedness to their parents.”<sup>41</sup>

While Buddhism basically advocates horizontal ethics, Confucianism adopts vertical ethics. Yun Wolha horizontally and from the Buddhist perspective interpreted relations between a king and subjects, government officials and citizens, a husband and a wife, a master and a disciple, parents and children. He wrote, “If the nation is rightfully managed, national opinion will follow the nation’s policy. If the government’s officials are not corrupt, people will treat them comfortably. If a wife is kindhearted, her husband will have no worries. If children are loyal to their parents, parents will be generous.”<sup>42</sup> In this way, he did not accept the vertical ethics of Confucianism but interpreted Confucian ethics from the Buddhist perspective.

He simultaneously emphasized the preservation of precepts and the research of doctrines and considered them to be supplementary to each other. He believed that sentient beings should behave based on his understanding of Buddhist doctrine. He wrote, “An ordinary being is supposed to have less good behavior. He has perverted and wrong thinking. Even so, because he takes and reads scriptures, he will at least not be born in a hell. If he copies scriptures, he will escape from disasters and diseases.”<sup>43</sup> He thought that doctrinal research helps sentient beings preserve precepts and develop their minds.

He contended that we could not force the spirit of vinaya to be realized but should realize it naturally. He also strongly suggested that we cultivate our spirit of detachment and let our spirit of vinaya realized in ourselves. He said, “We should not practice good and remove evil unnaturally. If we naturally remove our evil, we can naturally remove attachment in our minds.”<sup>44</sup>

He regarded precepts as being innate in our minds and not existent outside us. If we receive and preserve precepts, we are supposed to reveal them from our minds. He argued that even though we are supposed to reveal them from our minds gradually and actually, we are in principle and theoretically able to manifest them suddenly. Even though he advocated the subitist position in soteriology and ethics, he did not exclude the gradual position. He attempted to harmonize the subitist position and the gradual one in his soteriology and ethics. So, he said, “If we cultivate our minds for one day, we are able to obtain the merits that you practice for one day. If we do not cultivate our minds for one day, we are not able to obtain the merits that you practice for one day. If we augment the merits gradually, we can obtain them (from the perspective of the provisional truth). However, if we seek for enlightenment, we can obtain the ultimate teaching (from the perspective of the absolute truth).”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 1: 260.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 1: 195.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1: 190-191.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 1: 196-197.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 1: 289.

He considered that the majority of Buddhists did not practice precepts. He strongly emphasized that Buddhists should receive and preserve precepts in their daily and religious lives. So, he used a metaphor of the pine and the nut pine and figuratively said, “Even though many Buddhists receive precepts from vinaya masters, few preserve them. Even though we easily receive our parental love, it is difficult to return it to our parents. How can we so easily turn our heads and not face the facts? However, the pine and the nut pine are able to endure the hard times well.”<sup>46</sup>

He also suggested that Buddhists should continuously preserve precepts in their daily lives. “Whenever we hold up our spoons (to eat meals), we should think of the merits from others. Each grain of rice originates from the Buddha’s blood. Even though a farmer is running with sweat in a dry field in a very hot summer, there is no even breeze.”<sup>47</sup>

He argued that if we receive and preserve precepts in our daily lives, we can finally realize peace in our minds and in society. “When we see the Buddha or listen to the Buddha’s teachings, we can obtain the Buddha’s purity. If we cultivate and plant our wholesome roots, nobody can make them be useless. If we cultivate our good, we can destroy a myriad of evils, just as we are able to burn all trees (on a mountain) even with a little fire.”<sup>48</sup>

He strongly advised Buddhists to not seek reputation and interests in vain. “We are transmigrating here and there in the cycle of life and death for a long time. As we grow older and our hair gets gray, even horses know our bodies are becoming older. Reputation and interests are the raging flames of a calamity. Who knows how many persons the flames have burnt throughout our history from antiquity to now?”<sup>49</sup>

He also cordially suggested Buddhists should not commit verbal wrongdoings. “The words coming out from our mouths are like arrows released from a bow. Therefore, we should not say our words carelessly. If someone hears our misspoken words, regardless of how powerful we are, we cannot take out them from his or her ears.”<sup>50</sup>

Because he considered precepts as inherent in us, he requested Buddhists to reveal them from their minds and to not see them outside. When we realize our misdeed in our minds, we can truly repent of them. When we remove our misdeeds from our minds, we can completely repent of them. He understood that we cannot remove our three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness through socially doing good behaviors but through realizing our ignorance of them inherent in our minds. When we completely remove the roots of evil, we can thoroughly repent of the evil.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 1: 299.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 1: 302-303.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 1: 297.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 1: 296.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 1: 169.



He cited the “Verse for True Repentance”<sup>51</sup> and the “Verse for Lay Practices”<sup>52</sup> by Huineng, the sixth patriarch of Chan Buddhism, and interpreted repentance from the perspective of Seon Buddhism.<sup>53</sup> Even though Seon sectarians put the practice of Seon Buddhism over the preservation of precepts, he harmonized the vinaya tradition with the Chan tradition. We can acquire true enlightenment through true repentance. Because true enlightenment and true repentance are two sides of a coin, we cannot separate them from each other. He equally emphasized the preservation of precepts and the practice of Seon from his ecumenical position.

Yun Wolha and Huineng loyally followed the spirit of repentance from the fifth minor precept of Mahāyāna Bodhisattva precepts included in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*. The relevant part is as follows:

Buddhists should teach confession to all sentient beings who violate five, eight or ten precepts or break any other prohibitions or who engage in seven cardinal sins and eight difficulties (in which it is difficult to hear the teaching), or any other violations of the precepts. However, if you, bodhisattvas, fail to teach repentance but live with monks for their benefit, do not share offerings, do not join the assemblies where precepts are preached, still do not call attention to confess the sins and do not teach repentance, you have committed a minor moral offence.<sup>54</sup>

Chan sectarians might claim that Huineng, whom they consider as the actual founder of their tradition of Buddhism, valued the practice of Chan over the preservation of precepts. Radical Chan sectarians might exclusively practice Chan meditation and negate the preservation of precepts. However, as we have seen in the above-mentioned verse, he equally emphasized Chan practice and precept preservation. He considered that both practices supplement each other. He suggested Buddhists should follow the two practices in their daily lives. If we diligently practice Chan meditation, we are able to naturally keep precepts. If we sincerely preserve precepts, we are supposed to naturally practice Chan meditation.

Huineng ecumenically considered Chan practice and precept preservation in his “Verse for Lay Practices.” Yun Wolha also cited the verse and equally emphasized the two practices without excluding any of them. He was not a radical Chan sectarian and also not a stubborn vinaya master but an ecumenist.

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 2: 112-114; T.48.2008.354c26-355a6; and Philip B. Yampolsky, trans., *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 154.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2: 109-111; and T.48.2008.352.352b28-c7.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 2: 112-114, 109-111.

<sup>54</sup> T.24.1484.1005b17-21 and Shigeru Osuka, trans., *The Very Mahāyāna Buddhist Ethics: Introduction and Translation of the Fan-wan-jing* (Tokyo: Chuo University Press, 2005), 98.

Even though a nation required its citizens including Buddhists to prioritize the government's laws to the religious organization's rules, he suggested Buddhists should prioritize vinaya and the rules of Buddhist organizations to the government's laws and autonomously manage Buddhist organizations. He liked Buddhism self-regulated, not other-regulated. Even though Korean Buddhism traditionally exercised state-protectionism, he strongly advocated the separation of religion and state (politics). He diagnosed many current problems of Korean Buddhism as originating from the government's intervention in Buddhist organizations and not allowing Buddhist organizations to solve their own problems.<sup>55</sup>

He strongly advocated celibate monasticism and backed up the Purification Buddhist Movement as one of its five key leaders. He suggested Buddhist monks should strictly preserve the precept of celibacy, "Sexual indulgence hurts our bodies and destroys enlightenment. Our bodies tied up one thousand times and ten thousand times enter a fire pool's hell. It is better to be close to a venomous snake than to be friendly with sexual indulgence. If we have wrong thoughts, we might have limitless sufferings."<sup>56</sup>

He also cited the "Verse for Entering Monkhood" by Emperor Shizu (r. 1643-1661) of the Qing Dynasty,<sup>57</sup> strongly emphasizing celibate monasticism and theoretically supporting the Purification Buddhist Movement. He said married monasticism was more harmful than poisoned serpents. He asserted that if a monk is married, he will be definitely born in a hell.<sup>58</sup> He prioritized celibate monasticism to married monasticism for Buddhists to obtain enlightenment. Emperor Shizu abdicated the throne to his third son Emperor Chengzu (r. 1661-1722), became a monk and wrote a famous verse.<sup>59</sup>

Yun Wolha cited the very famous "Four Stanzas Ecumenizing Chan and Pure Land Buddhism" by Yanshou, one of major ecumenists in Sino-Korean Buddhism and theoretically supported his ecumenism.<sup>60</sup> He loyally inherited ecumenism from Yanshou and ecumenized Seon and doctrinal Buddhism, Seon and Pure Land Buddhism, three kinds of learning of precepts, meditation and wisdom, theory and praxis, self-power and other-power, and three religious traditions of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism. He also cited a verse entitled "A poem for returning our favors to the Buddha" from the *Collection of 114 Questions and Answers: How can We Subsume Ten Thousand Goods to One Origin?* (*Wanshan tonggui ji*), one of Yanshou's major works, highly

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<sup>55</sup> Yun Wolha, *Wolha seunim beobeo-jip: Geurimja eotneun namu* (The Collection of Dharma Talks by Master Yun Wolha: A Shade-less Tree) (Yangsan: Deungbul, 1992), 31.

<sup>56</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 1: 251.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 2: 201-206.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 1: 251.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 2: 201-206.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 2: 188-190 and X.61.1163.632a19-24. See its English translation in Mun, *Ha Dongsan and Colonial Korean Buddhism*, 330-331.

emphasized morality and located the preservation of precepts in the ecumenical context.<sup>61</sup>

We need to reexamine the vinaya lineage of modern and contemporary Tongdo-sa Temple begun from Bak Manha through Seo Haedam to Yun Wolha. We might freely interpret that Yun Wolha successfully united the traditional lineage of Korean Buddhism originating from Vinaya Master Jajang, founder of Korean Buddhism's vinaya tradition in general and the precept platform of Tongdo-sa Temple in particular, with the authentic lineage of Chinese Buddhism originated from Guxin through Bak Manha.

However, when we see the vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Temple in the ordination certificates that Yun Wolha used,<sup>62</sup> we cannot see in them any vinaya masters of Korean Buddhism from Jajang to Bak Manha but only vinaya masters of Chinese Buddhism prior to Bak Manha. Logically interpreted, the certificates completely negate the long history of Korean Buddhism's and Tongdo-sa Temple's vinaya tradition continued from Jajang without interruption. Bae Hakdam (b. 1952), also called as Beopseong, vehemently criticized from the perspective of the lineage of Dae-eun which inherited traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism that the vinaya lineage of Guxin which Bak Manha took from China and transmitted in Korea is basically toadyistic to China-centralism.<sup>63</sup>

If Yun Wolha was a scholar, he just needed to prove the lineage textually and factually. He factually inherited the vinaya lineage of Guxin. However, he was not a scholar but the preceptor of Tongdo-sa Temple. If he accepted and justified the vinaya lineage, he should have logically negated the traditional vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Temple since its establishment. The two lineages cannot be logically coexistent but are contradictory. If he accepted the vinaya lineage of Guxin, he was supposed to negate the traditional vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Temple. If he accepted the vinaya lineage of Tongdo-sa Temple, he was supposed to negate the vinaya lineage of Guxin.

I think that Tongdo-sa Temple needs to solve the logical interruption of vinaya lineage transmission in its long history, occurring after the new introduction of the authentic vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism by Bak Manha. We can easily guess that because no one, including Yun Wolha, negated Jajang's foundation of Tongdo-sa Temple and its vinaya tradition, nobody might have negated the vinaya lineage originated from Jajang at the temple. So, Yun Wolha seemed to contextualize the new vinaya lineage in the vinaya lineage of Jajang.

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<sup>61</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 2: 182-187 and T.48.2017.992c18-993a3.

<sup>62</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, 139-147.

<sup>63</sup> Hakdam Seunim, "Yongseong Jinjong seonsa ui wondonyul sasang gwa seonyul gyeomhaeng ui seonpung" (Baek Yongseong's Thought on Vinaya and His Ecumenical Approach to Seon and Vinaya), in *Daegak sasang* (Mahā Bodhi Thought) 10 (2007): 285-415.

If so, the temple needs to conduct research on the vinaya lineage and make a new vinaya lineage to solve the logical contradictions between the traditional vinaya lineage of Korean Buddhism and the newly imported vinaya lineage of Chinese Buddhism and the historical discontinuation of Korean Buddhism's traditional vinaya lineage taken place after the new introduction of Chinese Buddhism's authentic vinaya lineage to Korean Buddhism. I think that the temple must include at least Jajang, its founder, in its newly revised ordination certificate. If not, the temple is logically accepting the discontinuation of the vinaya tradition that continued from the time of Jajang's foundation until Bak Manha's new introduction of the vinaya lineage of Guxin to its temple in 1897.

### **Jin Hongbeop (1930-1978)**

Jin Hongbeop was a disciple of Yun Wolha and an educator who taught student monks at the traditional monastic seminary affiliated to Tongdo-sa Temple. Although we cannot textually prove that Jin Hongbeop officially inherited the vinaya lineage from his master Yun Wolha, we can easily and textually find how much he inherited the spirit of vinaya from his master Yun Wolha and emphasized the preservation of precepts. We cannot textually see how he treated the two major vinaya lineages of modern Korean Buddhism, the lineage of Daeun and the lineage of Guxin.

According to the ordination certificate that Tongdo-sa Temple issued on April 5, 1972,<sup>64</sup> Jin Hongbeop served as the instruction preceptor and offered precepts for monastics at the Diamond Precept Platform of Tongdo-sa Temple, assisting Yun Wolha, the transmission preceptor. We can notice in the certificate that they adopted the vinaya lineage of Guxin. We can safely conclude that he adopted the lineage even though we do not know how seriously he accepted it. We can also guess that because we could not find his sentences advocating the lineage in the book,<sup>65</sup> he might accept the lineage conventionally, but not seriously.

On February 22, 1971, Jin Hongbeop was installed the fourth abbot of Tongdo-sa Temple after the beginning of Purification Buddhist Movement, and invited his friend Yi Seongsu (1923-2012), a member of Cheongmaek-hoe (Society of a Green Barley),<sup>66</sup> to preach in the series of sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra* that Jin Hongbeop hosted in the year of 1971 after the assumption of

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<sup>64</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, 147.

<sup>65</sup> See Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe (The Publication Committee for the Memorial Collection of Seon Master Jin Hongbeop's Works), ed., *Hongbeop seonsa chumo munjip* (The Memorial Collection of Works for Seon Master Jin Hongbeop) (Yongsan: Tongdo-sa Temple, 2008).

<sup>66</sup> Young monks might establish the Cheongmaek-hoe (Society of a Green Barley) in 1963. See Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 170, 242-247, 301. However, Yi Seongsu remembered in his writing (pp. 151-159) of the abovementioned book that they established the society in 1965, not in 1963.

abbacy. Jin Hongbeop and Yi Seongsu actively participated in the society. Yi Seongsu recollected how seriously Jin Hongbeop preserved precepts.<sup>67</sup>

Korean Buddhists mainly accept as their most authoritative writings two major vinaya texts, i.e., the *Four Part Vinaya* for monastic precepts and the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* for bodhisattva precepts. We can easily see in the *Chumo munjip* that Jin Hongbeop did not mention the *Four Part Vinaya* of Indian Buddhism's Dharmaguptaka Sect but wrote a lot about the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*.

Even though he did not ignore monastic precepts described in the *Four Part Vinaya* that strictly applies the precepts regardless of different situations, he emphasized very much bodhisattva precepts included in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* that strongly emphasizes the importance of intention.<sup>68</sup> So, Jin Hongbeop emphasized bodhisattva precepts and strongly encouraged Buddhists to preserve them.<sup>69</sup>

Jin Hongbeop also cited the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* and introduced the doctrine of mind ground that serves as the foundation of precepts.<sup>70</sup> "The precept has already been explained by all Buddhas of the past, will be explained by Buddhas of the future, and is now being explained by Buddhas of the present. The bodhisattvas of the three periods have studied it, will study it, and are studying it now. I have already practiced this ground of mind for hundreds of eons, and I am called Vairocana Buddha. All of you Buddhists should transmit what I have explained and open for all living beings the way of the ground of mind."<sup>71</sup>

He alluded to the distribution section of the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* and strongly requested all Buddhists to receive and preserve ten major and forty eight minor precepts,<sup>72</sup> "All Buddhists, listen carefully to the ten major and forty eight minor precepts, which were recited, which will be recited, and which are recited now by the three periods of all Buddhas. Now I, (Vairocana Buddha), recite them as well. All people in the great assembly, even kings, princes, any of the hundred officials, monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, all those who have received and upheld the bodhisattva's precepts, should accept and observe, read and recite, understand and explain, and copy this volume of precepts of the eternal Buddha nature and then circulate it to all sentient beings in the three periods and should not discontinue them but transmit for the future. You may encounter the thousand Buddhas, and Buddha may bless you. You will also never fall into the malicious way and the eight destructive conditions (in which it is difficult to see a Buddha). You will always be born among humans or in the heavens."<sup>73</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 157.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 112-113.

<sup>70</sup> For "the doctrine of mind ground" in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, see Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement*, 97-98.

<sup>71</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 105-106; T.24.1484.1003b12-15; and Osuka, trans., 86.

<sup>72</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 105-106.

<sup>73</sup> T.24.1484.1009b27-c4 and Osuka, trans., 121-122.

He strongly encouraged all Buddhists to receive and observe bodhisattva precepts.<sup>74</sup> So, he requested his disciples to not accept the customs that allow Buddhists to eat meats in Southeast Asia.<sup>75</sup> He referred to the third minor bodhisattva precept stipulated in the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*<sup>76</sup> and strictly preserved vegetarianism. He strongly attempted to de-Japanize Korean Buddhism that adopted meat eating during Japanese occupation.

He relied on the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* and incorporated the Confucian virtue of filial piety into the preservation of bodhisattva precepts. He integrated filial piety and sincerely respected his master Yun Wolha and senior monks. The scripture utilized filial piety, a central Confucian virtue, and was able to popularize Buddhism among Chinese Buddhists in particular and among East Asian Buddhists in general. He referred to the scripture and embodied Confucian filial piety in his daily life.<sup>77</sup>

Kim Taeung (b. 1941), a former abbot of Tongdo-sa Temple, described how his senior Jin Hongbeop was filial to his grand master Kim Guha, “Jing Hongbeop took care of and treated his grand master Kim Guha, the master of his master Yun Wolha, with the utmost courtesy. Rain or shine, he took on surplices and outer ritual robes and inquired after his grand master’s health twice per day without a stop.”<sup>78</sup> Jing Hongbeop cordially preserved the first minor precept that Mahāyāna Buddhists should respect seniors and masters.<sup>79</sup>

He referred to two scriptures, the *Fumu enzhong jing* (The Sūtra on Great Filial Love) and the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, both of which might have been composed in China, and highly emphasized the virtue of filial piety. He syncretized the Confucian virtue of filial piety with Buddhist ethics. He also cited the Confucian *Classic of Filial Piety*<sup>80</sup> and emphasized filial piety.<sup>81</sup> He referred to the *Sūtra on Great Filial Love*, summarized maternal love in ten and gave emphasis to filial piety as follows:

First, when a mother gets pregnant with child for ten months, for three hundred days, she has serious sufferings. The maternal love is as high as the sky. Second, when a mother delivers a child, she feels a serious pain like having her limbs dismembered. Third, after a mother delivers a newborn child, she completely forgets her sufferings. Fourth, a mother secretly swallows a bitter taste for her child. She also receives comfort when her child has a commendable deed and behaves with dignity. Fifth, even though a mother is busy and urgent and has a hard time, when a child cries with hunger, she lets

<sup>74</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 106-107.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 275.

<sup>76</sup> T.24.1484.1005b10-13.

<sup>77</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 195, 200-201, 264-265, 269-272, and so on.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>79</sup> T.24.1005a27-b5 and Osuka, trans., 96-97.

<sup>80</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 96.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

her child suck the breast. Sixth, a mother sleeps in the place which her child discharges urine and excrements. Seventh, a mother lets her child sleep in a dry place. Eighth, when a child is young, he or she always wants to be at his or her mother's side. When a child grows older and is not shown to her or his mother, a mother always worries over her child. Ninth, when a child encounters difficulties, his or her mother does not hesitate to sacrifice herself for her child. Tenth, even though the parents are of 90 years old, they always worry about and take care of their child of 70 years old just like a young kid.<sup>82</sup>

Jin Hongbeop delivered a sermon on the Buddha's Renunciation Day (the seventh day of the second lunar month) in 1978. He referred to the *Ja'gyeongmun* (Treatise of Self Admonitions) by Yaun Gag'un active in late Goryeo and early Joseon dynasties and strongly suggested lay Buddhists to not become addicted to clothes, meals and sleep.<sup>83</sup>

Yaun Gag'un wrote the *Treatise of Self Admonitions* and guided himself to enlightenment with ten aphorisms. He was a representative disciple of Naong (1262-1342)<sup>84</sup> and studied Buddhism in China after his master's death. He wrote the *Treatise of Self Admonitions* in one fascicle,<sup>85</sup> a textbook that novice monks should learn in the monastic seminaries of Korean Buddhism.<sup>86</sup>

We can summarize the *Treatise of Self Admonitions* in the ten aphorisms.<sup>87</sup> First, practitioners should not receive clothes soft to touch and meats delicious to eat. Second, they should not be mean about money and should regulate their desires. Third, they should not speak too much but should take cautious action. Fourth, they should make friends with good persons and should keep aloof from bad persons. Fifth, they should not sleep except from nine o'clock p.m. to three o'clock a.m. Sixth, they should not exaggerate themselves and underestimate others. Seventh, if they see wealth and sexy women, they should treat them properly with correct thought. Eighth, when they keep company with others, they should not make them have hatred and jealousy. Ninth, they should not intentionally reveal the faults of other persons. Tenth, they should evenly treat other persons when they live with them.

Jin Hongbeop referred to just the first and fifth aphorisms and delivered his sermon at the Buddha's Renunciation Day. He divided the first aphorism into two items, making three aphorisms. His master Yun Wolha also emphasized the *Treatise of Self Admonitions* and we can see the ten aphorisms in a summarized

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 95-96.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 111-112.

<sup>84</sup> Yi Jeong, ed., *Han'guk bulgyo inmyeong sajeon* (Dictionary of Korean Buddhist Names) (Seoul: Bulgyo sidae-sa, 1991), 11.

<sup>85</sup> H.6.765b2-767c5.

<sup>86</sup> Yi Ji'gwan, *Han'guk bulgyo soui gyeongjeon yeon'gu* (Research on Korean Buddhism's Authoritative Scriptures) (Seoul: Dongguk daehakgyo seongnim-hoe, 1969), 36-38.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 37-38.

verse in the *Seon Talks by Seon Master Yun Wolha*.<sup>88</sup> He received influence from his master Yun Wolha and highly laid stress on the *Treatise of Self Admonitions*.

Yaun Gag'un admonished monks to not become addicted to riches and sexual desires in the seventh aphorism of his *Treatise of Self Admonitions*. The third major bodhisattva precept of the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* also strongly prohibits Buddhists from engaging in improper sexual actions.<sup>89</sup> Succeeding to the vinaya spirit of the *Treatise of Self Admonitions* and the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, he emphasized celibacy for monks and proper sexual actions for lay Buddhists. He also introduced a poem on how Chan Master Taidian (732-824) saved a woman named Honglian (Red Lotus) who tempted him as follows:

As I have not gone down from Jiuling Peak,  
phenomena become identical with emptiness.  
How can I shed a water drop of Mt. Caoxi  
on a leaf of Red Lotus?<sup>90</sup>

Jin Hongbeop frequently quoted the *Self Admonition Poem by Bhikṣu Hongdo* and admonished his students to not generate the three poisons of greed, anger and delusion, especially anger.<sup>91</sup> Yun Wolha, the master of Jin Hongbeop, also thought much of the poem.<sup>92</sup> Kim Gyeongbong, a disciple of Kim Seonghae, a junior Dharma brother of Kim Guha and a Dharma uncle of Yun Wolha, also quoted it and admonished Buddhists to not generate anger.<sup>93</sup>

In the *Brahmā Net Sūtra* that Korean Buddhists including Yun Wolha and his disciple Jin Hongbeop have highly valued, we can see the ninth major bodhisattva precept of no anger<sup>94</sup> and the twenty-first minor bodhisattva precept that they should not make anger and take revenge on enemies.<sup>95</sup> The ninth major bodhisattva precept describes the negative aspects of anger, “Buddhists should avoid being angry at themselves or teaching anger to other persons. (If you do so, you may accrue) the anger’s cause, condition, transgression and action. Therefore, bodhisattvas generate good roots and no disputes with all sentient beings and always cultivate mindfulness of compassion. If, instead, you abuse all sentient beings and non-sentient beings by slanderous speech or beat by hand, sword, or stick, you will still not be satisfied. Furthermore, if the

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<sup>88</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 2: 310-318.

<sup>89</sup> T.24.1484.1004b26-c2 and Osuka, trans., 93.

<sup>90</sup> Hongbeop seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 317.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 258-260, 302, 322-324.

<sup>92</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 2: 239-241.

<sup>93</sup> Myeongjeong Seunim (b. 1943), comm. and trans., *Nwi ga nugo?* (Who are you?) (Seoul: Human and Books, 2003), 200-202.

<sup>94</sup> T.24.1848.1005a5-10 and Osuka, trans., 95.

<sup>95</sup> T.24.1848.1006b21-26 and Osuka, trans., 104.



person regrets and apologizes but you do not forgive him or her because of ongoing anger, this is a bodhisattva's unpardonable sin.<sup>96</sup>

Jin Hongbeop quoted a poem entitled "Sabu-si" (Four Vainness-es) by the layman Buseol and strongly emphasized that monastics should make their minds attain enlightenment.<sup>97</sup> His master Yun Wolha also cited the same poem.<sup>98</sup> Both Jin Hongbeop and his master Yun Wolha extolled honorable poverty and encouraged Buddhists to practice the virtue.

Jin Hongbeop might emphasize no killing described in the first major bodhisattva precept<sup>99</sup> and the third minor precept,<sup>100</sup> the tenth minor precept,<sup>101</sup> the eleventh minor precept,<sup>102</sup> twentieth minor precept,<sup>103</sup> and the thirty-second minor precept.<sup>104</sup> Go Gwangdeok (1927-1999), his close Dharma friend and a member of the Society of a Green Barley, recalled that when Jin Hongbeop was drafted to military service in 1951 during the Korean War, June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953, he was seriously concerned with the cardinal precept of no killing and was reluctant to attend the war.<sup>105</sup> He seemed to not pay attention to state protectionism or Confucianized Buddhism but to the preservation of precepts introduced in vinaya texts.

Wongwang (d. 640),<sup>106</sup> active in the Silla Dynasty, interpreted Buddhism from nationalist and Confucian perspectives and made five secular precepts for lay Buddhists, (1) lay Buddhists should be loyal to their state; (2) they should pay respect to their parents; (3) they should make friends with friendship; (4) they should not withdraw from military battles; and (5) they are allowed to kill other beings in some exceptional situations. Later Korean Buddhists inherited Wongwang's patriotism and justified even the engagement of monks in wars. However, Jin Hongbeop did not blindly follow state protectionism and did not agree with the engagement of monks in wars. Even though he did not actively decline to attend the war, he passively participated in it.

Vinaya Master Jajang established the Diamond Precept Platform and emphasized vinaya at Tongdo-sa Temple. The monks inherited his ways and laid stress on this afterwards without interruption. The eminent monks of Tongdo-sa Temple in modern times also ecumenically practiced Seon meditation and conducted research on scriptures based on vinaya. Jin Hongbeop loyally transmitted his master Yun Wolha's equal emphasis on three major Buddhist

<sup>96</sup> T.24.1848.1005a5-10 and Osuka, trans., 95.

<sup>97</sup> Hongbeop seonsa seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 314-316.

<sup>98</sup> Wolha seonsa sangdang-nok ganhaeng wiwon-hoe, ed., 2: 236-238.

<sup>99</sup> T.24.1484.1004b18-20 and Osuka, trans., 92.

<sup>100</sup> T.24.1484.1005b10-13 and Osuka, trans., 97.

<sup>101</sup> T.24.1484.1005c14-19 and Osuka, trans., 99-100.

<sup>102</sup> T.24.1484.1005c20-23 and Osuka, trans., 100.

<sup>103</sup> T.24.1484.1006b9-18 and Osuka, trans., 103-104.

<sup>104</sup> T.24.1484.1007b11-13 and Osuka, trans., 109.

<sup>105</sup> Hongbeop seonsa seonsa munjip ganhaeng-hoe, ed., 185-187.

<sup>106</sup> Yi Jeong, ed., 202-203.

traditions of doctrinal research, Seon practice and vinaya preservation. Yun Wolha loyally inherited Seo Haedam, the revitalizer of vinaya at modern Tongdo-sa Temple, who also ecumenized the three traditions without excluding any of them. Accordingly, we can properly locate Jin Hongbeop in the ecumenical context of modern Tongdo-sa Temple.

### **Lee Jungwoo (b. 1952)**

Lee Jungwoo loyally inherited his master Jin Hongbeop's ecumenism in particular and ecumenical tradition of Tongdo-sa Temple in general. He was not a Seon sectarian but an ecumenist. He was an ecumenist who equally emphasized doctrinal, Seon and Pure Land Buddhism. He did not hierarchically but ecumenically classify major Korea Buddhist traditions such as Seon, doctrinal, Pure Land, vinaya and Tantric traditions.<sup>107</sup> Even though he did not inherit a vinaya lineage, he highly emphasized vinaya and ecumenically treated vinaya with other traditions.

Even though Yun Wolha, his disciple Jin Hongbeop and his grand disciple Lee Jungwoo all advocated ecumenism, they differ in their ways of implementing ecumenism. While Yun Wolha actively participated in Purification Buddhist Movement as one of its five major leaders, served as the order's supreme patriarch at the order's level and guided Tongdo-sa Temple for several decades as its spiritual leader, Jin Hongbeop educated monk students at the temple-affiliated traditional monastic seminary and managed the temple as its abbot.

Lee Jungwoo established more than ten propagation centers and around ten kindergartens and preschools and was active to propagate Buddhism to lay Buddhists in the Seoul metropolitan area.<sup>108</sup> He established eight temples in foreign nations of the United States, Canada, Australia and India.<sup>109</sup> He also established and has managed the monthly magazine *The Buddha*, the publication company of Iljumun, an internet television, a pilgrim tour company, a theater, and others and spread Buddhism among Koreans. He made propagation centers and temples officially affiliated to Tongdo-sa Temple.

Even though Lee Jungwoo was not the leader of the order and the temple like his grand master Yun Wolha, he served as the order's major administrator and law-maker and attempted to develop the order and the temple. While his master Jin Hongbeop mainly educated monk students, Lee Jungwoo mainly educated lay Buddhists. While his master Jin Hongbeop and his grand master Yun Wolha propagated Buddhism in their home nation of Korea, Lee Jungwoo

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<sup>107</sup> (Lee) Jungwoo clarified his ecumenism in the preface to his edited *Jeong'u seunim i jeonhaneun gyeongjeon malsseum bucheonim puman ttatteuthan gajeong* (Buddhist Teachings Selected and Edited by Lee Jungwoo) (Seoul: Iljumun, 2004), 6-7.

<sup>108</sup> See the back page of the 2012 calendar of his resident Guryong-sa Temple in the southern part of Seoul.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

attempted to spread Buddhism in and outside his home nation. Lee Jungwoo made sister relations with Kyōgan-ji Temple and Shōgyō-ji Temple of the Eastern Hongan-ji Sect of Pure Land Shin Sect of Japanese Buddhism and Fo Guang Shan Monastery of Taiwanese Buddhism and had strong connections with Tibetan Buddhism.

He figured all Buddhist teachings have one taste just as all water has one salty taste everywhere in the ocean.<sup>110</sup> He equally considered all Buddhist teachings without hierarchically classifying them. He located universal principle over a particular Buddha. He strongly criticized the blind faith in the Buddha and suggested Buddhists to practice Buddhism based on the principle.<sup>111</sup> He argued that just as Śākyamuni Buddha did not make new principles but discovered and revealed principles, we Buddhists should place universal principle over the Buddha, the founder of Buddhism and Bodhidharma, the founder of Chan Buddhism.<sup>112</sup>

Buddhists can verify Buddhas and bodhisattvas through orthopraxy. If anyone does not properly behave, he cannot be a Buddha and a bodhisattva. If someone expounds Buddhist teachings very well but is not ethical in his behaviors, he cannot be a sincere Buddhist. So, Lee Jungwoo highly emphasized ethics and requested Buddhists to sincerely practice ten good acts, (1) no killing, (2) no stealing, (3) no sexual misconduct, (4) no lying, (5) no duplicity, (6) no coarse language, (7) no vulgar language, (8) no greed, (9) no anger, and (10) no foolishness.<sup>113</sup> He also emphasized four infinite virtues, (1) boundless friendliness, (2) boundless compassion, (3) boundless joy, and (4) boundless equanimity.<sup>114</sup>

He placed stress on *pāramitā* (perfection) practices which bodhisattvas must preserve to obtain enlightenment. He matched each of ten perfections to each of ten stages of development from the forty-first through the fiftieth stages in the system of the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice expounded in the *Huayan Sūtra*.<sup>115</sup> The ten perfections are (1) almsgiving, (2) the keeping of precepts, (3) endurance, (4) assiduousness, (5) meditation, (6) wisdom, (7) skillful means, (8) the vow, (9) power, and (10) knowledge. The ten stages are (1) the stage of joy,

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<sup>110</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, *Gil leul mutneunda bul e dalgun dol eul mulgo* (I Ask Ways by Holding a Hot Stone between the Teeth) (Seoul: Singu midieo, 1994), 2: 192-193.

<sup>111</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, "Jihye-roun bulja ui salm" (Life of a Wise Buddhist), in the monthly magazine *Butda* (The Buddha: December 2009): 7-8.

<sup>112</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, "Bosal i jinyeoya hal yeolgaji mom gwa mal i itsseumnida" (Ten Proper Acts which Bodhisattvas should Preserve), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (June 2009): 4.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>115</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, "Gwansim gwa baeryeo ui chinjeolham: Tongdo-sa Hwaecom sallim beophoe beommun" (Careful Concern and Thoughtful Consideration: The Series of Sermons on the *Huayan Sūtra* at Tongdo-sa Temple), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (February 2011):4-5.

in which one rejoices at realizing a partial aspect of the truth; (2) the stage of freedom from defilement, in which one is free from all defilement; (3) the stage of the emission of light, in which one radiates the light of wisdom; (4) the stage of glowing wisdom, in which the flame of wisdom burns away earthly desires; (5) the stage of overcoming final illusions, in which one surmounts the illusions of darkness or ignorance of the Middle Way; (6) the stage of the sign of supreme wisdom, in which the supreme wisdom begins to appear; (7) the stage of progression, in which one rises above the paths of the two vehicles; (8) the stage of immobility, in which one dwells firmly in the truth of the Middle Way and cannot be perturbed by anything; (9) the stage of the all-penetrating wisdom, in which one preaches Buddhism freely and without restrictions; and (10) the stage of the Dharma cloud, in which one benefits all sentient beings with Buddhist teaching, just as a cloud sends down rain impartially upon all things.<sup>116</sup> He also enlisted four virtues of (1) faith, (2) the vow, (3) assiduousness, and (4) merit-transfer and regarded them as a new set of three refuges and as a new set of four great vows.<sup>117</sup>

He stated that just as nature has a lot of different forms, Buddhism has eighteen thousand teachings.<sup>118</sup> He admitted the diversity of nature and Buddhism from the ecumenical perspective. He non-dualistically approached two opposite sets of concepts such as emancipation and defilement, good fortune and wisdom, self-cultivation and helping others and considered opposite concepts as being supplementary with each other.<sup>119</sup> He also suggested his followers to adopt and practice any of Pure Land, doctrinal, and Tantric traditions based on their capacity and interest.<sup>120</sup>

Lee Jungwoo equally emphasized Seon, doctrinal and vinaya traditions. For example, he referred to the preface to the major work *Seon'ga gwigam* (The Standard Teaching of Seon Buddhism) (H.7.625b4-17) by Hyujeong and theoretically supported his ecumenism between Seon and doctrinal traditions in his selected and edited *Jeong'u seunim i jeonhaneun gyeongjeon malsseum*

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<sup>116</sup> See the entry of “ten stages of development” in the English Buddhist Dictionary Committee, ed., *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism* (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002), 680.

<sup>117</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, “Hoehyang eun saeroun sijak” (Merit-Transfer as a New Beginning), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (August 2007): 7.

<sup>118</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, “Chosim eul ilji atneun bulja ga doeja” (Let Us Become Buddhists who Do not Lose the Beginning Mind), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (August 2009): 4-5.

<sup>119</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, *I Ask Ways*, 2: 173-175.

<sup>120</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, “Changgan isip ju'nyeon e bucheo” (Celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Monthly Magazine *The Buddha*), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (February 2008): 6-10.

*bucheonim puman ttatteuthan gajeong* (The Buddhist Teachings Selected and Edited by Lee Jungwoo) (Seoul: Iljumun, 2004).<sup>121</sup>

He highly emphasized several passages selected from various texts on vinaya and precepts in his selected and edited *The Buddhist Teachings*.<sup>122</sup> He also introduced vinaya spirit of Jajang, founder of Tongdo-sa Temple to which he affiliated, and interpreted the spirit from the Seon perspective.<sup>123</sup> He suggested Buddhists to consider precepts to be innate and to naturally reveal the innate precepts in their daily lives. He also introduced the preface to the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, the key scripture of bodhisattva precepts, and strongly emphasized bodhisattva precepts.<sup>124</sup>

Because he was active in propagating Buddhism to laypersons in the metropolitan area, he also suggested lay Buddhists to emphasize precepts.<sup>125</sup> He equally emphasized the preservation of precepts and the research of doctrines and texts. He accepted ecumenical doctrinal classification systems and did not hierarchically classify doctrines and texts of the great vehicle. He hosted at Guryong-sa Temple each series of sermons on each of major Mahāyāna texts such as the *Brahmā Net Sūtra*, the *Huayan Sūtra*, the *Śūramgama Sūtra*, the *Lotus Sūtra*, the *Complete Enlightenment Sūtra*, the *Diamond Sūtra*, and so on.<sup>126</sup>

Buddhism highly emphasizes three kinds of learning, preservation of precepts, practice of meditation and cultivation of wisdom, and contends that Buddhists are able to remove three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness. For instance, Buddhists can remove greed through preservation of precepts, anger through practice of meditation and foolishness through cultivation of wisdom. Lee Jungwoo also stated that Buddhists are able to remove three poisons by practicing three kinds of learning and to obtain enlightenment.<sup>127</sup>

Korean Buddhism has two major praxis traditions: Seon and Pure Land Buddhism. Korean Buddhist monks incorporated and did not exclude the traditions. Lay Buddhists usually adopt Pure Land Buddhism for their daily practice. Because Lee Jungwoo was active in propagation centers, he placed stress on Pure Land Buddhism for lay Buddhists more than Seon monastics and

<sup>121</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, ed., 206-207; and Hyon Gak, trans., *The Mirror of Zen: The Classic Guide to Buddhist Practice by Zen Master So Sahn* (Boston and New York: Shambhala, 2006), 1-2.

<sup>122</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, ed., 24-26, 94-95, 113-117, 139-140, 140, 144-146, 171, 171-173, 255-289, and others.

<sup>123</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, "Innyeon eul gwihage yeogyera" (Let Us Consider Our Relations Very Preciously), in the monthly magazine *The Buddha* (June 2009): 7.

<sup>124</sup> T.24.1484.1003a15-b3; Jeong'u Seunim, ed., 95-95; and Osuka, trans., 84-85.

<sup>125</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, ed., 255-289.

<sup>126</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, *Nae eoril jeok kkum eun unjeonsu yeossne* (I Dreamed of Becoming a Driver When I Was a Child) (Seoul: Iljumun, 2000), 1: 156.

<sup>127</sup> Jeong'u Seunim, *I Ask Ways*, 2: 30-35.

introduced fifteen kinds of pure land.<sup>128</sup> He especially emphasized belief in Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva who is in charge of the nether land and the deceased beings and interpreted the belief from the Seon perspective.<sup>129</sup> He contended that Buddhists should regard sins as not being originally existent and remove them through repentance.<sup>130</sup>

Lee Jungwoo loyally followed Korean Buddhist ecumenists such as Wonhyo (617-686), Uicheon (1055-1101), Jinul, Gihwa (1376-1433), Hyujeong and other ecumenists, and representative Chinese Buddhist ecumenists such as Chengguan (738-839), Zongmi, Yanshou, Zhuhong and other ecumenists.<sup>131</sup> He also inherited the ways of modern Tongdo-sa Temple's ecumenists such as Seo Haedam, Yun Wolha and Jin Hongbeop. Although he strongly emphasized preservation of precepts, he did not exclude other Buddhist traditions in the ecumenical context. So, he was not a vinaya sectarian but an ecumenist.

## Epilogue

Korean Buddhists consider Tongdo-sa Temple as the foundation of Korean Buddhism's vinaya tradition. As seen above, even though Seo Haedam, Yun Wolha, Jin Hongbeop and Lee Jungwoo, the vinaya masters of modern Tongdo-sa Temple, whom I discussed in this article highly emphasized vinaya and precepts, they did not sectarianistically and hierarchically position vinaya tradition over other traditions. If we apply to the multi-religious society their ecumenical position through which they harmonized different Buddhist traditions in their temple and their religious practices, we might make peace among different religions in this society and in our religious practices.

If a Buddhist positions his or her preferred tradition over and criticizes other traditions, he or she might create conflicts in the Buddhist society. Likewise, if a person locates his or her religion over other religions, he or she might make conflicts in the multi-religious society. A Buddhist and a religious believer should not request Buddhists of other traditions and believers of other religions to abandon their own Buddhist and religious traditions and adopt his or her own Buddhist and religious tradition. I think that we should not prioritize our own Buddhist and religious tradition to other Buddhist and religious traditions. If so, we might decrease conflicts and increase peace among different Buddhist and religious traditions.

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 1: 43-48.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 1: 49-55.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., 1: 55.

<sup>131</sup> Mun, *Ha Dongsan and Colonial Korean Buddhism*, 269-452.



# MASTER HOEDANG, PEACE AND THE FOUNDING OF THE JINGAK ORDER OF KOREAN TANTRIC BUDDHISM

**Donghyeon Koo**

*If we straighten our mentality, we can distribute our material possessions, and when we share our material properties, they become well developed. As we put this principle into practice, we can make peace for humankind.*

Hoedang<sup>1</sup>

## **The historical and societal background**

Son Gyusang, whose Buddhist name was Hoedang (1902-1962), lived as a leading thinker and reformer of modern Korean Buddhism during a period of turmoil and chaos in Korea. In his sixty odd years, Hoedang lived through the Korean Empire (1897-1910), Japanese Imperialism (1910-1945), the US Military Government (1945-1948), the First Republican Government of Korea (1948-1960), the Interim Government (1960), the Second Republican Government (1960-1961), and the Military Government (1961-1963). He lived a short life but during the most dynamic era, the turbulent modern period of Korean history. There were several historical events in his time which even changed the stream of history, such as the March First Independence Movement (1919), Liberation (1945), the Division of the Korean Peninsula (1945), Korean Civil War (1950-1953), the 4.19 Student Pro-democracy Movement (1960), and the 5.16 Military Coup (1961).

When Hoedang was just three years old, Korea was deprived of its diplomatic authority by the Japan-Korea Protectorate Treaty on November 17, 1905. When he was eight years old in 1910, the entire country was forcibly annexed to Japan. He was too young to understand the meaning of sovereignty

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<sup>1</sup> *Silhaeng-non* (The Collection of Master Hoedang's Discourses), 4-1-9



at that time and he likely knew little of the sociopolitical circumstances. Moreover, he lived only in Ulleungdo Island<sup>2</sup> before leaving it at the age of twenty in 1922. However, soon after leaving the island, he entered Gyeseong School<sup>3</sup> in Daegu to study in the modernized western-style of education. Afterwards, he went to Japan without even notifying his family.<sup>4</sup> It seems that he must have interpreted the loss of sovereignty as a personal matter. He physically witnessed the people's affliction and hardship under the poor domestic environment of colonial times. This personal experience must have greatly influenced his religious nature that would develop later in his life.

As all social thinking is bound with history, Hoedang's ideological background is deeply connected to the political, economic, and socio-cultural situations of contemporary Korean society. If a society is on the periphery of the world's power system, the international situation of world order comes to be a decisive factor for forming thought. Because Hoedang's ideas came into being within the Korean society, a society categorized in the periphery, his ideological background should be discussed in relation to these conditions: international and domestic situations, and socio-religious circumstance.<sup>5</sup>

The Korean Peninsula has received considerable influence from international circumstances and experienced the loss of sovereignty by the intrusion of foreign countries. Also, as the first victim of the East-West ideological confrontation, it had hardly recovered its sovereignty from Japan when it became divided into two countries with ethnic homogeneity.

Hoedang's spiritual foundation was formed on the basis of the Buddha's teachings with the influence of Confucianism while adopting actively new ideas of the modern times. He, however, rejected the authoritarianism and the formalized courtesy of Confucianism, and had a negative impression of the ritualistic and blessing-seeking faith trend of Buddhism as well. Furthermore, he objected to the imprudent acceptance of the imported new ideas.

Hoedang delineated the features of the contemporary Korean Buddhist world. First, there was the mountain Buddhism and seclusion caused by the

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<sup>2</sup> The island of Ulleungdo is located in the East Sea about 75 miles from the east coast of the Korean Peninsula.

<sup>3</sup> This school was a Christian mission school which was founded in Daegu by the missionary J. E. Adama and his wife in 1906.

<sup>4</sup> Hoedang studied at a preliminary school to enter a regular school in Japan. He worked during the day for his tuition fee and living expenses, and studied at night. In the next year, however, the Great Kantō Earthquake hit Japan, which caused the massacre of Koreans who were living in Japan. He was taken into custody, barely escaped from imprisonment, and finally he could not help returning to Korea. See Kim Musaeng, *Hyeondae Han'guk milgyo-sa: Chogi Jingak jongsu* (The Modern Esoteric Buddhist History in Korean Buddhism: The Early History of the Jingak Order) (Gyeongju: Uiduk University Press, 1999), 29.

<sup>5</sup> Bak Huitaek, "Hoedang sasang-ui sidae-jeok baegyeong" (The Historical Background of Hoedang's Thought), in *Hoedang hakbo* (The Journal of Hoedang Studies) 1 (1992): 95.

“Pro-Confucianism and Anti-Buddhism” policy of the Joseon Dynasty; second, ceremonial Buddhism which is bound to formality; third, conventional precept-oriented<sup>6</sup> Buddhism; fourth, decorated Buddhism in the Buddhist icons; fifth, Buddhism invoking afterlife paradise and praying for good fortune; and sixth, Buddhism just in the Buddhist temples. These were manifestations he pointed regarding the situations of Buddhism of those days: “At that time, Buddhism did not show a sense of self-reliance in people’s lives related to improving the contemporary actual world mottled with contradiction while looking away from its duty to guide people to the righteous path.”<sup>7</sup> It seems to be a natural consequence that Hoedang’s desire for social reformation could not help arriving at Buddhist reformation. Likewise, although he reached the conclusion that the Buddhist self-reliant doctrinal system is sufficient for accomplishing his wish for reform, he again was confronted with Buddhist contradictions.

On the other hand, Hoedang ranked the doctrine of Buddha Nature as his highest concern among the Buddhist teachings, and he perceived in the theory of Buddha Nature the path that subsumes all spiritual trends that he had experienced. Buddha Nature can be considered a universal principle and might be inherent in countless phenomena. Thus a sentient being can retain self-reliant ability and potentially realize the ideal of Buddhahood under the theory of Buddha Nature. Consequently, Hoedang felt that the doctrine of Buddha-nature could embrace every theory that was a part of his background: “Roots (fundamental) and Branches (phenomenal)” from Confucianism, rational and innovative thought from modern sciences, and freedom, equality and the spirit of autonomy from Western democracy.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, around the colonial period (1910-1945), there were some significant Buddhist reformers who asserted the necessity of Buddhist reform. Here, Buddhist reformers such as Han Yongun (1879-1944), Baek Yongseong (1864-1940), and Bak Jungbin (1891-1943) emphasized the necessity of change in Korean Buddhism and implemented their claims. Among various contemporary representative Buddhist reformers in Korean society, these three are considered to be in close relationship with Hoedang's Buddhist reformative ideas. Hoedang must have sympathized with their ideas and shared the spirit of their reformative thoughts.<sup>9</sup> They have been well known for such Buddhist

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<sup>6</sup> Before the Buddhist Purification Movement (1954-1970), Korean Buddhism did not institutionally put weight on the Buddhist precepts. However, Hoedang seems to have understood that Korean traditional Buddhism had been conventionally tied to various rules and precepts.

<sup>7</sup> Seon Sanggyun, "Hoedang sasang-ui sasang-jeok baegyeong" (The Philosophical Background of Hoedang's Thought), in *Hoedang hakbo* (The Journal of Hoedang Studies) 1 (1992): 123.

<sup>8</sup> Kim Musaeng, *Hoedang sasang gwa Jingak milgyo* (Hoedang's Thought and Jingak Esoteric Buddhism) (Gyeongju: Uiduk University Press, 2002), 189-93.

<sup>9</sup> There is no documented evidence to verify his direct interaction with them, but it is not difficult to infer Hoedang's ideological consensus with those reformists' thoughts. Jang Yongcheol states Hoedang's direct acquaintance with Baek Yongseong and Yi

reform movements as Han Yongun's *Joseon bulgyo yusillon* (Treatise on Korean Buddhism's Reformation), Baek Yongseong's *Daegak-gyo* (Great Enlightenment Religion) movement, and Bak Jungbin's *Won-bulyo* (Won Buddhism) movement respectively. In addition, Hoedang's (Son Gyusang) reform movement may be named *Simin bulgyo* (Mind-seal Buddhism) movement.<sup>10</sup>

### Relativity (Non-duality of the Mental and the Physical)

Hoedang used the term “dualism” instead of “relative principle” to express his religious thoughts and philosophy. If we study his theory, however, we find he may have slightly misunderstood the western philosophical term “dualism.” Hoedang's usage “dualistic principle”<sup>11</sup> is different from traditional ontological dualism, which regards as dual the nature of existence as it relates to mind and to matter. The traditional dualism, especially in western philosophy, is a field of philosophical investigation that reduces the variety of its subject matter to two irreducible principles or antagonistic forces, as good/evil or natural/supernatural. His dualism is related to the phenomenological features having different operational and functional characteristics but showing complementary harmony and equality, which is the Buddhist teachings based on the approach of marklessness, impermanence, no-self, and profound principle of dependent arising. Actually, Hoedang used the following terms: dual-relative principle, dual-specialized principle, and dual-complementary principle to describe his “dualistic principle.” Therefore, Hoedang's dualism should be interpreted as “relative principle,” “specialized principle,” and “complementary principle.”

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Cheongdam, see Jang Yongcheol, *Bulbeop eun cheyo segan-beop eun geurimja ra* (Buddha's Dharma Is Essence, Mundane Laws Are Its Reflection: The Life of Master Hoedang) (Seoul: Haeinhang, 1999), 130–131. Meanwhile, there is a historical event to prove Hoedang's continuous relations with them: Hoedang attended the 5<sup>th</sup> World Fellowship of Buddhists (WFB) in Bangkok in 1958 with other Korean Buddhist priests, Ha Dongsan, Yi Cheongdam, and Seo Gyeongbo of the Jogye Order, and Bak Giljin of Won Buddhism for the purpose of the globalization of Korean Buddhism, see Jinkak Order, ed., *JGO: Jin-Gak Buddhist Order* (Seoul: Haeinhang, 2003), 15.

<sup>10</sup> See Donghyeon Koo, “A Modern Innovative Movement of Korean Buddhism: A Study of the Jinkak Order of Korean Buddhism and Its Founder Hoedang Focused on Hoedang's Religious Thoughts and Sectarian Characteristics of the Jinkak Order” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of the West, 2011), 28. Koo discusses their religious reformation theories respectively, and compares their pivotal points.

<sup>11</sup> Hoedang's understanding of the dualistic principle can be seen through his theory of the “Non-duality of the Mental and the Physical” as follows: “Esoteric Buddhism considers all (physical) things in the universe as true and realizable as thusness. Thus it does not enclose them (as being unreal or false) in the arms of the Mental and regards them as a principle whereby the Physical and the Mental become equalized. Therefore, it is the “Dualistic Principle” of the Esoteric Buddhist doctrine to realize that the Buddha's teaching corresponds to the phenomena of this world as they really are.”

which means “Dependent Origination” as a Buddhist predicative. For him, furthermore, it was a modernistic expression of “maṇḍala”, which is a technical term of Vajrayāna or Esoteric Buddhism.

On the basis of his philosophy of Buddhism, Hoedang founded the Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism that systematized its theory from esoteric Buddhist doctrine. He insisted that a Buddhist sect should be specialized on the basis of its own doctrinal essentials. While the doctrinal system of the Jingak Order is based on the prototype of an esoteric Buddhist sect, it shows different characteristics from a typical system of ritual and doctrinal application of traditional esoteric Buddhism. This is why the order may also be called “Jingak Esoteric Buddhism.” The term “Jingak Esoteric Buddhism” relates to its practical system, having a distinct basic tenet and teaching methodology that has no parallel in the history of Korean Buddhism. Jingak followers believe that the advent of the Jingak Order, advocating a universality of religious truth, is a popularized and modernized development of esoteric Buddhism. On the other hand, traditional Korean Buddhism has apparently formed ecumenicalism with celibate monasticism, rather than the features of sectarian Buddhism. Under the circumstances of Korean Buddhist society, the Jingak Order, having the peculiar form of a lay Buddhist sect<sup>12</sup> with esoteric Buddhist doctrine, is an atypical position.

His Buddhist philosophy is reflected in his article “Intention of Founding the Bodhisattva Association of the Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism,”<sup>13</sup> which contains early doctrinal teaching and practical ideology of the Jingak Order.

The Jingak Order, newly opened to edify and save this world, upholds primarily a scriptural study<sup>14</sup> and the Six-syllable Mantra. .... A *jeongsa*<sup>15</sup> who

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<sup>12</sup> Hoedang must have been influenced by the married monasticism of the contemporary Korean Buddhist society in its historical context.

<sup>13</sup> This article appeared in the preface to the booklet named “The Constitution of the Bodhisattva Association of the Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism” published in 1954. Son Gyusang, “Daehan bulgyo Jingak-jong bosal-hoe leul Se'u-neun tteut (The Intention of Founding Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism),” in Uiduk University's Research Institute for Esoteric Buddhist Culture, ed., *Hoedang nonseol-jip* (The Collection of Hoedang's Articles) (Gyeongju: Uiduk University Press, 2002), 15–23.

<sup>14</sup> There are two types of school: the Chan meditative (nonverbal) and doctrinal approaches to the practice of Buddhism. The Jingak Order, later, in the process of that the esoteric Buddhist doctrine took root in its system, adopted the method of Three Mysteries meditation in 1957. The formation of such methods of practice in the Jingak Order was attributed to the process of settling its doctrinal basis which coalesced its meditation, the Six-syllable Mantra, and the Three Mysteries. In other words, it was a system of three-mysterious meditation characteristic of the Jingak Order to employ a pattern of binding mudrā in its meditative concentration with mantra-chanting.

<sup>15</sup> This is a specific term exclusive to the Jingak Order. They name the male priest *jeongsa*, the female priest *jeonsu*, and usually just call the clergy *seuseung* (lit., master or teacher).

realizes the truth of *Simin* (mind-seal) transmits the truth, has a married life unlike a celibate monk, leads sentient beings to keep the bodhisattva precepts while staying in this world, and edifies the world to produce the Buddhist pure land. .... A Buddhist temple (of traditional celibate monastics) purifies (this world) by venerating Three Treasures with the Buddha statue: the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. On the other hand, a Jingak Order temple believes in the Three Bodies of Principle Buddha; *dharmakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, and *nirmāṇakāya* without clinging to a Buddha statue, puts the Six Perfections into practice, inner-realizes the law of cause and effect, and then edifies sentient beings. Consequently, (each group becomes specialized in one's separate way), the relative specialized system is turned into reality, and then, the traditional Korean Buddhism and the Jingak Order mutually interpenetrate and have reciprocal influence on each other. Therefore, enlightening works are equally realized. .... We, members of the Jingak Order, organize the “Bodhisattva Association of the Jingak Order of Korean Buddhism” on the basis of “the Three Bodies of the Principle Buddha; Dharma-body, Reward-body, Transformed body,” and set up an independent Buddhist sect by enacting articles for regulating the association. By doing so, the Jingak Order sincerely vows to be helpful, even to (the most miniscule extent of) a millionth or a ten-millionth to make Buddhism greatly thrive in the age of Mahāyāna Buddhism.<sup>16</sup>

This article discloses the Jingak Order's basic teachings and practical thought based on Hoedang's Buddhist philosophy, while showing the contents of a scriptural study, the Six-syllable Mantra, awakening *Simin* (mind-seal), and putting the Six Pāramitā in practice. Hoedang claims that while monastics conform to celibate monasticism of traditional Korean Buddhism, lay bodhisattva practitioners primarily employ skillful means to discipline the public, establish a Buddhist organization, and make articles for regulating it.

In addition, based on the religious autonomy and a reciprocal specialized system without antagonism, he argues that religious pluralism and sectarian specialization are necessary for world peace.<sup>17</sup> Based on his theory of relative principle, Hoedang instituted a teaching of the “principle of relative materiality and mentality” as a way of being delivered from those hardships, or achieving *siddhi* that is a transliteration of the Sanskrit, meaning attainment, perfection, final emancipation, and extraordinary insight achieved through Three Mysteries practice in Tantric Buddhism.<sup>18</sup> He emphasizes that people's lives are better off by practicing the “principle of relative materiality and mentality” that material and mind become equalized.<sup>19</sup>

Hoedang, meanwhile, insisted on the specialization and cooperation of the Buddhist sects based on his pluralistic thought. He organized a lay practitioner-

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<sup>16</sup> Son, 17–23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 21–23.

<sup>18</sup> Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak gyojeon* (The Canon of the Jingak Order), 13<sup>th</sup> ed. (Seoul: Haeinhang, 2006), 167–168.

<sup>19</sup> Son Gyusang, *Silhaeng-non* (The Collection of Master Hoedang's Discourses), ed. Jingak Order (Seoul: Haeinhang, 1988), 90.

centered monastic system in lieu of the celibate monastics of traditional Korean Buddhism. It was an epoch-making event in the history of Korean Buddhism. It was the central idea of his reformation and could be well worth comparing with the Bodhisattva movement of Mahāyāna Buddhism against the celibacy-oriented monastic system in ancient India.

Hoedang, however, definitely warned that the circumstance of fragmented Buddhist sects could not be useful for spreading Buddhism. Without any doctrinal difference between split schools, if the Buddhist schools are divided for their own interests in disregard for enlightening sentient beings, this turns out to be nothing more than an increase in the number of one's political constituents under the same basic sūtra, same method of practice, same Buddha statue, or same rituals.<sup>20</sup>

His idea regarding the specialization of Buddhist sects placed an intellectual basis on the “principles of maṇḍala” in esoteric Buddhism and the doctrine of the “Completion of the Primary and the Secondary” in Huayan philosophy.

Each one of the deities represented in a maṇḍala drawing or arrangement, have separate values but take a position of a being mutually venerated and collaboratively provide assistance. Simultaneously, through their specialized activities, they create and accomplish the Buddha Land of Mysterious Adornment of Mahāvairocana. Mahāvairocana is the central deity represented in the maṇḍala, surrounded by the others and representing the universe. This is the principle of maṇḍala. In this process, centrifugal force and centripetal force come to simultaneously operate. The former is envisioned as the virtues of Mahāvairocana spreading out spirally into all deities of maṇḍala. The latter is that the merits of all surrounding deities converge and embellish Mahāvairocana in the center of the maṇḍala. These two forces account for the appearance of activity in the phenomenal world, the “two but not-two” of particularity and universality. This is the bases of Hoedang's idea regarding specialization and collaboration of Buddhism.

The doctrine of the “Completion of the Primary and the Secondary”<sup>21</sup> in Huayan indicates the interrelationship among all deities in a maṇḍala. This doctrine can be interpreted to reveal primarily the interrelation of the Many through the expression “One is in all and all is in one”<sup>22</sup> and “the One and the

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<sup>20</sup> Jong-woong Choi, “New Role and Outcome of Buddhism in Modern Korea - Focused on the Jingak Buddhist Order,” in *The WFB International Conference by Korean Regional Center* (Gyeongju: The Preparatory Committee of the Korean Regional Center of WFB International Conference, 2007), 151.

<sup>21</sup> The expression “The Completion of the primary and the secondary contains immeasurable merits.” is seen in *Huayan yisheng jiaoyi fenqi zhang* (Treatise of Doctrinal Systems of the One Vehicle of Huayan Buddhism), T.45.1866.477c12-13.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding an expression of the Huayan school on the inter-penetrated nature of existence, “The one and the many are the same without obstruction,” see the *Huayan Sūtra*, T.9.278.448b16.

Many are Not-different”.<sup>23</sup> This, in other words, means that if one becomes Essence or the Primary the remainder serves as Function or the Secondary.<sup>24</sup> Metaphorically, as the wave is with water and water with the wave, phenomenon is identical with noumenon.

Likewise, the fundamental principle of specialized sects is to arrange the Primary and the Secondary into systems of practices. This task is generally named “Doctrinal Classification.” In the specialization of sects, a tenet or a practical method is classified as the Primary while the rest of the tenets or practical methods are employed as the Secondary that assists the Primary.

Hoedang urged reciprocal respect and assistance rather than antagonism between Buddhist sects. Furthermore, he emphasized the necessity of a federation of the Buddhist world to facilitate various joint activities, which could propagate Buddhism.<sup>25</sup> He designated this activity as relative-specialized movements.

Based on his thought in respect to specialization and partnership among Buddhist sects, his doctrinal classification should be categorized not into a sectarian *panjiao* (doctrinal classification) system but an ecumenical *panjiao* system.<sup>26</sup> Hoedang diachronically understood the content of the teaching, esoteric Buddhism and exoteric Buddhism, and also emphasized the benefits of the esoteric teaching as higher. At the same time, however, he did not hierarchically evaluate Buddhist scriptures and synchronically adopted a way of understanding texts: the esoteric and exoteric aspects. Consequently, he developed a new Buddhist sect named the Jingak Order based on the teachings of Esoteric Buddhism and the Three Mysteries practice that are employed as Essence or the Primary.

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<sup>23</sup> The expression “The one and the many are identical because they transcend (the distinction between) the beginning and the end),” is seen in *Xiu huayan aozhi wangjin huanyuan-guan* (Huayan Practice of Contemplation: Removing of Delusions and Returning to the Origin of Enlightenment), T.45.1876.640a08.

<sup>24</sup> The expression “The primary and the secondary are mutually manifested (just as they are) in the Indra Net, .... If we take the one that will be the primary, the leftover five are conditioned to the secondary.” is seen in T.45.1876.640c12-14.

<sup>25</sup> Son Gyusang, “Bulgyo ui bunhwa wa hyeopdong” (The Specialization and Cooperation of the Buddhist Sects),” in *Hoedang nonseol-jip*, 61.

<sup>26</sup> Mun categorized the *panjiao* systems into two groups, i.e., the ecumenical systems and the sectarian systems. The sectarian *panjiao* systems typically comment on the various texts based upon their sectarian perspective in order to prove the superiority of their tradition over other traditions and evaluate various scriptures based upon the diachronic preaching order or the content of the teaching. The ecumenical *panjiao* systems do not hierarchically evaluate various scriptures, advocate that the scriptures are basically equal in value and functionally differentiate tenets in terms of the content difference. For more detailed explanations, see Chanju Mun, *The History of Doctrinal Classification in Chinese Buddhism: A Study of the Panjiao Systems* (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2006), 17, 116-120.

Hoedang, on the other hand, emphasizes the equal roles and mission of the celibate monastics and lay practitioner, and asserts a reasonable relationship between the two groups in pursuit of liberal democracy. “Because monks and nuns are to laymen and laywomen what the eldest grandson of a head family is to the offspring of its ramified families. As the eldest son takes over the work inherited from his ancestor, the celibate monastics is in succession to the tradition of the Three Treasures. At the same time, the group of lay bodhisattvas primarily employs skillful means to discipline the public as the offspring carries on the tasks of descendants.”<sup>27</sup>

Kim Chi-on, in his article “Chulga wa jaega e daehan ilgochal” (A Study of Lay and the Monastic Practitioners), investigates the constituent groups – lay followers, lay bodhisattva, and the clergy – of the Jingak Order, and compares them with the component parts – lay followers, lay bodhisattvas, and renunciant bodhisattvas – of the early Mahāyāna in terms of their economic lives. The monastic bodhisattvas of early Mahāyāna are the group that was constant in devotion to only religious practice relating to and caring for the world without other employment. According to Hoedang, becoming a *jeonsu* or a *jeongsa* is in the same category as renunciates. Hoedang called them “mind-renunciates”<sup>28</sup> in this context, and adds that if a *jeonsu* or a *jeongsa* goes against the basic principle of the true renunciates s/he is a lay person who, just seeking to make a living, strives for fame and profit. In such a condition, their clerical status becomes a transgression. Kim urges that, based on this context, the priesthood of the Jingak Order, *jeonsus* and *jeongsas* who adhere to the precepts of Dharma-transmission, correspond to the monastic bodhisattvas among the three groups of the early Mahāyāna: lay followers, lay bodhisattvas, and monastic bodhisattvas.<sup>29</sup> While this idea needs more research and discussion, viewed according to the widely accepted bifurcation of the saṅgha into celibate monastics and lay practitioners, if we weigh only the role of each, particularly in terms of economics, it does not seem to be an entirely absurd idea. In addition, while illustrating the plural sectarian system of Christianity,<sup>30</sup> Hoedang

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<sup>27</sup> Son Gyusang, “Hyeondae bulgyo neun jaega wa chulga ro bunhwa doe-eoya handa” (Modern Buddhism Should Be Separated into the Celibate Monastics and Lay Buddhists), in *Hoedang Nonseol-jip*, 68.

<sup>28</sup> This is based on the concept that bodhisattvas should be true renunciates, not those (like monks) who merely renounce household life. Bodhisattvas of correct understanding have no need to renounce the world and become monks. See Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1989), 21.

<sup>29</sup> Kim Chion, “Chulga wa jaega e daehan il-gochal” (A Study of Lay and Monastic Buddhism), in *Hoedang Hakbo* 11 (2009): 85.

<sup>30</sup> Son Gyusang, “Bulgyo jeonghwa e daeha-yeo” (Toward Buddhist Purification),” in *Hoedang Nonseol-jip*, 53. Hoedang illustrates as follows: the Catholic priests, monks and nuns observe rigorously the precepts of celibate lives while succeeding the lineage of the Supreme Pontiff. On the other hand, Christianity is specialized into plural sects such as the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Church and the Holiness Church, and



emphasizes the necessity for the specialized distinction between celibate monastics and lay practitioners, which would be subject to relative equality, reciprocity, specialization, complementarity, and autonomy, to help purify Buddhism and make it flourish.<sup>31</sup>

Based on this identity, it is said that Hoedang tried to make the Jingak Order into a thorough lay practitioner-centered bodhisattva group and a practice-oriented sect, while emphasizing the edification of the public. The role of clergy, *jeonsus* and *jeongsas*, as religious leaders who edify sentient beings to make the world an unimpaired Buddha land, is emphasized.

Meanwhile, due to escalating conflicts between married priests and unmarried monks, the milieu of the modern Korean Buddhist was becoming extremely poor. At the time, celibate monks started Buddhist Purification Movement (1954-1970) with the goal of eliminating married monasticism, which had been introduced by Japanese Buddhists during their occupation period (1910-1945).<sup>32</sup> Around 1954, Hoedang addressed this development and the remarkable growth of Christianity even in the initial stage of the Movement in his article titled “Concerning the Buddhist Purification Movement.”<sup>33</sup>

On the other hand, there was some problematic fallout from the process of the Buddhist Purification Movement in modern Korean Buddhism. Chanju Mun of the University of Hawaii – Manoa defined the characteristics of the Movement. Based on Mun's explanations, the problems caused by the conflict between two groups (married monks and celibate monks) can be summarized as follows: First, the movement heavily relied on the state. As a result, the government administrative units became actively involved in the religious affairs. Second, each group, married and celibate monks, defined monkhood in different ways based on their interests. The celibate monastic group contended that the order should consist of monastics and lay Buddhists and argued that the married monks should not be included in the category of monks. On the other hand, the married monks asserted that the order should constitute monastics and lay Buddhists and it divided monastics into two groups, the group of practicing monks and the group of propagation monks; they assigned celibate monks to practicing monks and married monks to propagation monks. Third, the process of Buddhist Purification Movement was heavily dependent on the court and the state's intervention. The two groups took their cases to court and to the state to back up their own behaviors. Korean Buddhism wasted its properties and money in legal fees. Consequently, the movement facilitated the government's violation of the policy of the separation between religion and state, which is stipulated in the Korean constitution. In turn, Korean Buddhism became a pro-government

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evangelizes all over the world. Likewise, this specialized plural system is indispensable for even Korean Buddhism to expand far and wide.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 43-53.

<sup>32</sup> See Chanju Mun, *Purification Buddhist Movement, 1954-1970: The struggle to restore celibacy in the Jogye Order of Korean Buddhism* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2011), 1.

<sup>33</sup> Son, 53.

religion and voiced support for the government. It automatically turned its face away from the people's clamor for social justice and reform of the undemocratic regimes. Fourth, the behaviors of both sides were non-Buddhist. They used violence and broke the harmony of the Buddhist community. They even employed gangsters to attack the other side and to wrest control of temples from their opponents.<sup>34</sup> In this and other ways, the contemporary status of Korean Buddhism became even worse than it was during the Japanese occupation period. Hoedang emphasized, based on his autonomous relative thought, the necessity for sectarian Buddhism to have Korean Buddhism flourish while manifesting the plural system of Christianity.

### **Autonomy**

Hoedang devoted himself to ending the difficulties of the Korean people. Toward this end he developed "Autonomous Thought" based on Buddhist philosophy. Hoedang viewed the core of Buddhist philosophy as "the spirit of autonomy" that he saw as inherent in the concept of "Buddha-nature." He used this terminology as a cornerstone of his reform ideas. In summary, the historical and social background of Hoedang's "Autonomous Thought" came from the colonial period, the Korean Civil War, and the reorganization of the postwar world order, which all played a decisive role in the situation of change around the Korean Peninsula. He was one of the most remarkable reformers in Korean Buddhist history and a great thinker as well, who dedicated his life to implanting the spirit of autonomy in the people. This self-reliant spirit without a doubt is inextricably linked with the revelation of one's intrinsic Buddha-nature through religious practice.

Likewise, Hoedang's "Autonomous Thought" was on the basis of the reorganization of world hegemony in the postwar era. Noting that he had lived in the Japanese colonial period, the loss of sovereignty to Japanese imperialism should be understood as historical background to his theory of autonomy. Hoedang placed emphasis on Buddhism as religion of self-reliance that could give rise to "the spirit of autonomy" in the people for establishing a sovereign nation. He linked being colonized to practices of worship advocated by Confucianism, interpreting it as an other-reliant, heteronomous religion.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, he assumed a critical attitude toward Confucian thought and Japanese imperialism, archetypal examples of monistic absolutism. He advocated a relative autonomous system in which politics neither used nor

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<sup>34</sup> Mun, 60-62.

<sup>35</sup> Hoedang understood Buddhism as the religion of enlightenment which is to be realized through one's own efforts rather than through reliance upon an external powerful being. Buddhism, however, is itself categorized into two teachings according to soteriological interpretation: self-power teaching and other-power teaching. In his phrase, the aspect of Pure Land teaching is the representative other-power teaching, which emphasizes the need to rely on Amitābha Buddha for salvation.

dominated religion and religion neither flattered nor detracted from politics. Religion and politics were to hold mutual respect for each other.<sup>36</sup>

Among Korean intellectual nationalists and activists in the period of Japanese imperialism, Sin Chaeho (1880-1936) published ideas similar about Confucianism to those of Hoedang. Sin was a transitional Korean intellectual and political activist, and devoted his life to historical studies of ancient and early medieval Korea. Sin criticized Confucianism twofold: The *sadae juui* (toadyism) inherent in Confucian historiography denied origins of the Korean people, and it subjugated the Korean past to the interpretive framework of Confucian morality.<sup>37</sup> Sin endeavored to break the hold of the Confucian version of the past in hopes of mobilizing the Korean people to build their own future. According to Sin, the Joseon Dynasty's rule for five hundred years, its emphasis on *sadae* (to serve the great) in relations with China, and its ideological subservience had engendered with it a psychic malaise of subservience in the Korean people. A revival of the national spirit of self-reliance was a prerequisite to reviving national identity. Likewise, reforming political institutions was useless if the masses at large did not consciously identify with the collective fate of the nation.<sup>38</sup> Sin stated explicitly that Confucian ideas had inflicted injury on the spirit of autonomy of Korean people for several centuries. Sin poured his efforts into writing and acting on the fringe of Korean and Chinese anarchist movements to awaken the masses during the colonial period. Unlike Sin, Hoedang's solution was the renovation of the people's mentality through religion, especially Buddhism. Therefore, the latter devoted his life to the reform of consciousness through Buddhist reformation.

Hoedang emphasized that the establishment of the autonomous spirit is the only route to overcoming all contradictions of the times. The autonomous spirit is generated from a sense of ownership toward history and society. Consequently, the establishment of autonomy is infeasible without an outlook on the world and life that is based on one's own perspective. This is engendered by earnestly accepting responsibility of all problems and contemplating them until a solution can be found according to one's ideological framework. Accordingly, this method can be called "self-responsibility for life and the universe." This was an inevitable reason why Hoedang had no choice but through religion to realize his volition of social reform for the establishment of the autonomous spirit. Furthermore, he proclaimed that Buddhism is the most

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<sup>36</sup> Bak Huitaek illustrates these ideas while citing a transcript of Hoedang's thought regarding the "Principle of Dualistic Relativism," "Hoedang sasang-ui sidae-jeok baegyong" (The Historical Background of Hoedang's Thought), 101. There is another source, a textbook for Congregation of the Clergy of the Jingak which was held in the spring of 2009, see The Education Bureau of the Jingak Order, ed., *Iwon wollli* (Dualistic Principle) (Seoul: Unpublished Educational Book, Jingak Order, 2009), 58.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Robinson, "National Identity and the Thought of Sin Chaeho: *Sadae-juui* and *Chuche* in History and Politics," in *Journal of Korean Studies* 5 (1984): 129.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

suitable religion to foster the autonomous spirit and performed the reformation of the times.<sup>39</sup>

Hoedang, furthermore, distinguished between vertical and horizontal doctrinal systems<sup>40</sup> when classifying religion. Buddhism can be seen as having a horizontal doctrinal system while Confucianism and Christianity have vertical ones. The horizontal doctrinal system is able to play a role of mental prop in today's complicated democratic society when the individuality of each person is respected. On the other hand, the vertical doctrinal systems of Confucianism and Christianity were suitable in the past, when the societal structure and human being's social activities were simplified, but have an insufficient ideological base for the present when everything has become complicated and pluralistic.<sup>41</sup>

### State Protectionism reconsidered

Another characteristic of Hoedang's Buddhist reform was the introduction of *Jinho gukga bulgyo* or *Hoguk bulgyo*, literally "Buddhism for protecting the nation." Hoedang borrowed the phraseology of *Jinho gukga* or *Hoguk* from Japanese Buddhism and Korean traditional Buddhism. Buddhist state protectionism, including that of Korea, has been variously criticized for extreme misappropriation for individual and political motives.<sup>42</sup> However, Hoedong endeavored to properly establish an intrinsic attribute of *Hoguk* (protecting the nation) which would not recklessly preserve the tradition of patriotic Korean Buddhism, but would engage in practical Buddhist activities for the benefit of humanity. According to the Buddhist tenet and ideal, Buddhist administrations and activities toward the public should be based on aiding sentient beings to accomplish an ultimate aim, enlightenment. Kim Jongman, meanwhile, proposed a desirable direction of *Hoguk* Buddhism to shed its negative image.

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<sup>39</sup> Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak gyojeon*, 7-9; and Son Gyusang, "Bulgyo neun uri ui pungto-seong gwa hyeolji-seong e matneun-geot (Buddhism is the religion which is suited to Korean cultural climate and national ethos)," in *Hoedang nonseol-jip*, 77-79.

<sup>40</sup> Based on the Buddhist doctrine of "innate Buddha-nature" and "equalitarianism," Hoedang interpreted Buddhism as having a horizontal doctrinal system wherein one doctrine is not evaluated as higher than another. On the other hand, he understood that Confucianism and Christianity traditionally contain the doctrine of patriarchal or hierarchical structure. He viewed these as having vertical doctrinal systems.

<sup>41</sup> Seon, "Hoedang sasang-ui sasang-jeok baegyeong," 117.

<sup>42</sup> Ronald S. Green brings up negatives in regard of institutionalized Buddhism early in East Asia, particular in the case of Japan. He observes that the institutional Buddhism was tied with the employment of violence as a means of coercion in the interests of a specific ruling clan. Green urges that the flip side of the seeming egalitarianism in Buddhism is that it has provided justification for seizing state power, accomplished violently. For more details about Buddhism that became a great imperialistic power in East Asian culture, see Ronald S. Green, "Institutionalizing Buddhism for the Legitimation of State Power in East Asia," in Chanju Mun, ed., *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu: Blue Pine, 2007), 219-231.

Accordingly, *Hoguk* should play a role in defending temporal and spatial forms of the actual world where all beings become free from afflictions. He believed the principle of *Hoguk* is not to protect merely established national boundaries, but to guard the realm of sentient beings against common enemies of humanity such as tyranny, poverty, disease, and war. Therefore, the real intention of *Hoguk* is actively putting the Buddhist ideal into practice.<sup>43</sup>

Hoedang wrote, “The idea of *Jinho gukga* is to lead one to help all sentient beings accomplish Buddhahood along with oneself. By purifying this world where we are living together, one turns it into Pure Land of Mysterious Adornment. ... Therefore, one should pay prior regard to the rights and interests of others before those of oneself.”<sup>44</sup> This was an expression of the supranational character of Buddhism. In 1952, during the Korean civil war, he built a temple named Milgak Simin-dang in Seoul with his aspiration for the end of the war and the cessation of poverty. His followers believe that this historical Buddhist service stands in comparison with *munduru bi-beop*,<sup>45</sup> that is, a secret maṇḍala rite performed by Myeongnang<sup>46</sup> in ancient Silla Kingdom.

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<sup>43</sup> Kim Jongman, "Hoguk bulgyo-ui ui banseong-jeok gochal" (A Reflective Examination of Buddhist State Protectionism), in *Bulgyo pyeongnon* (The Buddhist Review) 3 (2000): 191-211.

<sup>44</sup> Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak gyojeon*, 79-80.

<sup>45</sup> In 668, during the peninsular wars for unification, when it seemed that Chinese Tang would invade Silla, Myeongnang was asked to use his powers to avert an impending disaster. His first thought was to create a giant maṇḍala in the form of temple, but as there was not enough time, he gathered together twelve other practitioners of occult Buddhism and performed a rite called *munduru bi-beop*, that is, a secret maṇḍala rite. Exactly what scriptures were recited and what invocations chanted are not known, but the *Samguk yusa* (Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) does claim that the Tang navy was sunk. See James Huntley Grayson, "Religious Syncretism in the Shilla Period: The Relationship Between Esoteric Buddhism and Korean Primeval Religion," in *Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture* 43. 2 (1984): 193.

Charles D. Orzech examines that the *homa* rituals were the centerpiece of "State Protection" Buddhism; states that the Buddhist tradition in China, especially Esoteric Buddhist function was protector of the state; Esoteric Buddhism effectively transplanted to China while combining religious ideas and political expediency; there is fulfillment of two goals in esoteric rituals: rapid enlightenment and benefits for the state such as "to ensure seasonable rain, to repel invasion and put down uprisings, and to help promote the well-being of the imperial family and its ancestors." These characteristics of Esoteric Buddhism in China could be applied to the case of Korean Buddhism, particularly in esoteric rituals. See Charles D. Orzech, "The 'Great Teaching of Yoga,' the Chinese Appropriation of the Tantras, and the Question of Esoteric Buddhism," in *Journal of Chinese Religions* 34 (January 1, 2006): 67; and Charles D. Orzech, "Maṇḍalas on the Move: Reflections from Chinese Esoteric Buddhism Circa 800 CE," in *JLABS* 19.2 (1996): 226.

<sup>46</sup> Myeongnang was in China from 632 through 638 studying the doctrines of esoteric Buddhism. He was particularly interested in the use of the occult speech (mantra) and the mystic diagrams (maṇḍala), which formed important parts of the rituals of the

It may be fair to say that Hoedang's applications of his ideology of Buddhist reform as seen in such activities as translational projects, educational programs, welfare activities and so on, is based on his notion of *Jinho gukga bulsa* (Buddhist service for protecting the nation). He was also an enthusiastic participant in social rallies. In 1959, he held a demonstration aiming to support the independence movement in Tibet, sent an encouragement letter to His Holiness the Dalai Lama (b. 1935), and delivered a message to the United Nations Secretary General.<sup>47</sup> Reapplication of the thought of *Jinho gukga* was derived from his intense aspiration toward liberty and peace on the Korean Peninsula, which had been in turmoil and disarray for several decades. Hoedang, through the idea of *Jinho gukga bulsa*, overcame the limitations of nationalism and patriotism and stepped forward toward cosmopolitanism. The exigency of this period required him to employ a nationalistic discourse, but he did not endorse nationalism as an ultimate goal. The support of the nation was thus a strategic means for him to realize Buddhist truth. Furthermore, Hoedang urged that Buddha's Dharma is not different from the worldly law.<sup>48</sup>

Through the process of purifying the distorted aspects of Buddhism, he claimed, sundry social irrationalities and defilements can be ameliorated and purified. For him, the innovation of Buddhism was necessitated for contemporary Korean society and more generally, the whole world to maintain peace and/order, and to flourish beyond the ideologies of patriotism and nationalism.

In sum, during the Japanese colonial period, the saṅgha of Korean Buddhism was subjugated to powerful imperial policies. Even after liberation from Japanese colonial rule in 1945, Korean Buddhists experienced a similar crisis with the powerful, subsequent series of dictatorial Korean governments. Under the name of "Buddhism for the Protection of the Nation (*Jinho gukga* or *Hoguk bulgyo*)," the saṅgha tacitly collaborated with those regimes against the general public and social justice. As a result, the public had hard feelings toward the saṅgha and the term "*Hoguk bulgyo*." Hoedang reinterpreted this term<sup>49</sup> and integrated it into his own religious ideas. His nationalist struggle was not different from his ideas for socially engaged Buddhism. "State Protection Buddhism" was thus a strategic means for him to realize Buddhist truth, to advance cosmopolitanism, to encourage the culture of impartiality of the world, and to lead people to live in peace.

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occult sects. After his return to Silla, he founded the Shinin Sect, which emphasized the use of the maṇḍala.

<sup>47</sup> Choi, 144.

<sup>48</sup> Son, "Daehan bulgyo Jingak-jong bosal-hoe leul se'u-neun tteut," 17.

<sup>49</sup> If the phraseology itself became problematic due to its negative perception, however, Hoedang should have modified the term "State Protection Buddhism" into another more appropriate expression, for instance, "Impartial Protection Buddhism," "Peace Protection Buddhism," or "Cosmopolitan Buddhism," when he amalgamated it with his religious ideal.

## Humanity and peace

During his pilgrimage for seeking the Dharma prior to his enlightenment, Hoedang focused his whole mind on learning the Buddhist teachings and doing practice, rather than his private business left to family members and acquaintances. Through the following anecdote we get a sense of his humanity and spiritual maturity. One day during his Dharma-seeking practice, Hoedang took out the charge accounts of extended credit to customers, and set them on fire, while saying that he wrote off the debt and freed the poor debtors from it.

Another time, when his willpower for seeking after truth became stronger and stronger like a roaring wood fire, he entered *Saengsik*<sup>50</sup> (lit., eating fresh edibles) practice, a religious austerity of only eating raw grass, pine needles, or bark. There are two significant implications to this. Firstly, it was a self-mortification for him and secondly, he participated in the people's suffering from poverty in every nook and cranny of the land. During his Dharma-seeking pilgrimage in the early 1940s, he became painfully aware of the affliction and hardship of the people enduring food shortages. They did not know when their next meal might be cut by another domestic or foreign crisis.

### 1. The Construction of Milgak Simin-dang in Seoul during the Korean Civil War

The Korean Civil War erupted on June 25, 1950. Despite the throes of the Korean Civil War, the Jingak made significant progress in its edification activities and became well organized in the interior and exterior of the Order. For two and half years, from the outbreak of the war to the end of 1952, eleven Repentance Centers<sup>51</sup> were newly opened around the Gyeongsang provinces,<sup>52</sup> including one in Seoul (present Milgak Simin-dang). On the other hand, on July

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<sup>50</sup> *Saengsik* is a way of religious austerities of an ascetic who eats only raw grass, pine needles, or bark.

<sup>51</sup> *Chamhoe-won* (Repentance Center) is similar to Seon (Zen) center. The early history of the Jingak Order was characterized by having a "Repentance Movement" based on "Six-syllable mantra," the "Principle of Formlessness," and the "Principle of Repentance." According to the theory, by chanting six-syllable mantra, a practitioner could realize acutely his or her faults and attachment to self, and then begin to repent of transgressions and lead a better life. This was the main current of religious life in the early years of the Jingak Order. It was the reason they called temples "*Chamhoe-won*" (Repentance Centers) at that time. See Kim, *Hyondae han'guk milgyo-sa*, 38.

<sup>52</sup> During the Korean War, the Gyeongsang Provinces (the southeast of the Korean Peninsula) were the only unoccupied territory by the North Korean armed forces. So, the religious activities in the region were more available and freer than other regions in the Korean Peninsula.

29, 1951, the Jingak registered the new name, “Simin Buddhism - Repentance Center,” with the Central Bureau of Public Information.<sup>53</sup> Then, on April 8, 1952, it changed its official designation of temple from Repentance Center to Simin-dang (Mind-seal Sanctuary).<sup>54</sup> After the outbreak of the Korean War, the troops of South Korea were moved back to the area of Daegu, a southeastern city of the Korean Peninsula. Subsequently, the Namsan-dong Repentance Center, the headquarters, was placed under requisition for the attached building of the Armed Forces Hospital. Around that time, most of the people left for a southern area to take refuge. Hoedang, however, did not leave Daegu and was absorbed in his prayer to protect the nation while saying that it is not me, but the war that should retreat.<sup>55</sup> After Seoul was recovered during the war, he came up to the city to construct a Simin-dang with a cherished desire for full cessation of the war and peaceful reunification. On arriving in Seoul, he asked people where the poorest neighborhoods were in the city. There he founded Milgak Simin-dang with his deep wish for peace and national salvation in a battlefield.<sup>56</sup> These religious activities or Buddhist services of Hoedang show how strongly he cherished the wish for an end to the war and cessation of poverty in Korea. The Milgak Simin-dang was the first Jingak temple in Seoul.

## 2. The Dharma hardship

On July 5, 1954, two discontented disciples officially announced their withdrawal from the order.<sup>57</sup> They conspired with a few sympathizers from the inside and outside to oppose the order's management policies, claiming halve of the order's property. A chief monk from the Jogye Order sent a petition to the district police station to disorganize the religious body while insisting that the property of the Jingak should be reverted to the Jogye Order.<sup>58</sup> They circulated false reports, and charged that the Jingak was a heretical religion and that Hoedang blasphemed Buddhism. This was called the second “Dharma hardship” of the Jingak and occurred because there was not yet mature enough to bring together an internal consensus after the congregation's rapid growth during a short period.

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<sup>53</sup> Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak-jong gyosa* (The History of Jingak Order), unpublished historical document based on the diachronic facts, n.d., “Registration with the Central Bureau of Public Information,” July 29, 1951.

<sup>54</sup> All *Chamhoe-wons* were renamed as Simin-dang simultaneously.

<sup>55</sup> Kim, *Hyeondae han'guk milgyo-sa*, 49.

<sup>56</sup> See Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak-jong gyosa*. The construction of Seoul Simin-dang began on September 29, 1952.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, on September 24, 1954, “A Petition from Bak Dosu.” Bak Dosu, the chief of the Jogye Order's provincial headquarters in North Gyeongsang Province sent a petition of disorganizing a religious body to the chief of the provincial police station and argued that the property of Jingak Order should be in the possession of the Jogye Order.



Hoedang was even detained in police custody twice.<sup>59</sup> During the public trial, on the other hand, the Jingak Order presented explanatory documents regarding Buddhist doctrine and called important witnesses from the Buddhist world and official circles. Of them, Yi Cheongdam, then president of the Jogye Order, spoke in support of the Jingak Order as a witness against the plot of pseudo-religion.<sup>60</sup>

There was a succession of court processes resulting in a verdict of not guilty from Daegu District Court (December 15, 1955); a rejection of the appeal by the High Court (April 13, 1956); and the waiver of final appeal to the Supreme Court (April 21, 1956). This incident finally concluded after dragging on for nearly two years. The “Dharma hardship”, however, brought many suggestions and lessons. Hoedang regarded this case not as insubordinate conduct of his disciples, but as their unwise behavior. While facing these difficulties, he left his followers invaluable teachings through which they could surmise his thought and personality of high caliber as a religious leader and practitioner: “These hardships are attributed to the doctrinal authority being unequipped to shore up the energy to spread religious enlightenment”<sup>61</sup>; “These tough roads and afflictions are inescapable for a religious teaching to ride the wave of a great propagation, and these difficulties are caused by my incomplete skillful means”<sup>62</sup>; and “Although the opponent files a complaint against us, that we do not bring a recrimination for them is the right path of Buddhists, forbearance, silent conquest, nonresistant dominance, and infinite triumph.”<sup>63</sup>

### 3. Education Institution and Welfare

On March 1, 1949, Hoedang opened an education institution named “General Civil Education Center” at the Namsan-dong Repentance Center.<sup>64</sup> This education center later became the basis of the establishment of Simin Junior High school in Daegu and a cornerstone of the “Hoedang Educational Foundation” of today. In addition, for missionary work toward children, he established the *Jaseong hakgyo* (lit., Self-nature School) which was a “Buddhist Sunday School for Juveniles.” As the personality comes into being mostly in childhood or adolescence, this time is a critical period for the development of personality. Based on this idea, Hoedang inaugurated a class for children to have them experience the teachings of the Buddha.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., on October 15, 1954, “The Confinement of Master Hoedang,” and on December 15<sup>th</sup> 1954, “The Remand of Master Hoedang.”

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., on November 16, 1955, “Preparation for a Public Trial.”

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., on September 4, 1954.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., on December 15, 1954.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., on April 23, 1956.

<sup>64</sup> Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak-jong gyosa*; and Kim, *Hyeondae Han'guk milgyo-sa*, 44.

<sup>65</sup> Choi, 143.

This shows his enthusiasm for education. At that time, many people were uneducated and illiterate in the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, he realized the necessity to initiate an illiteracy eradication campaign. He translated some Buddhist scriptures into the Korean vernacular language, and used the translated scriptures in the public Buddhist services.<sup>66</sup> Consequently, this new method of Buddhist service helped attendants in the ceremony learn to read while equipping them with the Buddhist teachings.

In addition to the educational activities, Hoedang undertook a social welfare program that shows he was clearly aware that another one of the most imperative functions of contemporary Korean Buddhism was to act for the wellbeing of the people. He formed a philanthropy division at the core of this and founded Giro-won<sup>67</sup> and Sudo-won,<sup>68</sup> which are social welfare facilities for the seniors in need. This philanthropy center became a footstone for the “Jingak Welfare Foundation” which was established in 1998. It was skillful means through welfare activity to put his idea into effect, which was that a religion must give back all merits and virtues to the public.<sup>69</sup>

Hoedang, furthermore, organized a centralized administration system in which the central administration institute has the authority to appoint and dismiss temple abbots and supervise all religious affairs. It became a measure for effective management of the newly-risen Buddhist sect. Hoedang, however, carried out a regional parish institution later and provided a system of separation of legal, administrative, and judicial powers by forming the Jingak assembly and judicial institute. This system made it possible for the Jingak to use transparently donations from supporters for diverse religious activities and efficiently allocate human and financial resources to put those activities in place.

## Conclusions

Buddhism has, from its inception, penetrated a number of dissimilar cultures, while embracing various ideas and philosophy to suit itself with different historical, geographical, ethnic, or religious characteristics. Therefore, at first glance, we would say that a mixture of different forms of Buddhism coexist in the modern world. Seon (Chn., Chan; Jpn., Zen) is also one of those historical examples. Anyone of Early Buddhism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Vipassanā and Seon can be absolute.

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<sup>66</sup> Hoedang translated the scripture into Korean, copied it and hung the copy on the wall. He had practitioners follow the recitation of the scripture verse by verse in the public Buddhist service.

<sup>67</sup> This is a nursing home for elderly priests who are retired from missionary work, allowed them to concentrate peacefully on practice.

<sup>68</sup> This is a nursing home for elderly believers who do not have a residence or children to care for them.

<sup>69</sup> Choi, 143-144.

Hoedang's hermeneutical approach toward Buddhist ideas and his interpretation of the Buddhist tradition are based on his religious experience through his own religious practice and thoughts. In order to recover the fundamental aspects of the Buddhist faith and practice, Hoedang recognized the necessity of a new Buddhist movement and opened a new doctrinal gateway to the Buddha's teachings. He founded the Repentance Center in 1947.<sup>70</sup> He regarded it as the heart of the new Buddhist movement.

Hoedang placed, instead of the Buddha's statue, the Six-syllable Mantra (*Om manipadme hūm*) as the central object of respect. It represents the inner natural mind of all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, and sentient beings. Hoedang negated any kind of Buddha statue or image and methodologically adopted *Sammil* (Three Mysteries) practice to obtain Buddhahood, the aim of Buddhist practice. He asserted that a Buddha statue or image was unwholesome for stimulating self-reliance, the fundamental spirit of Buddhism, and moreover, resulted in leading to the spirit of other-reliance. According to Hoedang, however, the separated forms of faith and practice were needed for use as skillful means. He urged each group to become specialized in their separate ways, and advocated a system of relative autonomy. Accordingly, Buddhists both in temples and in the Jingak Order interact and have reciprocal influence on one other, and finally, edification is equally realized on both sides.

Likewise, Hoedang formed a part of a social enlightenment campaign through reforming the people's consciousness based on a reform of Korean Buddhism that has been a foundation of cultural and national ethos in Korean history. Hoedang's religious reform ideas differed from the reformative characteristic of the established traditional group. He organized a bodhisattva saṅgha as a group of religious leaders and formed a new Buddhist sect that had a different appearance from the traditional Buddhism. It was an unprecedented Buddhist reform movement in Korean Buddhism. It was a kind of social campaign. This new movement of religious life had an enormous influence on people's lifestyles at the time. This skillful means evoked a great sensation to relieve a variety of frictions in home or in the community, and to eliminate a variety of socially depressed factors: discord in human relationships, disease, discontent, dissatisfaction, poverty, etc.

Hoedang concluded that with recovery of human nature through establishing an autonomous spirit, the consciousness of each person could be reformed and lead to the reformation of the way of thinking of modern people. Based on this idea he founded his thought and attempted a social revolution.

In sum, Hoedang's thought arose through the flow of a world situation deeply entrenched in the colonial period, the Korean War, and the

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<sup>70</sup> See Jingak Order, ed., *Jingak-jong gyosa*. The year, 1947, is the first year of the Jingak era, which means the year of "Initial Edification of the Jingak Order," however, the Jingak officially registered in the Office of Public Information of North Gyeongsang Province with the name of "Repentance House of an Edification Body" on August 3, 1948.

reorganization of the postwar world order. In addition, the contemporary contradictions of the times and the incongruities of Buddhism of that era became the historical and societal background of Hoedang's religious thought. Further research should focus on how he interpreted those matters and what methodology he employed to overcome the hardships. Moreover, in the aftermath of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonization, economic destitution deepened and the people's unrest intensified to the extreme. The worst crisis that all territories faced, whether discussing the political, economic, social, or cultural realms of those times, is that the status quo drifted and people lost a sense of direction. This contributed to and grounded the advent of Hoedang's reformative ideas, which are based on his ideas of relative autonomy. Hoedang's religious ideas illustrate that relative autonomy can be interpreted as "relative principle," "specialized principle," and "complementary principle," which mean "dependent origination" as a Buddhist predicative and "maṇḍala" as a technical term of Vajrayāna.

Hoedang hoped that the Jingak that he founded would eventually render services toward the illumination of the national spirit, national advancement, Buddhist prosperity, cosmopolitanism, and peace. He leaves us this teaching: "If we straighten our mentality, we can distribute our material possessions, and when we share our material properties, they become well-developed. As we put this principle into practice, we can make peace for humankind."<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Son Gysang, *Silhaeng-non*, 167.



# HARMONIZING THE VISIONS OF PEACE AMONG THE WORLD'S RELIGIONS

**James K. Powell, II**

You may know, there are many varieties of analogy in Buddhist tradition of the universe as a “bubble”. As the Buddha said, “Form is like a lump of foam, feeling like a water bubble; perception is like a mirage, volitions like a plantain trunk, and consciousness like an illusion....”<sup>1</sup> So, while a number of religions might seem like Luther’s “Mighty Fortresses” as he declares his God to be, in fact, religions come and go and the humble Buddhist tradition has from the start, acknowledged the ebb and flow of religions, including its own presence in the world. Alas, this is not true of the Abrahamic religions. It is their distinctive feature to project “solidity”, “firmness”, “absolute truth” and the like that appear to Asians from many traditions as such a bubble.

I have by now been in discussions with so many Confucian, Daoist, Hindu and Buddhist thinkers, I realize the common denominator for them all is comprehending the fascination of otherwise advanced “westerners” with the inherent violence in many western religious interactions. The witch trials and Inquisition particularly fascinated him. Isshi Yamada and my subsequent Tibetan advisor Geshe Lhundhup Sopa (b. 1923) (emeritus professor of University of Wisconsin – Madison) agreed on one thing: to see that a creator that is, as Karl Barth (1886-1968) famously put it, *ganz anders* literally “wholly other” than the world, is absurd.<sup>2</sup> For Mahāyāna logician Nāgārjuna, the idea of

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<sup>1</sup> Bhikkhu Bodhi, *Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Saṃyutta Nikāya* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 952-953.

<sup>2</sup> William Stacy Johnson, *The Mystery of God: Karl Barth and the Postmodern Foundations of Theology* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1997), 19-20. Johnson makes clear that Barth is not asserting a god spatially different from this world, but rather, existing in interaction with this world, but on a different moral plane. He translates this term as “completely different” but I believe the distinction is minor. This is the classic

“otherness” points to a lack of connection. If something does not connect (God to the world), how can it be known? God cannot affect our world and is an imaginary projection. So many Buddhist thinkers love to compare such thinking to “sky flowers” or “Centaur castles in the sky.” This is much like the invisible pink unicorn: how can it be pink if it is invisible? How can God be other than yet related to the world? Yet as a projection, Jehovah has proven an invaluable bubble, or “sacred canopy” as sociologist of religions Peter Berger (b. 1929) explained.

Let’s look at the building of the bubble. The Golden Age of Islam endured for 1,300 years, the Christian colonial period continues on, from 1492, for more than 500 years. Abrahamic religions account for some three fifths of the Earth’s believers. This was not always so. Buddhism and Indian culture loomed large over the Eurasian continent through the Kuṣāṇa Empire, with visitors even to the historical Buddha from this region, until the advent of Islam in central Asia, quashing a great civilization and its religion, its sacred canopy of Buddhism, in the seventh century. I suggest that the greed, hatred and ignorance one finds among the religions, are “bubbles”, not unlike other “bubbles” such as the housing “bubble”, the dollar “bubble”...is in the process of “popping”. All three religions are fixated upon a holy city, Jerusalem, all three have nuclear weapons and apocalyptic visions of a violent end times, perhaps these are self-fulfilling prophecies. Perhaps the Asian bubble is expanding again.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) contrasts “practical” Asian religion with the superior (in his view) pure *theoria* of Greek philosophy that he contrasts with Asian religions that are merely “practical”.<sup>3</sup> I suggest that the world needs such “practical” religion for too many wars have been fought over when God is “three in one”, whether Christ is divine or human, whether the Messiah has come or not. All these Abrahamic differences the historical Buddha would write off to improvable, useless assertions. I will claim that the Abrahamic bubbles have assisted humanity in achieving more egalitarian societies, in spite of inherent problems that I think can be solved from the perspective of Asian, especially Chinese, religions. This chapter is not aimed at proving Abrahamic religions are “wrong” and Asian religions are “right” but rather to elucidate the different *foci* of the religions and how this impacts their visions of peace. Arguably, the Abrahamic religions have done much to engender social equality,

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“Jehovah” stance: the God of Abraham is a moral judge, outside the realm of nature. While this is a subtle distinction, it is in conflict with Mahāyāna core assumptions: *pratītyasamutpāda* necessitates logic of neither difference nor non-difference.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 282-284. The great Husserl expresses a common understanding of the “orient” as “pre-scientific” and “religious-mythical” as he puts it. I would agree that western religions/philosophies are highly theoretical, focused on theory for its own sake, as Husserl deems this a virtue, I deem it an extreme. It is in keeping with other themes raised in this paper: God (in this case, theory) as “other” than this practical world.

yet the hierarchical structures of the Catholic and/orthodox churches and Shi'a Islam point away from this for a different vision of peace through group social control. The Hindu and Confucian hierarchies stratify the people similarly into classes, we nevertheless find anti-hierarchical strains of thought in Buddhism and Daoism, paralleled to some degree on the Abrahamic side, Judaism, Sunni Islam and Protestant Christianity.

It is the exclusivist tendencies of the Abrahamic religions that serve as an outstanding feature, when viewed from the vantage point of someone from an Asian religion. We find nothing of holy wars, crusades, and not much by way of inquisitions...among the Asian religions. We do find the usual persecution of minorities, we see violence in Asia for sure, but nothing quite like war and violence as we see this exemplified by the Abrahamic religions. Still, I would contend, the world's religions' visions of peace, are complementary, not contradictory, and do not conflict with that new global religion, science. Are the *foci* of peace among the religions of earth the same? This is clearly not the case. An obvious example: "Islam" means "peace", but "peace" in submission to God, while the Buddhist nirvāṇa is the snuffing out of ego, not submission to a grand cosmic figure like al-Lah ("God"). In spite of such contradictions, it is possible to put them together into a new global package, at least on a conventional level.

### **My steps up a ladder: Protestant Buddhism**

I saw profound implications for Protestant thought through studies of Nāgārjuna and the Happiness ("Pure Land") Buddhism with Isshi Yamada and the idea of "self and other power merged" in that tradition. It seemed easy to apply this notion to Protestant thinking about God, and thus "Buddhize" if you will, Protestant thought. This is the import of the *Sukhāvativyūha-sūtra*: Understood through Yogācāra filters "*parikalpita*" – individuated conceptualization - merges with "*pariniṣpanna*" – the final state of non-dual awareness in meditation. This very "*Saha*" or miserable world is a land of happiness when viewed apart from the classic mental disturbance (*prapañca*). When "my power" and the "other power" of Infinite Light and Life (Amitābha/Amitāyus) merge, sorrow no longer endures. The *Sukhāvati* traditions are not about devotionism (though many if not most traditions do devolve to that), but realizing the bliss of awakening all around.

Some years ago, he suggested I was attempting to create my own religion by attempting to mix Protestant social action with the Happiness (Pure Land) vision of "heaven". I have been told by a number of Asians that "white" Euro-American people remain Christian even though developing a preference for Buddhist philosophy. While there is no denying our conditioning from childhood, Christians do not think such people are still Christian. What then are such hybrid people? We are "slashers", in my case, Protestant / Mahāyāna. How does one reconcile violence one finds in the Hebrew Bible and apocalyptic visions in the New Testament with Buddhist awareness of the primary



importance of inner, mental peace? Combining them requires a “poetic” reading of that Almighty God, the “irascible”<sup>4</sup> Jehovah, God of the Jews and thus, all the Abrahamic religions.

### **Asian inclusivism: To be Confucian and Christian**

Let us apply the “practical” nature of “oriental” religions, as Husserl defines these. As time has passed, I have come to see more deeply the value of all of them, in particular, the tradition of Master Kong and his “Academia” approach to life. This religion is arguably one whereat appreciation of it improves with age, favoring as it does a kind of gerontocracy. Different religions may play yet again, different roles. How could one be right and all the others be wrong? Such a conception offends Chinese thinking. The “Land of Three Religions” they call it. One can be Confucian, Daoist and Buddhist or more, at the same time. Yutang Lin (1895-1976), famous convert to Christianity once said, that though he sees the Christ as his savior, none of this means he must adhere to Greek speculative theological views. He makes the case for staying Chinese, noting famously that belief in Christ as his savior does not mean he must embrace Platonism or Aristotelianism. Christ points to an issue of the heart, not the brain. He shares his thoughts on the futility of debating whether Christ was resurrected “in the flesh” or not, retaining a Chinese suspicion of “spiritual” or “ghostly” worlds beyond our ken.<sup>5</sup> These visions are complementary in spite of seeking significantly different, yet ultimately compatible visions of “peace”. Like vegetables, all are vegetables, but some are specifically carrots, while others are onions, one might analogize. There is no need to keep any outside the salad, but in each case, there are aspects one may wish to discard.

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<sup>4</sup> Karen Armstrong, *A History of God: The 4000-year Quest of Judaism, Christianity and Islam* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993), 38-39. Armstrong contrasts the “one” of Greek philosophy with the “irascible” Jehovah, for Jehovah is most human, often angry and irrational. The Greek “prime mover” and the like were not identical with Buddhist notions, but much closer, as she acknowledges. The Greek and Indian worlds revolved around logic, inquiry, skepticism and debate. The world of ancient Israel was focused on obedience to divine laws, given by a deity deemed “beyond nature”.

<sup>5</sup> Yutang Lin, *The Importance of Living* (New York: Harper Collins, 1937). He notes that a heaven without work might appeal to galley slaves, and upholds the value of the physical world in opposition to the classical Christian emphasis on a world of “pure spirit”. He asserts this is more like Buddhism in fact, an idea that can be traced to Asia having no real place in his Sinified Christianity (p. 26). He states that specific Christian doctrines began to annoy him, especially the bodily resurrection of the Christ. The inner heart of a Christian’s sacrificial love, however, held him in its grip for most of his life. (p. 409). Still, there are far more references to Confucius than Christ in his writings.

### **Exclusivism characterizes the Abrahamic religions.**

The Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam are globally known for their intolerance of each other and of other religious traditions as well. As anyone who has taught countless courses on the religions of Earth for years knows this is true, especially when contrasted with Indian religious views. The Indian religions insist on “hyper-inclusion”: after countless lifetimes, you *will* find your way into their respective religion. The Abrahamic conception of peace is famously, a world ruled by god, without war, whereat usually the believer’s own sect is admitted to a usually spiritual, non-earthly heaven. Christianity, perhaps most of all, has proven intolerant of alternative religious visions of peace. Israelites began the cycle of violence. It is chronicled in the Hebrew Bible: genocide for the Canaanites, for they worship Ba’al. The only peace, they preach, is obedience to God’s Law. Christians and Muslims remade the laws, following this “Western” logic, to see “peace” as a totalistic rule of one’s own god over all the others. Tetsurō Watsuji (1889-1960) saw the cause in the desert climate: in a monsoon climate such as India one doesn’t need totalitarian law to eat, but in the Tigris Euphrates river region, a strong central command is required to control and distribute water. He notes that this term “desert” points to an “absence of human life” as he distinguishes pastoral, monsoon and desert religions.<sup>6</sup> We can then begin to peer into the nature of this God theologian Karl Barth among others, defined as “wholly other” than our human world.<sup>7</sup> God is the great ego, literally, the “I Am” as God reveals himself in the Bible.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Tetsurō Watsuji, Geoffrey Bownas, trans., *Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1961), 39-40.

<sup>7</sup> “ganz anderes” as Karl Barth put it, or as Anselm put it, god is “that than which no greater can be thought”. We see this purely transcendent vision of God in the earliest sections of the Hebrew Bible: Exodus 16:10: “While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud.” God is the only source of power or life in the desert, throughout the Moses epic.

<sup>8</sup> Hebrew Bible, Exodus 3:13-14. Interestingly, a study demonstrates that “when asked to describe their day, (six year old) Americans make three times more reference to themselves than Chinese six year olds.” David Brooks, *The Social Animal: The Hidden Sources of Love, Character, and Achievement* (New York: Random House, 2011), 141-142. American children can more readily distinguish “anger and disgust” than Chinese counterparts. All of this seems tied to idea of “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”, along with what has become a toxic addiction to individualism.

### **There are common features of religion and they are all “sacred canopies.”**

So what do all the religions have in common? Durkheim pointed out that they serve as “glue” for cultures.<sup>9</sup> Any map of the world religions will reveal this truth: how is it that there can be whole swaths of earth holding people of shared beliefs? One may think, “Why are so many for example, Catholic in Latin America or Buddhist in Korea, and so forth?” Sociologist of religion Max Weber (1864-1920)<sup>10</sup> saw how religions serve as catalysts for change in society, they “shake things up” and make way for evolutions in understanding the meaning of peace and so many other things. Psychologist of religion Erik Erikson (1902-1994) saw the religious person as the mature individual, like a Luther or a Gandhi, employing religion to create new avenues of understanding the meaning of this word “peace”, literally changing whole societies and their subsequent histories. Karl Heinrich Marx (1818-1883) and Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) saw the darker yet still true side of all religions: they may legitimate class inequality and they may serve as psychological props for the weak, respectively. Finally, sociologist Berger assimilated so much of this and more in his notion of the “sacred canopy”. The religions offer at least a relative peace in a chaotic and unpeaceful world. We all think, feel and act within some sort of sacred canopy, even if that be science. In this sense the religions all seek what they deem social and individual “peace” and fall within the analysis of these important European thinkers.

### **Distance and nearness: There are both transcendent and immanent notions of the sacred.**

I would like to emphasize the differences. Generally speaking, Christian notions of “peace” involve a peace brought about by a “wholly other” God through the sacrifice of the Christ, Jesus of Nazareth. For so many Christians, the path to peace is the “straight and narrow” path, for as Jesus says in the

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<sup>9</sup> Stjepan Metrovic, *Durkheim and Post-Modern Culture* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1992), 98-99. Durkheim sees religion in terms of culture – not belief in a deity, for he was among those early pioneers of sociology to note that a number of Asian traditions have no belief in a deity. This was a milestone in western thought about religion, acknowledging that religion can be immanent as well as transcendental.

<sup>10</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Minneapolis, NY: Dover, 2008), 178-181. Weber remarks that Protestant frugality gives way to an emphasis on material goods that went from being a “light cloak” to an “iron cage” as he Parsons famously translated what might more accurately be translated as “steel shell”. Ascetic Protestantism had built a prison of individualistic, materialistic capitalism. He denotes the Puritan idea of work as a “calling” paves the way for Anglo-American culture.

Gospel of John 14: 6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Of course, this is the "Father God Jehovah" of the traditions of Abraham. My liberal Protestant minister father raised me as a Christian Existentialist by way of Søren Aabye Kierkegaard (1813-1955) and Paul Johannes Tillich (1886-1965). For these gentlemen, there could no longer be any question of Christianity being the "only way" to a reasonable afterlife, nor even is an afterlife important, but more often, a distraction from the here and now. For these liberal Protestants, Christianity had become metaphor, poetic language, resources for here and now issues. Metaphysics gave way to existence and the dialogue between Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Keiji Nishitani (1900-1990), his Zen existentialist student towards a "here and now" perspective, is renowned as chronicled in *Religion and Nothingness*, wherein Nishitani differentiates the "other distant father god" from the "here and now" Zen perspective. With the story of Abraham, we see that God is separate from nature. This is the pride of the Abrahamic religions: a god outside of and even in conflict with, nature.<sup>11</sup> Obedience to this Father God outside nature as a moral creative force of the universe diverges with the Greeks' generally more naturalistic inclinations. Sin – disobedience to god – both for the group as well as the individual, is the source of "no peace". Peace for the Abrahamic religions is focused on obedience to God. This notion is distinctly different from the Indian focus on individual karma, "self-propelling cause and effect" action; one simply receives the results of one's action and this does not depend upon a monotheistic God.

**For Judaism, peace comes from obedience to divine law.** The Jews, unlike any other religious group, feel they are especially "chosen" by God. "Peace" for a member of the tribe of Judah – Judaism – means a near total obedience to the Father God Jehovah's commandments. These comprise the simple and ancient "Seven Laws of Noah" evolving into 613 *mitzvot* or "commandments" an Orthodox Jew is expected to practice. These include a number of references to the "defilement" produced by menstruation and the subjugation and/or exclusion of women. This points to just one instance of the anti-natural "peace" proffered by the Creator Law-giver who rules outside creation and is the only source of true peace – in obedience – for the Jew.

**For Christians, love supersedes law.** Christianity offers yet another vision of "peace", an understanding that explicitly rejects the Jewish *halakhah* the path to ultimate peace. Famously, not only St. Paul the Apostle and Martin Luther (1483-1546) but so many others, the law of Jehovah is deemed a burden, a corral for "sheeple" if you will. We find this understanding in the statements of the

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<sup>11</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans, 1990), 110-112. Lurking behind the account of Creation is the story from the Babylonian *Enuma Elish* whereat Marduk violently slays the female chaos monster Tiamat and carves the earth out of her body. The Genesis passages still hint at the violent aspect of the creation of the world. Marduk made humans from the blood of Tiamat's inept male consort... serving as the backdrop for the Biblical story.

founder Jesus of Nazereth himself in the oldest gospel Mark, 2:27: “And he said to them, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” Jesus “broke” a major Jewish law by working on the Sabbath, and in this, he advocates a human focus – not a God-focus - for among the most important of God’s Laws. Christ also spoke as a friend with women he did not know, a severe offense. God’s love and grace over-ride Jewish law, at least for the Christian. How can Jews and Christians agree on a path to peace with such opposing conceptions of “peace”? The answer is simple: we have Jews for Jesus, the early Judaizer sect of Christianity following James the Just, brother of Jesus..., one can in fact, easily keep both traditions alive.<sup>12</sup> The example of the “Hindu-like” Gnostics demonstrates the range of what we can consider “Christian.”

**Christian love privileges the sinner.** For the Christian, the law is written on the hearts of humans. We find this expressed in the Jewish prophet Ezekiel, but never does this idea mean that a devout Jew should cease to practice the “outward” laws, in particular, the ancient and tribal nature of Judaism can be seen in Law 602: God’s requirement that the Israelites exterminate the Canaanite nations. Christians will see their “peace” as a higher level of peace, for this peace comes not from God’s commandments, but from God’s love and self-sacrifice for his creation. Jesus loved the sinner, the alcoholic, the traitor, the prostitute, the poor...and saved his wrath for the powerful, law-abiding Jewish clergy, whom he likens to “whitewashed tombs” and “sons of the devil”.

**For the Jew, Jesus left the Jewish peace, and disobeyed God’s law.** If the Babylonian Talmud is in fact referencing Jesus in the following passage, it seems he was further deemed a sorcerer: “On the Sabbath of the Passover (Jesus) Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place, a herald went forth and cried, ‘He is going forth to be stoned because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.’”<sup>13</sup> While scholars – with Jewish

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<sup>12</sup> Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, eds., *James the Just and Christian Origins* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), 127-128. In fact, the struggle between St. Paul and the James the brother of Jesus has received increasing examination. For Bruce Chilton, it is clear that these two fought bitterly over the centrality of the Law or *Torah* the Five Books of Moses. For James, “faith without works is dead” but for Paul, Abraham was justified by faith in god, not by works, and thus received the covenant. For James, one must be both pure and strict according to the law and accept the sacrificial death of the Christ or messiah, on the cross as an act of grace on the part of God. I should ask, where is the conflict? James letters were deemed so “Jewish” Martin Luther sought to get rid of them from the New Testament. Not only Luther, but the vast majority of Gentiles for whom the law was alien, Paul’s Christianity will win the day.

<sup>13</sup> Gerd Theissen and Annette Mertz, *The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1996), 74-75. This quote is taken from a Tannaitic period text (bSanh 43a). Some doubt its authenticity dating as it does from the second century however it does correspond with the Gospel of John in asserting Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover, whereas the synoptic gospels do not. In any case, Theissen elucidates the fact that the miracles Jesus performed would prove a great stumbling block for Jewish acceptance. Moses is punished for claiming credit for the

and Christian fundamentalists emphasize this passage to their own polemical ends, debate whether this is a reference to the same Yeshua ha-Notsri, Jesus of Nazereth, there can be no doubt that this is a traditional Jewish view of Jesus, as law-breaking sorcerer. Yet the cry, "The Jews killed Jesus" has led to millennia of sorrow for the Jewish people at the hands of Christians through the course of centuries of *pogroms*, the holocaust...attempts at the genocide of the Jews in all parts of Europe. How can these groups ever share the same notion of peace? Here is the common denominator: one sees a law-obeying believer in the Messiah (Christ) as a suffering servant, the Passover lamb slain for the sins of many and deeming Jesus of Nazereth as such is a Jewish Christian.

**For Muslims, peace involves submission to the will of God.** The term "Islam" itself means "peace" (from *salaam*, a cognate with the Hebrew *shalom*), but this peace too, is no Indian or Chinese conception of the term, but a peace found in submission to God. Islam amalgamates the conceptions of Jewish law into the *shariah* legal and *hadith* (example of Muhammad) traditions with the Christian emphasis on the pure grace of "the God" (*al-Lah*) for the common believer and makes the faith ever so simple to join and follow. Muhammad thought naively his prophetic visions would be accepted by Jews. He was mistaken. The period of prophecy Jews deemed ended with the last prophets of the Hebrew Bible ca. 400 BCE. Islam amalgamates the "best" of Judaism and Christianity and is like a hybrid of the obedience to God's law like Judaism with the love and grace and acceptance of all people, like Christianity. Its appeal is enhanced by an even greater insistence on social justice than its predecessors.<sup>14</sup>

**Struggle is a core part of submission to God in all three Abrahamic religions.** The betrayal by the Jewish tribe *Bani Quraizah* resulted in Muhammad's battle with and subsequent forced exile of this Jewish tribe. Those Jews who refused to recognize Muhammad's prophetic status were punished even with enslavement and executions. The Islamic conception of peace explicitly denies the divinity of Jesus as Christ. Breaking with both earlier

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miracle of turning water from stone, Jesus, turning water into wine, raising the dead and the like, along with law-breaking we mentioned above. Again, nothing prohibits one from being a Jewish Christian. Muslims explain this as miracles done through God's power alone, channeled through such prophets as Jesus, whose miracles are derived from the same source as that of Moses and Muhammad: that irascible Jehovah, also known as God and in Arabic, as al-Lah.

<sup>14</sup> K. D. Irani and Morris Silver, *Social Justice in the Ancient World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 116-118. K. D. Irani chronicles the development of revolutionary social principles in Islam. He reminds us that Muhammad was born into a poor family in a society characterized by a sharp distinction between rich and poor. Like Christ before him, Muhammad had a following among the poor, but unlike Christ, Muhammad attempts a "utopian" community after the flight to Yathrib, changing the name to Medina or "The City". Early Muslims will enforce *zakāt* or "alms" but increasingly, this was a tax on the rich to redistribute wealth to the poor. Islamic civilization will produce large hospitals with health care for all, no one turned away. Muhammad did what we still cannot do today in modern America.

traditions, Muhammad preached the existence of 24,000 prophets sent by al-Lah to all parts of the earth. The inclusive vision of this last Abrahamic evolution denies both the validity of Jewish Law and Christian Atonement of Christ on the cross for the sins of the world. It is no wonder these three religions have fought so very much with one another, given their exclusive claims about the divine, and thus, ultimate peace. (And let's not mention land!) Islam amalgamates the best aspects of Jewish Law, Christian sacrificial love and grace of God notions, all the while emphasizing social justice. It is now easy to see how one can be a Jew and a Christian... while being a Muslim. Certainly Muslims see things this way.

**Let us emphasize the inclusivism of the Indian family of religions and the distinction between karma and sin.** With the Indian family of religions we see arguably the most inclusive understanding of peace of any of these three families of religion (Abrahamic, Indian and Chinese). The Sanskrit term *śānti* "peace" references mental peace, the pacification of turbulence in the consciousness. Plato's definition of peace as quelling social unrest, a conception shared by the social emphasis found among the Abrahamic religions, is no longer a primary meaning of "peace". From the standpoint of the Indian religions, Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism, the failure to attain "peace" does not lie in disobedience to an all-powerful deity, but of course to one's personal karma trajectory. One's own past lives and deeds create the unpeaceful reality for the suffering individual. The lack of peace does not lie in combating a sinful nature, but in pacifying the mind through meditation, study and discipline. All three of these religions agree: stifling cyclic karma is the path to peace and furthermore, at the end of the line the most perfect peace for all beings (not just members of the given religion) will culminate in either *mokṣa* ("release"), *kevalajñāna* ("pure wisdom") or *nirvāna* respectively.

**The Hindu vision is that of merging with the universal spirit.** This then leads one to another conundrum. The Indian religions themselves still disagree on the nature of final peace. The Hindu *mokṣa* points to "release" of the individual *ātman* – "self" or "soul" - from confusion, the snares of *samsāra*, this literally "convoluted" world wherein beings suffer from ignorance – not disobedience to a Lord. Through yogic practices, many physical disciplines and study for the purpose of wisdom, the Hindu *ātman* expands in wisdom and breaks free from the entanglement of the many worlds described in Indian religious literature. The Upanishadic vision points to the full awareness of the reality of the *ātman* as identical with eternal *Brahman*, defined as ultimate "being, mind and bliss." For the *bhaktin* or devotionalist Hindu, this state may be attained in one of a number of pure realms of the great Lords Krishna, Shiva, et. al. It is indeed the "play" of Krishna that attracts his followers.<sup>15</sup> Why cannot

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<sup>15</sup> Edwin F. Bryant, *Krishna: A Source Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 117-118. As Bryant notes, Krishna's divine play encompasses not only Krishna's own acts, but all aspects of devotion, ritual, and ethical action and is the path to union with Krishna's divine nature. For the Hindu, all is Maya – illusion – for the *Vaiṣṇava*

one incorporate these notions of divine play with the qualities mentioned concerning the Abrahamic religions? This transition to the Indic worldview is the most treacherous of them all, but I see no conflict in obedience to law, love and justice while enjoying the divine play of the cosmos and devotion to abstract principles embodied by the Hindu gods.

**Asceticism leads to peace in the Jain tradition.** The Jains disagree with Hindu emphases on life in this world. The Hindus value pleasure and family and social life. The idea that performing social caste duties leads to a reduction in negative karma and thus peace, they deny in favor of austerities. Life in society, life in the caste system itself they reject. Final peace for the Jain arrives at the time a *Tirthankara*— a ford-maker — sheds all karmic matter through ascetic practices and arrives at the final peace they name *kevalajñāna* — “pure wisdom”. Forever then, lingering in the cosmos as a benign presence, the individual exists in the *Siddhashila* — the pure realm of the Adept Siddhas — for eternity. As with all the Indian traditions, this points to the end of rebirth among the standard realms. While one may not wish to embrace a complete asceticism of the Digambara Jains, still a greater sympathy with non-harming other beings does not conflict with the composite picture of a possible religious human of the future, simultaneously taking all the paths.

**Buddhism and the peace of snuffing out the ego.** For the Buddhists yet another conception of peace is to be found. *Nirvāṇa* — far from meaning “bliss” (it is said to be beyond bliss) — points to the peace that comes with the passing away of the ego view. *Nirvāṇa* is literally the “snuffing out” of the self and lies in opposition to Hindu notions of *mokṣa* - release to divine being(s). Buddha denied the efficacy of Jain asceticism and as well, the dualism of *jīva* or “soul” vs. *ajīva* or “matter”. Greed and ego fixation are the obstacles to final peace in this Indian tradition. They are obstacles to clear cognition. While similarities with the other two Indian religions are surely there as much as the same is true for the Abrahamic religions, the conceptions of peace are complementary there as well. How could attainment of the pacification of mental turbulence impede the composite religious person constructed thus far?

**For Confucius, peace means social harmony.** In China, similar contradictions exist. Master Kong (Confucius) teaches that “heaven” and final “peace” are found in the moral character of the individual superior man, the gentleman or person of *ren*. This man plays his role in the social hierarchy, acting diligently, calmly and with compassion for his fellow human through action in the human world. “I speak not of divine things, but human things” Master Kong famously declares. How can this view of peace be deemed identical with the Abrahamic, Hindu or even a number of Buddhist conceptions

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Hindu, the world takes place in the mind of Vishnu’s divine consciousness. Hinduism also affirms acceptance of class status and performing class duties, to the point of that most famous incident at the Battle of Crow Field whereat Arjuna finds he cannot kill his enemies. Krishna reveals divine nature and confirms that no harm will ultimately come to his relatives, but he must kill them for it is his caste duty.



of final peace? In the legendary debates with the Old Master (Laozi, Lao-tzu) he declares that without the actions of virtuous men, society will crumble, ruining all chances for real peace. Chaos results from the inaction of the scholars in society. In fact, one may reasonably translate the Chinese name for his school as “Academia” – the *ru jiao* or “tradition of the scholars”. It is through proper ritual – *li* – that the gentleman attains to the Confucian final peace, certainly a this-worldly peace sharing more in common with Plato’s definition of a “lack of social unrest” than with the “divine” paths of most religions. It’s social structure conflicts with the Hindu caste system, but does not impede awareness of Hindu divine play. How could efficient management of society conflict with the positive values of the religions indicated here?

**There is in the Dao, harmony of mind and body.** At odds again with this “final peace”, Daoism affirms once more the individual and his/her relationship with the Unmanifest Dao – the “Way” of all things. The Daoist sees final peace as *wuwei* – “inaction” in opposition with the proper social/ritual action of the Confucian “gentleman”. For Confucius, if responsible, well-educated leaders do not act and maintain the social order and its hierarchy, chaos and “unpeace” will rule. For the Old Master, no matter how much anyone acts in society, peace will give rise to unpeace no matter how diligently scholars strive to stop it. Peace is all about acceptance and thus “non-action” (*wuwei*). Both Chinese conceptions seek peace and this through reciprocity (*shu*), albeit in such different ways. As China is often termed a “land of three religions” and we find the saying one is born Daoist, lives Confucian and dies a Buddhist, if Chinese can blend all three into a synthesis, why couldn’t our global, religious person? How could Daoist mind/body harmony conflict with anything to this point?

**How does one synthesize all the diverse views?** So we have then, complementary but not contradictory visions of peace. How then will the rudiments of a global religion perhaps take shape? It might contain the human aware of universal law (Judaism), aware of divine grace and love (Christianity), aware of the human need for social justice (Islam), aware again of the divine play (*lila*) of the universe (Hinduism), aware of the need to live on little, to spare life (Jainism), of the hindrance represented by the false ego self (Buddhism), of the natural flow of all things, regardless of one’s struggle (Daoism) and finally, of the need for the “gentleman” (and woman) to do his or her utmost to prevent social chaos, to humbly accept one’s station in life and do one’s duty to preserve the “peace”. So there it is. These are complementary visions of peace, but really, but why should one declare them “incompatible”? It is true some things will stay and some will go for a particular individual, but there is something there for all.

**Science, the knowledge of things “out there” is equally complementary.** I think most know of the distaste many noted scientists have for religion.<sup>16</sup> Carl

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<sup>16</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2006), 40-41. Richard Dawkins insists science is about the “how” not the “why” of things, which concerns theology. His hostility to religious fundamentalism does not mean that he is

Sagan, that theologian of science, once said that "...if by 'God,' one means the set of physical laws that govern the universe, clearly there is such a God. This God is emotionally unsatisfying... it does not make much sense to pray to the law of gravity."<sup>17</sup> I would say that practitioners of the Asian religions would far prefer to pray to the law of gravity than the original jealous god Jehovah. Perhaps the word "pray" is a poor choice. Perhaps "meditate" upon the gravity that binds all things to all things.

**Most scientists do not make any distinction between the "here and now" religions of China, nor the yoga and mental focus traditions of India relative to the Abrahamic religions.** They castigate the improvable Jehovah, the faith basis of the Abrahamic religions. Is science really incompatible? How does science refute universal law (Judaism)? Gravity is surely there to serve as such as Sagan noted. Is Christian love disproved by science, though scientists may find neuro-chemical bases for such? Does science refute the need for social justice (Islam)? Does science refute the "play" of the universe and the search for total integration within it (Hinduism)? Does it negate the sanctity of all life and the necessity to live simply (Jainism)? Scientists have in fact proven the artificiality of the "self" construct that obscures a more true knowing (Buddhism). It has proven as well the efficaciousness of mind/body harmony and the need for kinetic non-action (Daoism). History has proven that the scholar working to improve society is working towards demonstrably effective goals (Confucianism). When put this way, I will say all these religions...and science...are complementary, not contradictory. I will say that any who declare these are incompatible seek obstruction to immeasurable life and light (*amitāyus/amitābha*) we find so valued in Buddhist traditions.

**Science alone is impoverished.** If one were to live with science alone in its materialistic and atheistic standard manifestation, the sacred dimension diminishes. One can view scientific discoveries from the standpoint of the sacred: viewing the "Big Bang" as one's cosmology, searching for immortality through medical breakthroughs, perhaps in the afterlife one might exist in the internet "cloud". I would argue still for a role for law (Judaism), love (Christianity), justice (Islam), play (Hinduism), mental tranquility (Buddhism), social and natural harmony (Confucianism and Daoism). If one regards the positive features of the earth's religions while overlooking the negatives and weaves these into one's science, I suggest one will have arrived at a truly global perspective. In this sense, religion and science are not opposites, but rather science is the "larger set", able in theory to incorporate all of them. Buddhism has often absorbed and integrated the best insights of other cultures, notably Daoism and Confucianism. Isshi Yamada once said that western religions work out of an "exclusive synthesis" meaning they do in fact amalgamate other

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incapable of religious feelings about science itself, in spite of abhorring the use of "god" so much among scientists (e.g., the "god" gene, the "god" particle, etc.)

<sup>17</sup> Charles R. Pellegrino, *Return to Sodom and Gomorrah* (New York: Avon Books, 1994), 316.

religions' components. Buddhism, he said, operates out of an "inclusive synthesis" meaning it aspires through an emphasis on experience, to evolve and incorporate ever more elements consciously. This is true of the Mahāyāna in particular he said, which "was a house big enough for infinite furniture." I suspect Buddhism of the future will absorb even more, merging seamlessly, with science.

# **DARKNESS ON THE EDGE OF DHARMA: RE-THINKING BUDDHIST VIEWS OF VIOLENCE IN LIGHT OF AṄGULIMĀLA**

**John Thompson**

*I fought with my Twin,  
That Enemy Within,  
'Til both of us Fell  
By the Way.*

Bob Dylan, "Where Are You Tonight?"

It has become a cliché among progressives that of all world religions, Buddhism offers the best hope for peace. And indeed, with an array of prominent Buddhists – Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), Aung San Suu Kyi (b. 1945), the current fourteenth Dalai Lama (b. 1935) – advocating for peace in the global arena, it is little wonder that many look to Buddhism for guidance. Still, we should consider the full range of Buddhist traditions before jumping to the conclusion that Buddhism advocates peace in all circumstances. A more critical look at Buddhist literature and history reveals a more checkered past when it comes to war and violence than we might assume. Rather than add to the large (and growing) body of scholarship on Buddhism and violence, however, I take a different approach in this paper. I will closely examine a figure whose example encourages us towards a more complicated (and somewhat ambivalent) attitude towards violence within Buddhism: Aṅgulimāla, the murderous-brigand-turned-monk. Looking at Aṅgulimāla and the way he is portrayed through history calls into question simplistic views of Buddhist commitment to and understanding of *ahiṃsā* ("non-harming"), and what we mean when we label Buddhism (or any religion for that matter) as "peaceful." Ironically, though, I believe that this more nuanced perspective on violence reveals a dark wisdom within the Dharma that we would do well to heed.

## Background

The common association of Buddhism with peace is not just a recent development. Buddhist tradition has been bound up with the virtue of *ahimsā* from its very beginnings and it remains, at least theoretically, an ethical ideal in all forms of Buddhism to this day. It is the first of the five basic precepts that all Buddhists should live by,<sup>1</sup> and by and large encourages a peaceful orientation to life. On a strictly abstract basis, inflicting injury is wrong, and should be avoided. However, in practice, *ahimsā* is rarely strictly observed. For instance, most Buddhists (lay or monastic) have not been vegetarian. There is evidence that *ahimsā* emerged among *śramaṇa* (lit. “strivers,” renunciates) movements that arose in response to the dominant Vedic religious order of ancient India, and was modified as it adapted to mainstream society. Moreover, it seems that for rulers, *ahimsā* could include using force to maintain order, defend the state, and even the Dharma.<sup>2</sup> Although this was a point of contention early on, it seems that there was increasing latitude in observing *ahimsā* in the political and social sphere as Buddhism spread beyond the Indian region. Grammatically, *ahimsā* is the negative form of the Sanskrit *himsā*, “to desire to harm,” thus, *ahimsā* might be better translated as “not desiring to harm,” an idea that opens the possibility of initially harmful but ultimately beneficial actions being considered *ahimsā*.<sup>3</sup>

It is just this centrality (and ambiguity) surrounding *ahimsā* in Buddhist history that makes the relationship between Buddha and Aṅgulimāla so intriguing. The story of the Buddha’s encounter with Aṅgulimāla has fascinated people for centuries, and the tale itself has an interesting history. Only two texts in the Pāli canon, the oldest of the surviving collections of Buddhist scripture, actually speak of Aṅgulimāla – verses 866-91 of the *Theragāthā* (“Verses of the Elders”), a collection of hymns traditionally attributed to various of the Buddha’s earliest disciples, and the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*, a short “sermon” found in the *Majjhima Nikāya* (“Middle Length Discourses”), a major collection of early Buddhist teachings. Later non-canonical texts, the *Papañcasudani*, a commentary on the *Majjhima Nikāya* attributed to the scholar-monk Buddhaghosa (5<sup>th</sup> century CE), and the *Paramattha-dīpāni*, a commentary on the *Theragāthā* by Dhammapala (6<sup>th</sup> century CE), both add many details not in the

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<sup>1</sup> The basic five precepts are refraining from causing unnecessary harm (*ahimsā*), refraining from stealing, refraining from harmful speech, refraining from “illicit” sexual activity, and refraining from the consuming of intoxicants. In actual practice there is wide latitude on how these precepts are defined and observed.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Zimmerman, “Only a Fool Becomes a King: Buddhist Stances on Punishment,” in Michael Zimmerman, ed., *Buddhism and Violence* (Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2006), 213-242.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Jerryson, “Introduction,” in Michael K. Jerryson and Mark Juergensmeyer, eds., *Buddhist Warfare* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 6. The classic Buddhist example is a doctor cutting off a poisoned finger, a painful, traumatic procedure that is necessary to preserve a person’s life and so is considered *ahimsā*.

earlier texts. Not surprisingly, the commentaries present Aṅgulimāla in a rather positive light, perhaps to make his story conform more closely to Buddhist doctrine. For the purposes of this paper I will stick to the early canonical versions of the tale, as I think this will allow us to gain greater insights into how Buddhism handles violence, and enable us to play different readings off one another.

### The Basic Story<sup>4</sup>

The *sutta* account opens in formulaic fashion with the Buddha residing at Jeta Grove just outside of Sāvattihī. It then relates that at that same time, a bloodthirsty bandit was terrorizing the region, laying waste to the countryside. This killer was known for his grisly habit of wearing a garland (*mālā*, also a term for the “rosary” used by Buddhist monks) of severed fingers (*aṅguli*) taken from his many victims, hence his epithet “Aṅgulimāla.” During his morning alms rounds, the few remaining villagers warn the Buddha repeatedly of this killer, stating that he has single-handedly attacked and slain parties as large as forty men, but rather than heed them, he calmly ventures out alone into the forest, seemingly intent on flushing Aṅgulimāla out.

The sharp-eyed killer spies the Buddha from afar and is surprised that a lone monk should wander into his domain when he has destroyed far-larger groups. True to his nature, he gathers up his arms and charges after the Buddha, intent on dispatching this foolish holy man easily. However, things don’t go as he planned. The Buddha, apparently well aware of Aṅgulimāla’s approach, uses his “psychic power” to stay out of harm’s reach; he continues calmly walking yet Aṅgulimāla, though running with all his might, cannot catch up. Finally in frustration he halts and calls out, “Stop, contemplative! Stop!” The Buddha replies, “I *have* stopped, Aṅgulimāla. *You* stop.” Aṅgulimāla is amazed – not only has the Buddha remained outside his murderous clutches, he seems to have told a lie by commanding Aṅgulimāla to stop when the killer has already done so, and then claiming that he (Buddha) has stopped when he clearly has continued walking. Aṅgulimāla then asks what he means. The Buddha explains:

I have stopped, Aṅgulimāla,  
once and for all,  
having cast off violence  
toward all living beings.  
You, though,  
are unrestrained toward beings.  
That’s how I’ve stopped  
and you haven’t.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Summarized from the *Aṅgulimāla Sutta*. For an English translation, see Thanissaro Bhikkhu, *Aṅgulimāla Sutta: About Aṅgulimāla*, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/mn/mn.086.than.html> (accessed March 9, 2012).

At once the Buddha's words have a powerful effect. Aṅgulimāla proclaims that the teaching of Dharma has worked, and that he will give up his evil ways. Tossing aside his weapons, he bows to the Buddha and requests to become a monk. The Buddha accepts, and together they return to the Jeta Grove to join the rest of the saṅgha. Aṅgulimāla commits himself diligently to the monastic path, proving himself to be a model monk.

Shortly thereafter, the Buddha receives a royal visit from King Pasenadi, who, in accordance with his duty as ruler, is hunting down the renegade laying waste to his realm with a full contingent of cavalry and chariots. The Buddha asks if the realm is being attacked by hostile forces but the king explains that he is leading this armed expedition to apprehend the vicious killer Aṅgulimāla, stating, "I am going to stamp him out."<sup>6</sup> The Buddha asks the king what he would do if he were to find that Aṅgulimāla had forsaken his violent ways and taken up the monastic life. The king answers that he and his men would, in accordance with the Dharma, venerate the *bhikkhu* and offer him all the support laity owe monastics. In seeming disbelief, though, he asks how such a killer could be tamed. In answer, the Buddha points out Aṅgulimāla sitting calmly nearby in his monastic robes. Understandably, the king is alarmed yet Buddha convinces Pasenadi that Aṅgulimāla has given up his life of crime and has found his true calling. Astounded, the king offers to pay for the reformed criminal's robes and upkeep, praises the Buddha for pacifying this threat, and returns to his palace.

Aṅgulimāla continues to devote himself to the monastic life and, through his great merit and sincerity (with the Buddha's guidance) even heals a woman in danger of dying while in labor. Following the Buddha's instructions, Aṅgulimāla performs a "truth act" (*sattyakiriya*), declaring that his present life of purity and harmlessness will henceforth be the means for bringing health and wellbeing for the mother and her child. In so doing, Aṅgulimāla essentially establishes a ritual of protection (*paritta*) still used in traditional Theravādin societies to bless pregnant women and new houses.

Sometime later, the text says that Aṅgulimāla retires to solitude in the forest. There he devotes himself to rigorous meditations and ascetic practices, and relatively quickly reaches "the supreme goal of the holy life," *nirvāṇa*. The text further says that he himself realizes his attainment, and so he became an *arhat*, the highest spiritual level in early Buddhism.

Yet the tale of Aṅgulimāla does not end at this point. After Aṅgulimāla attains the level of *arhat*, the *sutta* relates that one morning while on his begging rounds, he is attacked (presumably by villagers who recognize him although the text does not say). After being struck by clods of earth, rocks, and potsherds, Aṅgulimāla returns to the Buddha, "his head broken open and dripping with

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3.

blood, his bowl broken, and his outer robe ripped to shreds.”<sup>7</sup> The Buddha sees him and exhorts him to bear with it, explaining that Aṅgulimāla is now experiencing the fruit of the bad karma from his previous violent deeds – karma that otherwise would have burned him “in hell for many years, many hundreds of years, many thousands of years.”<sup>8</sup>

The last section of the *sutta* alludes to Aṅgulimāla going into seclusion and experiencing the “bliss of release,” and then spontaneously breaking into verse. As mentioned above, these verses are also found in the *Theragāthā* (Thag 16.8 – verses 866-891), and allude to various events in Aṅgulimāla’s life, both before and after his conversion. Thus Aṅgulimāla chants:

Who once was heedless,  
but later is not,  
brightens the world  
like the moon set free from a cloud....

Some tame with a blunt stick,  
with hooks, and with whips  
But without blunt or bladed weapons  
I was tamed by the One who is Such.

‘Doer of No Harm’ is my name,  
but I used to be a doer of harm.  
Today I am true to my name,  
for I harm no one at all.

A bandit  
I used to be,  
renowned as Aṅgulimāla.  
Swept along by a great flood,  
I went to the Buddha as refuge....

This has come well and not gone away,  
it was not badly thought through for me.  
The three knowledges  
have been attained;  
the Buddha’s bidding,  
done.<sup>9</sup>

And so, on this most appropriate note, this remarkable tale ends.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5-7.



## Problematic Points

This story of Aṅgulimāla, while relatively short, is quite complex. As an example of the universal tale of a fallen man's conversion and redemption, it remains deeply compelling. Buddhists often cite Aṅgulimāla's story as evidence that under the Dharma, no one is beyond salvation, and that the Buddha's way of handling evildoers is superior to the kingly use of law and/order. Still, despite all this, this fascinating tale raises many disturbing questions.

To begin with, the story is so idealized and sketchy that it begs the reader to fill in additional details. As an actual narrative, the tale is rather episodic, and does not appear to unfold in strictly chronological sequence. For instance, it seems that Aṅgulimāla actually attains *arhat* status before being attacked by the villagers yet the concluding section of the *sutta* right before the verses also found in the *Theragāthā* opens with phrase, "Then Ven. Aṅgulimāla, having gone alone into seclusion, experienced the bliss of release."<sup>10</sup> Such textual inconsistencies, which are fairly common in many Buddhist scriptures, suggest the story in its present form is a composite text, composed over time by various people most likely drawing on earlier oral traditions.

But leaving aside textual difficulties, the story is disquieting on many levels, and seems to point to an alarming lack of any social conscience on the part of the Buddha. The whole episode seems rather *ad hoc*, and the Buddha shows no effort at deterring crimes similar to those committed by Aṅgulimāla in the future. More to the point, there is little sense of real justice being rendered here: neither the Buddha nor Aṅgulimāla offer apologies to the villagers, nor make any public admission of guilt, let alone attempt to make amends to Aṅgulimāla's victims or their families. Indeed, the story may even betray a sense that the monastic saṅgha is above or beyond the reach of the king's law.<sup>11</sup> Later commentaries explain that it was as a result of negative reactions on the part of some lay people to the presence of the reformed killer among the saṅgha that the Buddha instituted the rule of not ordaining criminals but the *sutta* itself says nothing about this. In the end, the original story does not seem to be a satisfying way of handling criminals and terrorists, so it is little wonder that later tradition tries to present the situation in a more reasonable light.

The story of Aṅgulimāla also illustrates aspects of Buddhist history that bear further attention. Historical records show that forging relationships with rulers was crucial to the development of the saṅgha, both during the Buddha's life and after his passing. Such relationships, while perhaps necessary for the religion's survival, betray a decidedly ambivalent view of saṅgha-state relations. Canonical and historical sources indicate that Buddha consulted with various

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>11</sup> For an extended discussion of some of these issues, see David R. Loy, "How to Reform a Serial Killer: The Buddhist Approach to Restorative Justice," in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 7 (2000): 145-168.

kings yet was often loath to offer direct advice or criticism.<sup>12</sup> Certainly the Buddha does not reprimand King Pasenadi in the story of Aṅgulimāla for taking up arms against possible military threats, nor towards the end of his life does he ever criticize Pasenadi for his more violent excesses.<sup>13</sup>

This sanctioning of violence on the part of Buddha, tacit though it may be, should give those who consider Buddhism to be a “religion of peace” (at least in fully pacifist sense) some pause. Rather early in its history, Buddhist tradition developed the notion of an ideal ruler, the *cakravartin* (“wheel-turning king”) who conquers the world and rules without need for violence or punishment. In practice, of course, such a model was highly problematic, as it seems to have wedded the Dharma to state interests, and led to what scholars call “state protection Buddhism.” A number of texts have the Buddha or one of his disciples explain how to establish a Dharmic society, outlining duties for ruling justly and insuring the wellbeing of the people. This ideal, however benevolent it may be, is despotic by modern standards; by and large, the ruler’s primary duty is to maintain order, and this requires using force. Some texts even say that if he maintains compassionate intention, a king can accumulate vast karmic merit by harshly enforcing the law, torturing evildoers, and waging war against his enemies.<sup>14</sup> It seems that in the examples of Aṅgulimāla as well as certain monarchs, the Buddha might forgive or even turn a blind eye towards certain acts of violence.

Returning to the story of Aṅgulimāla, the vignette involving Aṅgulimāla and the woman in labor is also quite odd. There is a very strange, threatening aura surrounding it – the newly converted murderer coming upon a woman who is alone and at her most vulnerable. At first Aṅgulimāla does nothing, interpreting the encounter as yet another sign of the sorrows of *samsāra*, and continues on his daily alms round.<sup>15</sup> Later on he relates the tale of his encounter to the Buddha. From a contemporary perspective, the now tamed Aṅgulimāla seems remarkably fatalistic, evincing a rather jarring *lack* of concern for someone in genuine trouble. It may be that this episode is intended as a contrast with his former life, where he gleefully killed men, women, and children on sight. Regardless, the Buddha uses this incident as a “teaching moment,”

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<sup>12</sup> Stephen Jenkins, “Making Merit through Warfare and Torture According to the *Ārya-Bodhisattva-gocara-upāyavisaya-vikurvana-nirdeśa Sūtra*,” in Jerryson and Jurgensmeyer, eds., 64.

<sup>13</sup> Stephen Batchelor, *Living with the Devil: A Meditation on Good and Evil* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2005), 164-168.

<sup>14</sup> Jenkins, 64-71.

<sup>15</sup> Those familiar with the travelogues of the Japanese *haiku* master Matsuo Bashō may be reminded of a similar event in the poet’s writings where Bashō comes upon a young boy abandoned along the shores of the Fuji River. Similar to Aṅgulimāla with the pregnant woman, so Bashō and his companions leave the boy to his fate, musing that, “This must be the will of heaven.” See Matsuo Bashō, “Travelogue of Weather-Beaten Bones,” in Sam Hamill, trans., *Narrow Road to the Interior and Other Writings* (Boston and London: Shambhala, 1998), 40.

instructing his disciple to return to the woman and declare, “Sister, since I was born I do not recall intentionally killing a living being. Through this truth may there be wellbeing for you, wellbeing for your fetus.”<sup>16</sup> When Aṅgulimāla objects to this apparent lie (he has intentionally slain *many* beings), Buddha advises him to rephrase it so that he declares his harmlessness since his “noble birth” (i.e., becoming a monk). Aṅgulimāla does so, and both the woman and her baby become well. It would seem that Buddha is engaging in some of his (infamous) “skillful means” here, advising a follower to utter words that are less than truthful which, paradoxically, become the basis for a “truth act”. Moreover, this particular “truth act” has had a lasting impact on Theravada tradition.

We could, of course, probe further into other issues the text raises but does not clearly resolve. All told, the tale of Aṅgulimāla is a most puzzling story when we stop to reflect on it. Perhaps that is the ultimate point of the tale – to get us to pause in the midst of our karmically over-driven lives and seriously grapple with the meanings of the Dharma, much like the Buddha gets Aṅgulimāla to cease his compulsive killing. Yet this very elasticity makes it difficult, perhaps impossible, to find a single, definitive meaning in the tale.

## Variant Readings

Because the canonical sources for the story of Aṅgulimāla are so challenging, his tale has been read and re-read repeatedly over the years, often in surprising ways. A few of these are particularly noteworthy. Following mainstream Theravadin tradition, Hellmuth Hecker has retold the tale of Aṅgulimāla for the German Buddhist magazine *Wissen und Wandel*.<sup>17</sup> In Hecker’s version, we get a much more detailed story, beginning with the night of Aṅgulimāla’s birth that is heralded by various cosmic and divine omens (the “thief’s constellation,” a mysterious light playing over all the weapons in the kingdom). As the story unfolds, we find that the young man (named “Ahiṃsāka” in hopes of warding off the negative portents) becomes the victim of jealous students for his excellence in his studies, and they gradually poison the mind of his shortsighted guru. Eventually, swayed by their lies, the guru charges the young man with the horrific task of paying his guru an honorarium of one thousand human fingers. Trapped by his desire to honor his duty as a student (and perhaps his cosmic fate), the young man commits himself to a life of crime, and so earns his *nom de guerre*.

While Hecker gives a good summary of the traditional Theravādin view, his version has all the earmarks of Buddhist apologetics, as it smoothes out the tale’s rough edges. In fact, in his re-telling, Aṅgulimāla is in many respects the

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<sup>16</sup> Thanissaro Bhikkhu, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Reprinted in English translation in *The Wheel*, 312 (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1979). Available online through Access to Insight, 2007-2012, <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/authors/hecker/wheel312.html> (accessed June 6, 2012).

victim of other people's actions, so his conversion by the Buddha and ultimate redemption is more understandable. Thus this version may be more palatable for the average reader even as it departs from the original *sutta* version.

More recently G. K. Ananda Kumarasiri has published a detailed retelling of Aṅgulimāla's story replete with colorful illustrations and intended for a popular audience.<sup>18</sup> Kumarasiri's is very much a "Sunday-school" version of the tale, similar to Hecker's albeit greatly expanded, and he weaves in his own didactic comments, even concluding with his own reflections on the Dharma lessons taught by the story and a list study questions for discussion (pp. 75-79). As we might expect, both Hecker and Kumarasiri have written what are essentially confessional pieces, and so do not dwell on the problematic aspects of Aṅgulimāla's story. Instead, they stress its more orthodox dimensions, presenting Aṅgulimāla's tale as a parable from which to draw important moral and spiritual lessons. Such readings of the story are quite influential, and seem to be the basis for the founding of "Aṅgulimāla: the Buddhist Prison Chaplaincy in England" in 1985, still the official Buddhist program throughout the British prison system.<sup>19</sup>

The story of Aṅgulimāla was interpreted much more creatively in Mahāyāna tradition, particularly as Buddhism spread to East Asia. For instance, the Tiantai patriarch Zhiyi (538-597) claims that even Aṅgulimāla's violence merely reflects Ultimate Compassion, while the later thinker Zhanran (711-782) writes that Aṅgulimāla "displayed the Dharma-gate by which to benefit others." The Japanese Tendai commentator Annen even says, "Aṅgulimāla's action should not be considered violations of the precepts on taking life."<sup>20</sup> Unlike the traditional Theravādin readings noted above, these Mahāyāna readings present a view from the perspective of the Ultimate, where dualities of "good versus evil" do not hold. Perhaps the rhetorical intention in these readings is, a la "Zen," to confound simplistic, more orthodox interpretations of this traditional tale and spur others to deeper insights.

Of course, these are not the only ways to read the story. Richard F. Gombrich, a scholar of Theravāda Buddhism, engages in a more critical and scholarly reading in his paper "Who was Aṅgulimāla?"<sup>21</sup> Working from several other Pāli sources as well as various textual problems in the *sutta* version and the verses from the *Theragāthā*, Gombrich suggests that the story of Aṅgulimāla may actually be based on an encounter of between the Buddha and a Saivite (follower of Śiva) or a devotee of *shakti* tantra. While this is an intriguing

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<sup>18</sup> G. K. Ananda Kumarasiri, *Aṅgulimāla* (Malaysia, 2004), [http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf\\_file/Aṅgulimāla6.pdf](http://www.buddhanet.net/pdf_file/Aṅgulimāla6.pdf) (accessed June 15, 2012).

<sup>19</sup> Their official website is <http://Aṅgulimāla.org.uk> (accessed June 20, 2012).

<sup>20</sup> Christopher Kleine, "Evil Monks with Good Intentions? Remarks on Buddhist Monastic Violence and Its Doctrinal Background," in Zimmerman, ed., 87-88.

<sup>21</sup> Richard F. Gombrich, "Who was Aṅgulimāla?" in *How Buddhism Began: The Conditioned Genesis of the Early Teachings* (London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: The Athlone Press, 1996), 135-164.

speculation, and certainly various extremist devotees of these deities have engaged in violent transgressive practices, there is nothing in the tale itself to suggest such a religious orientation nor is there any conclusive evidence of tantric practices in India before the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. Moreover, there is much scholarly disagreement over the extent to which transgressive violence in tantra has been merely rhetorical rather than actual.

While Gombrich's reading is probably an overreach, it does underscore some of the more troubling aspects of the tale of Aṅgulimāla that mainstream Buddhism tends to pass over all too easily. The fact of the matter is, the violence and blood are still there in the story, and they resist apologetic whitewashing. We can see evidence of just how disturbing this can be seen in the 2003 campaign on the part of some Thai Buddhist organizations to protest the release of a movie based on Aṅgulimāla's story. At least in part, the protests appear to have been because the director followed the *sutta* version rather than the later commentarial traditions.<sup>22</sup>

Even more recently, peace activist Satish Kumar (b. 1936) was so alarmed by the growing violence associated with the "Global War on Terror" that in 2006 he published a new version of Aṅgulimāla's story, *The Buddha and the Terrorist*.<sup>23</sup> Kumar's book is a highly creative re-telling of this famous tale, adding various new details and drawing in incidents from other Buddhist stories. Kumar makes the characters more human (i.e., less like stock figures from ancient Indian drama) and he shapes the narrative so as to address several of the issues left unmentioned upon in the traditional versions. This is most obvious in the next to last chapter, a single scene where the entire saṅgha (including the Buddha and Aṅgulimāla), all the inhabitants of Sāvathī, and King Pasenadi are assembled outside the main court. This is a full public hearing where charges are brought, options are weighed, and Aṅgulimāla admits his guilt, apologizes, and awaits the people's verdict. Most importantly, various victims of Aṅgulimāla's previous "reign of terror" (along with their family members) are allowed to speak. Kumar even adds Mahāvīra, the legendary founder of Jainism (a far more pacifist tradition than Buddhism), to his concluding scene, as if to underscore the necessity of a peaceful resolution.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly Kumar wrote his book as a critical response to the "Global War on Terror" and various remarks by leaders such as then President George W. Bush.<sup>25</sup> In his introduction, Kumar explains his version is based on the story as

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<sup>22</sup> "Movie Based on Buddhist Teachings needs New Title," *Bangkok Post*, April 2, 2003. The movie was re-edited and eventually released in 2004. For reviews in the Internet Movie Database, see "Aṅgulimāla (2004)," <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0417431> (accessed June 25, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Satish Kumar, *The Buddha and the Terrorist* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2006).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 89-105.

<sup>25</sup> This is most obvious with the character of King Pasenadi (especially in chapter 2) but also in chapter 5 (pointedly entitled "Seeking Revenge"), where a crowd of angry

he himself learned it as a child, with Aṅgulimāla growing up as a persecuted untouchable.<sup>26</sup> More importantly, he explains why he feels this tale is so vital for us today:

My aim in writing this story has been two-fold: firstly, to show that there is another way, a more effective way, to overcome terror than the way of meeting fire with fire; and secondly, to introduce Buddhist philosophy, as I understand it, through a narrative. In our troubled times we need to be courageous, creative, and compassionate, and to exercise our imagination in order to build a better future. Therefore, the story of Aṅgulimāla is as relevant today as ever.<sup>27</sup>

This certainly marks a great departure from the *sutta* and later commentarial versions of the story. All told, Kumar has given us a powerful little book, and he eloquently presents a perspective that we desperately need to hear. Yet in so doing, he has so reconfigured the tale that it can scarcely be called the same story.

### **Another Reading – Aṅgulimāla as the Buddha’s Shadow**

After thinking on Aṅgulimāla’s story, the commentaries and various interpretations, I want to propose another reading, one that I believe faces the grisly and violent aspects of the tale head on without trying to explain them away. In this I have been inspired by Gombrich’s attempts to uncover the historical background of this story and my own researches into the relationship between Buddhism and violence, and even later Mahāyāna views (such as the ones noted above) in an effort to challenge initially, perhaps simplistic readings. In addition I draw on Kumar’s retelling, Stephen Bachelor’s (b. 1953) book *Living with the Devil: A Meditation on Good and Evil*, Shifu Nagaboshi Tomio’s presentation of the martial arts dimensions of Buddhist tradition,<sup>28</sup> and my own training in *taekwondo*. I thus ask us to re-envision this tale in a way that I believe will help us get nuanced albeit challenging understanding of Buddhist approaches to violence.

To start off, it will be helpful to consider how Buddhism may actually have a more complicated relationship with violence than many Western (and even traditional Asian) histories of Buddhism indicate. Buddhism has its roots in the *kṣatriya* (ruler/warrior) caste of ancient India; and Siddhārtha Gautama himself

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villagers confront the king for his alleged leniency, saying (among other things) of the Buddha and laywoman supporting Aṅgulimāla’s case, “Either they are with us or against us.” See Kumar, 36-45, 80ff.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 2-3.

<sup>28</sup> Nagaboshi Tomio, *The Bodhisattva Warriors: The Origin, Inner Philosophy, History and Symbolism of the Buddhist Martial Art within India and China* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2000).

was born into a ruling family, and was trained in (and excelled at) the martial arts of his day prior to his renunciation. Furthermore, based on historical and textual evidence, some scholars suggest a close connection between the *śramaṇa* movements of the Buddha's time, and various bands of aggressive warrior figures referred to in several of the Vedas who engaged in various non-Vedic practices (ceremonies, meditations).<sup>29</sup> As *liminal* (marginal) figures, such people were living violations of prevailing social norms, often encouraging extreme and violent asceticism, and were potentially quite threatening from the perspective of rulers and law-abiding subjects alike.<sup>30</sup> Mircea Eliade, for one, notes in his detailed discussion of *yoga* that Indian folklore and mythology are filled with tales of gods and mortals destroyed by great ascetics wielding the *tapas* ("heat/ardor," supernatural power) generated through their rigorous practices.<sup>31</sup>

While Buddhism never encourages the indiscriminate use of violence, as we have noted earlier in this paper, it is has never been as pacifist as it is often depicted. Moreover, the *cakravartin* ideal, the king who establishes order and upholds Dharma, is, in some sense, the worldly (and perhaps necessary) counterpart to the *bhikkhu* as the means for maintaining a stable society. The best example of such a ruler would be Aśoka (r. 274-236 BCE), who united most of present-day India under the Mauryan Empire. Although after his great conversion, Aśoka allegedly engaged only in "Dharma conquests," he did maintain a standing army and continued to enforce law and/order during his reign. We see a similar function in the person of the Buddha's companion, Vajrapāṇi (lit., "Wielder of the *vajra*"), a mysterious figure who sometimes acts as the Buddha's armed bodyguard, and even threatens anti-Buddhist ascetics in certain instances.<sup>32</sup>

In addition, in traditional accounts of the early saṅgha we find several examples of violence being inflicted on the Buddha and other monks (Śāriputra, Mahamoggallāna) – most often these incidents are explained as being the result of accumulated negative karma from the past.<sup>33</sup> As with aspects of Aṅgulimāla's tale, so these karmic explanations seem decidedly *ad hoc* but they do suggest something rather important: even holy men are not necessarily immune from the

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<sup>29</sup> Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 77-82.

<sup>30</sup> For a detailed analysis of the social dynamics and disruption surrounding liminality, see Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1969), 94ff.

<sup>31</sup> Mircea Eliade, Willard R. Trask, trans., *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 106-107.

<sup>32</sup> Jenkins, 61. The *vajra*, of course, is an ancient, quasi-mythical object that seems to originally have been a powerful weapon wielded by the Vedic god Indra as he charged into battle (cf. Zeus' thunderbolt or Thor's hammer). In later Buddhist tradition it becomes a "weapon" of compassion, and in modified form, is often used in Vajrayāna ceremonies.

<sup>33</sup> Hecker, 10.

forces of karma. To a degree, at least, they are still subject to certain constraints of *samsāra* until they attain *parinirvāṇa* (final decease). There are indications, in fact, that in ancient India, *śramaṇa* life meant being subject to violent forces far beyond those suffered by the average villager. To lead the homeless holy life was to be tough but not invulnerable.

These considerations cast Aṅgulimāla's story in a new light, especially the scene where the Buddha and Aṅgulimāla first come face to face. To begin with, the Buddha's insistence on going into the forest despite the warnings he receives suggests that he is intentionally seeking out the murderous bandit. In a sense he is still following the traditional Dharma (duty) of the *kṣatriya* but in an even more effective way: the Buddha takes Aṅgulimāla on without weapons, literally practicing the "way of the empty hand" (*karate do*). Their confrontation is shot-through with violence (or at least the threat of it), and reads more like a duel between champions than a typical religious instruction. Moreover, the account is quite sketchy. While on the surface it appears that Aṅgulimāla is merely not able to catch up to the Buddha, if we read between the lines, the Blessed One comes off as the quintessential martial arts master, continually fending off Aṅgulimāla's attacks until the killer exhausts himself. The *sutta* portrays Aṅgulimāla as wild, straining "with all his might" yet the Buddha is restrained, almost still in the midst of this assault. The Buddha even draws attention to this contrast when he tells the killer that he (Buddha) has renounced violence whereas the killer is "unrestrained towards beings."<sup>34</sup> The Buddha's words and example have a powerful effect on his opponent. Indeed, it is the Buddha's superior (lack of) force – his indomitable but peaceful warrior spirit – that overcomes Aṅgulimāla, and elicits awe and respect, resulting in his admission that he is beaten and his self-surrender.

The Buddha, ever gracious as the World Conqueror (and Aṅgulimāla's arresting officer), then presents Aṅgulimāla with an alternative path, the way of the monk, a "peaceful warrior." This is not a life of unbridled freedom, however, but a life of confinement and hard labor, much like military service or even prison. Aṅgulimāla, though, takes to it and, drawing on his great power and toughness, confronts his own karma, bearing up under the villagers' assault and even going on to attain *arhat* status. Note, however, that even though he has attained *nirvāṇa*, Aṅgulimāla must still suffer the consequences of his past deeds. This reading also makes sense of the *paritta* invoking Aṅgulimāla's words – as a tough "Dharma protector," he can ward off demonic threats of disease and untimely death, and serve as an example of "manly valor" in service to Buddha's Truth.

Perhaps not coincidentally, my more martial reading resonates with an incident in the New Testament. Years ago when I was in seminary, I learned of a similar reading of a famous spiritual story involving Jesus. One of my friends, an army veteran and martial artist, told me that once he was talking to his *aikido*

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<sup>34</sup> See note #2 above.



master about several scenes in the Gospel of John where during the “Feast of the Tabernacles” (*Sukkot*) angry mobs in Judea turn upon Jesus yet he escapes. The Biblical text even says, “but no one laid hands on him” *twice*.<sup>35</sup> My friend’s teacher smiled and told him, “Yes, Jesus was *aikido* man!”

Such “gently violent” readings open important dimensions to these religious stories, and challenge simplistic views of either Christianity or Buddhism as either “violent” or “pacifist.” But there are even deeper levels than these. In his reflections on the traditional life story of the Buddha, Stephen Batchelor notes that unlike in versions familiar to most Westerners, the Buddha never finally defeats Māra, the Lord of Samsāra. In fact, Māra shows up time and again throughout the Buddha’s life, although he never gets the upper hand.<sup>36</sup> Rather, the Buddha recognizes Māra when he appears, gives him his due, but puts him in his place. Not surprisingly, this is, in broad outline, exactly how the Buddha handles Aṅgulimāla in the various versions of this tale. Batchelor also notes that in the great saga’s of Buddha’s life, Māra works through other figures, be they Devadatta, the Buddha’s usurping cousin, the kings Ajattasattu and Pasenadi, and of course, Aṅgulimāla.<sup>37</sup>

Ultimately, in Batchelor’s reading Māra is not so much an actual person as the embodiment of the drives that block and hinder our spiritual path, or constrict our views of the world. In Freudian terms, Māra (and his stand-ins) represents the id, the instinctual, a-moral forces powering life itself. In Jungian terms, they represent the Shadow, the archetypal figure personifying the “hidden” and potentially disturbing aspects of our being (egoism, laziness, ambition, lust for power and wealth, etc.). In other words, Māra is the “dark side” within us all.

Looking at the story of Aṅgulimāla through this lens, we see that in fact, there are very intriguing parallels between Siddhārtha and Aṅgulimāla: both are highly promising young men whose births are marked by special signs, and both have fathers who, concerned with their sons’ possible respective fates, try to intervene yet ultimately fail. Both Siddhārtha and Aṅgulimāla end up abandoning society through some sort of inner compulsion, becoming marginal figures who lead solitary lives that are, in a sense, parasitic on the body politic. Both men are known for martial prowess earlier in life, and both draw upon their strengths in their forest lives. In the story as well, both monk and murdered possess *mālās* – the Buddha, of course, has the typical beaded *mālā* of a monk (which he presumably fingers in his meditations) while Aṅgulimāla when we first meet him has his grisly *mālā* of finger trophies. Clearly the Buddha and Aṅgulimāla are mirror images of each other, yet Buddha represents the light side, while Aṅgulimāla represents the dark (cf. Obiwan Kenobi versus Darth Vader).

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<sup>35</sup> John 7: 30 and 44 (RSV).

<sup>36</sup> Batchelor, 17ff.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 154-157, 163-169, and 123.

Neither Freud nor Jung ever suggests we can destroy the id or the Shadow. We need them to live, but as human beings dwelling in society with others, we must learn to control them. Significantly, in the story of Aṅgulimāla although Buddha triumphs, he does not destroy Aṅgulimāla but “tames” him, subjecting him to monastic discipline (very similar to military life), and harnessing his power for more constructive ends. While there is no doubt that Aṅgulimāla is on the better path after being subdued, the clear implication is that his fierceness is exactly what enables him to succeed in the monastic life, to perform his great “truth act”, and to attain the status of *arhat*. The deeper truth here is the necessity of facing the wild, potentially destructive aspects of ourselves, and then working with these energies in skillful and creative ways.

Interestingly, Shifu Nagaboshi relates that later Buddhist tradition also reads Aṅgulimāla’s story symbolically, as an allegory for the Bodhisattva’s path to awakening. According to this view, the fingers strung on a necklace (*mālā*) represent the devotee’s failure to practice and attain the “limbs” (*aṅga*) of enlightenment. He adds, “Thus it can be seen that all of us wear an *Aṅgulimāla* of some type during our own lives. The figure of Aṅgulimāla, himself, represents the craving for the mundane world, along with its values, materialistic attractions, and distractions.”<sup>38</sup> While by no means identical with my own reading, Nagaboshi draws attention to the fact that we can (and perhaps should) read Aṅgulimāla’s story on several levels. In this sense, the tale neatly illustrates how the Dharma reveals new dimensions whenever we turn to it.

These reconsiderations of Aṅgulimāla’s story invite us, in turn, to imagine what this says about the monastic saṅgha in ancient India and beyond: it was a powerful but unsettling presence that, if treated well, could offer protection and benefits not readily available through standard Brahmanic ceremonies. It’s easy to see how villagers, while generally accepting the rule of kings such as Pasenadi and even participating in the occasional Vedic *yajñas* (sacrificial ceremonies) of the *brahmin* elite (if they were upper-caste males, that is), might more readily turn to these wandering holy men who dwelt in the forests around them. After all, the villagers encounter these renunciates fairly often (maybe daily) and some of them – like Aṅgulimāla and the Buddha himself – can kick ass if need be. These are exactly the sorts of folks you want on your side, but it would be understandable why you might hold them in both awe and fear. These unsettled men will always be deeply unsettling to those leading more settled lives.

It seems, then, that the use of force (“violence” at least by some definitions) is not necessarily counter to Buddhist teachings. In fact, those living by the Dharma *may* have to resort to violence at times, but as a rule should work defensively. Such a relatively permissive attitude has naturally been prone to

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<sup>38</sup> Nagaboshi, 183.

abuse at times (particularly, it seems in East Asia),<sup>39</sup> but it suggests that at its best, the Buddhist monastic path may actually function in part as a realistic “check” on violence. Most especially this story of Aṅgulimāla shows the necessity of confronting our inner obstacles, our propensities for violence and destruction. Perhaps we could say that under the Dharma, the “dark side” is acknowledged, handled carefully, but is only rarely called upon. None of this, of course, is to deny the importance of *ahimsā* in Buddhism so much as to help us appreciate its various nuances. In the end, it is a mistake to regard Buddhism as a purely “pacifist” religion, at least if we take “pacifist” to mean “passive.” Aṅgulimāla and the Buddha remind us that violence and terror are part of life, and we need to respond to them carefully and wisely. This lesson may not sit easily with us, but that is all for the good. After all, the Dharma is meant to stir us out of our complacency, to challenge our preset views, and to be enacted in our daily lives. Sometimes we may have to get a little tough with each other (and ourselves), but that’s not always a bad thing.

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<sup>39</sup> As in, for instance, the troops of “warrior monks” that lived and trained at various monastic complexes in medieval Japan and who often erupted in violence against rival monastic institutions as well as the larger society. For an analysis, see Kleine, 65-98.

# **PEACEFUL WARRIOR-DEMONS IN JAPAN: FROM EMPRESS KŌMYŌ'S RED REPENTANT ASURA TO MIYAZAWA KENJI'S MELANCHOLIC BLUE ASURA**

**Jon Holt**

Strife, and the violence begotten from it, has long been a concern of Buddhism. Anger, ignorance, and greed, namely the three great evils, must be understood and overcome in order to advance towards enlightenment. Buddhism, as a syncretic religion, incorporated other religious figures from the Asian continent into it as a part of the process of appealing to new converts. The Asura embodies all three of these vices and yet in the process of being adopted into Buddhism, he was able to change from a violent demon into a peaceful guardian of the Buddha.

The Asura devas battled Indra in the Hindu myths. Nicholas Gier describes how violence by humans or demigods against the gods, has been central not only in the Western religions but also in Eastern religions. The hubris exhibited by humans (or those representing humans), what Gier calls “Hindu Titanism”, is seen in the Asuras’ constant struggle against Indra. The story of the Hindu Asura, part of this “Hindu Titanism”, is one of “radical humanism...gone berserk... (they) deliberately reserve the positions of humanity and divinity; they take over divine prerogatives, and as a result of their hubris, they lose sight of their proper place in the universe.”<sup>1</sup>

Far from the hubris described by Gier of these “Asura Titans”, in Japan the asura came to be re-imagined as a more humble and peaceful deity. As the asura developed and evolved over the centuries as he moved east, being absorbed

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Gier, “Hindu Titanism,” in *Philosophy East and West* 45.1 (Jan. 1995): 73-74.

from Hinduism into Buddhism, he became a part of the six realms of existence: deva/heavenly being, human, asura, animal, hungry spirit, and the hellbound. Once he arrived in Japan, he reached a point where he was imagined by the Japanese as a kind of dual being: at times retaining his warlike character and at other times being a herald of peace and compassion. This study examines how from the earliest visualization of the asura in Japanese art (8<sup>th</sup> century) to his reincarnation in the twentieth century poetry of Miyazawa Kenji (1896-1933), the Asura has maintained a powerful presence as a Buddhist avatar of peace in the popular imagination of the Japanese.

In Japan, within a couple of centuries after Buddhism was adopted, images of asura can be seen in paintings and sculpture. In the early eighth century, not only does the asura come to be represented in temple art, but also he occupies an important place alongside the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. The Kōfuku-ji dry-lacquer Asura sculpture, in Nara, is one of the temple's and Japan's greatest art treasures, dating back to 734. Another prominent and important national artwork, the Sanjū-sangendō Asura King statue, in Kyoto (at Rengeō-in (Temple of the Lotus King)), dates to 1164. There are large differences in these sculptures, suggesting that this imported demigod captured the Japanese imagination in different ways at different times. Thanks to the interest of the modern poet Miyazawa Kenji, the Asura has continued to stir the imagination of the Japanese even today. Indeed, Kenji put his unique stamp on the Asura and thereby changed the way this Buddhist figure is viewed by contemporary Japanese.<sup>2</sup> According to Onda Tatsuo, if the Realms of the Preta (Hungry Spirits) and Hell are often seen in the works of Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, it is the Asura Realm that symbolizes the “spiritual climate” of Kenji's writings.<sup>3</sup> This is evident from the reception history of his most famous poem, “Never Losing to the Rain” (“Ame ni mo makezu”), which ironically contains no mention of the Asura, yet for some critics that poem best embodies Kenji's compassionate Asura ideal.

In his lifetime, Kenji's free-verse collection *Spring and Asura* (*Haru to shura*), which he self-published in 1924, hardly attracted any attention from either the public or critics; after his death, with the help of his literary estate, his avant-garde poetry came to be known in the mid-1930s and in the 1940s when even with the decline in non-war-related literature, his works came to be discovered and enjoyed by a new audience. Although perhaps best known for “Never Losing to the Rain”, which dates to 1931, Kenji equally has captured the attention of both the public and academia with his earlier and more seminal poetry in *Spring and Asura*. His “Asura alter-ego”, as I call it, in these poems won over his first generation of admirers such as the poets Takamura Kōtarō and

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<sup>2</sup> Miyazawa Kenji is one of those rare literary figures who is called by his given name rather than his surname or literary name. In Japan, the standard practice to call him Kenji, which I follow here.

<sup>3</sup> Onda Tatsuo, “Miyazawa Kenji ni okeru ‘shura’”, in Tsuzukibashi Tatsuo, ed., *Miyazawa Kenji kenkyū shiryō shūsei* (The Miyazawa Kenji Research Materials Collection) (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1990), 10: 318.

Kusano Shinpei. Poems like his “Preface (Poem)” (“Jo”) to the collection, “Spring and Asura” (“Haru to shura”), and the “Voiceless Grief” poems about the death of his sister (the “Musei dōkoku” poems, also known as the Toshiko poems) all feature a vacillating spirit who walks the earth half-caught between rage and sadness, between rash action and contemplation, a side of Kenji’s personality he called the “shura” in his poetry, and it is these poems that have far more solidly established Kenji’s reputation as a poet of greatness. These poems would not have fascinated generations of Japanese readers without the dramatic appearance of the Asura.

In Buddhism, the Asura were a warring godlike clan, borrowed from the Hindu myths, but they came to be guardians of the Dharma. However these asura beings first must overcome their warring nature. This warring and angry side of the asura is a legacy from its previous incarnation in Hinduism where they were known to war with Indra. In Buddhist art, an asura appears as having red skin; and he shows anger on his face and has multiple limbs (usually containing weapons). However, when he was made a part of the Buddhist pantheon, his human nature came to be emphasized. He is a product of anger, but he is able to overcome that anger in the process of embracing the Dharma. Buddhism’s syncretization of asura is seen in the way one of his multiple sets of arms includes one with palms pressed together out of respect for the Buddha.

One of the earliest extant images of the Buddhist version of asura in China is found in a wall painting in Dunhuang, dating to 550. There, the asura has two sets of eyes rather than three faces; and he has two sets of arms rather than three sets. Another image of the asura found at Dunhuang is dated to 686 in the Tang period; and this cave painting, unlike the earlier one, is more humanized and shows less of a Hindu influence and more of a Buddhist one. His angry face is now more tranquil; and of his six arms, one pair is positioned with palms pressed together and showing respect for the Buddha’s teachings. It is thought that the Korean sculptors in Silla were influenced by this later image of the Asura, first popularized in the Tang-period. Later Japanese sculptors of the Tenpyō age (729-749) followed the Korean example.<sup>4</sup>

As Buddhism made its way across China and Korea into Japan, the demigod figure of the asura further metamorphosed into a figure of repentance and compassion. Seen in important texts such as the *Sūtra of Golden Light* or the *Lotus Sūtra*, the asura became a figure positioned near the Buddha in his immediate circle of faithful followers like the bodhisattvas, the arhats, and the top disciples. In chapter one of the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, the stage for the expounding of the sūtra is set with the Asura Kings numbering among “the Brahma-king and the Thirty-three kings, the powerful rulers of the serpents, the kings of the Kinnaras...likewise the kings of the Garuḍas, these, having

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<sup>4</sup> Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, *Ashura to no deai: Oya to ko no gyararii* (Encounter with the Asura: Gallery for Children and Parents) (Kyoto: Bukkyō bijitsu kyōkai, 1997), 5.

approached there with the might of their armies and with their vehicles, will provide protection for them, by day and by night, remaining steadfast.”<sup>5</sup> Originally part of the decoration of Empress Kōmyō’s Western Golden Hall of Kōfuku-ji temple, the Asura statue, one of the “Hosts of the Eight Divisions” together with the ten disciples statues, formed a “diorama” dramatizing the scene in the Introductory chapter of this sūtra, one so beloved by its patron Kōmyō that she took her imperial name from it.

In the introductory chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, like in the *Sūtra of Golden Light*, the asura forms a part of the audience who hears the Buddha expound his new teaching: “There were four *asura* (titan) kings, namely, the asura king Balin, the asura king Kharaskandha, the asura king Vemacitrin, and the asura king Rāhu, each with several hundreds of thousands of followers.”<sup>6</sup> This “fourfold assembly”, surrounding the Buddha on Vulture Peak as he expounds the *Lotus*, was made up of a diverse group of humans, non-humans, buddhas and bodhisattvas alike; they “felt that this (occasion) had never happened before, and, joyously joining palms, single-mindedly they beheld the Buddha.”<sup>7</sup> The asura is also mentioned in chapter nineteen (“Merits of the Dharma Preacher”) as one part of a vast cosmos that a true preacher of the *Lotus*, having become endowed with super-powered hearing, can fathom. The realm of the asuras is just one part of the cosmos now audible to the *Lotus* preacher:

The asuras, dwelling by the edge of the great sea,  
When they talk to one another  
What great sounds they utter:  
Sounds like these (are heard by) the preacher of the Dharma  
Who dwells here securely;  
This multitude of sounds does he hear from afar  
Yet they do not damage his aural faculty.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> R. E. Emmerick, trans., *The Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvarṇabhasottama-sūtra* (London: Luzac and Co., 1970), 2. In Japan, Yijing’s translation of *Sūtra of Golden Light (and the Victorious Kings)* was read and used soon after its compilation. The monk Dōji, who was an emissary to Tang China, returned with it and many other sūtras by 720, what Osabe calls cutting-edge Tang fashion and culture. Emmerick’s translation into English, which I use in this paper, is based on the extant Sanskrit version that Johannes Nobel edited in 1937. For an encapsulated history of the translation history of the sūtra, see Catherine Ludvik, “A *Harivaṃsa* Hymn in Yijing’s Chinese Translation of the *Sūtra of Golden Light*,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 124.4 (Oct-Dec. 2004): 709-710.

<sup>6</sup> Leon Hurvitz, trans., *Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma (The Lotus Sūtra)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 5. In Japanese the great kings are, respectively, Bachi-ashuraō, Karakonda-ashuraō, Bimashitta-ashuraō, and Rago-ashuraō.

<sup>7</sup> See the aforementioned scripture.

<sup>8</sup> Hurvitz, trans., 244.

The *Lotus Sūtra* was particularly beloved by Miyazawa Kenji, who always kept it at his bedside since discovering it shortly after graduating middle-school.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps from the *Lotus* Kenji discovered his inspiration of the peaceful Asura. He not only named his first (and only) published collection of verse *Spring and Asura*, but he intended to publish two sequels to the collection, keeping the Asura in the original title. The asura mattered deeply to this otherwise peaceful man, a community activist, who died at the early age of thirty-seven.

From its embryonic-stage, Japan quickly grew into a state in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Its ruling elites, particularly Emperor Shōmu (701-756; r. 724-749) and Empress Kōmyō (701-760), embraced the cutting-edge fashion and culture from Tang China. They were fascinated by the power Buddhism could lend them to order and rule their state, as seen in Shōmu's building of the Great Buddha at Tōdai-ji, one great temple to represent his own great reign; but on the smaller scale, Kōmyō embraced the art of Tang China for the possibility of a more personal kind of salvation. By creating the Western Light Hall at the Kōfuku-ji temple complex and by populating it with the Hosts of the Eight Divisions, she endeavored to save her mother's soul. The Asura dry-lacquer sculpture, certainly a masterpiece in the Eight-Figure Group and one of Japan's greatest surviving cultural treasures, not only stands out in the group, but also curiously represents a complicated and at times seemingly contradictory blend of the desires of Empress Kōmyō herself, according to the journalist Osabe Hideo. Indeed, this peaceful three-faced, six-armed version is so far removed from its original warrior-demon DNA, it is hardly fits the stereotype. The grace and nobility of his features far outweighs the violence-obsessed warrior demon that is forever locked in a losing battle against Indra. As Osabe asserts, the Kōfuku-ji Asura has not the appearance of a young boy, but perhaps reflects that of a beautiful young boy or girl, and thus, it has an androgynous look. Is the Asura actually a reflection of Empress Kōmyō herself? Her Kōfuku-ji Asura is a peaceful warrior showing repentance for its sins. This unique image of the asura, certainly perfected in early Japan with this statue, would disappear and be replaced by the traditional warrior-demon Asura, baring his fangs and marshaling its fellow minions into armies when the original patrons of temple art, the aristocrats of Nara- and Heian-Period Japan, came to be replaced by the warrior elites of the Medieval Period (1185-1600).<sup>10</sup> From the eighth century through the twentieth century, over a large gap where the more typically violent form of the asura held sway in Japanese Buddhist art, Kōmyō and Kenji's peaceful Buddha has flickered in and out of the landscape of the Japanese

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<sup>9</sup> Miyazawa Seiroku, *Ani no toranku* (Older Brother's Trunk) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1991), 247.

<sup>10</sup> Another notable example of the warrior-elites' embracing of the asura in Medieval Japanese culture is the number of superb *shura-mono* (warrior plays) written for the Noh theater.



imagination yet their peaceful asura remains far more beloved by the Japanese today than the original violent demon.

### Recent Interest in the Ashura

In Japan, the year 2009 was certainly a watershed in terms of interest in the Kōfuku-ji's Asura statue. As a celebration of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the temple as well as the establishment of the capital at Nara, the statue was displayed from March to September for a period of six months; and it was a major event for museum-goers in both Eastern and Western Japan. Furthermore, a number of books and special-issue magazines were published to capitalize on this "Asura Boom" ("Ashura būmu"). Exhibit attendance at the Tokyo National Museum nearly exceeded one million visitors.<sup>11</sup>

The Kōfuku-ji Asura has long remained popular in the modern period since it was first photographed in 1888; and Etō Risaburō's 1908 photo collection of Japanese treasures, *Japan's Glory (Nippon seika)* helped to further popularize the statue at the national level. Beginning in 1903, it was put on public display in the Nara Natural History Museum. The statue had its first tour in 1952 to Tokyo, attended by half a million people.<sup>12</sup> It returned to Tokyo again for a second time in 1959. Yet the 2009 tour was particularly noteworthy because it had been the first time the Asura statue travelled together with the other retinue statues (the Hosts of the Eight Divisions and the Ten Major Disciples) for the Japanese to see it outside of Nara in its full context.<sup>13</sup> Today, it is normally on display at the Kokuhōkan, the National Treasure Museum in Nara. However, with the iPad "app", launched by the Kōfuku-ji temple in March 2010, one can access a 360-degree view of the Asura at any time.<sup>14</sup> This public-relations effort set into place by the temple has helped keep the Asura in the popular imagination of the Japanese. Having often appeared in Japanese school textbooks of history, the Kōfuku-ji Asura is, among all the Japanese-made artworks and treasures, perhaps the most commonly recognized by its people. Kaneko Hiroaki and Maruyama Shirō, respective directors of the Kōfuku-ji

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<sup>11</sup> Otake Tomoko, "Gods Are on the Boom," *Japan Times*, April 25, 2010, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fl20100425x2.html#.T-I9Qo6Eba4> (accessed June 20, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> Anonymous, "Nenpyō: 'Ashura' wa kō mirarete kita" ("Almanac: The Way the 'Asura' Came to Be Seen"), in *Geijutsu shinchō* (Arts Shinchō), 60.3 (March 2009): 79.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Dunn, "Well-Armed to Protect the Buddha", *Japan Times*, May 8, 2009, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/text/fa20090508a2.html#.T-Xd0I6Eba4> (accessed June 20, 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Otake, *ibid.* Although the app was initially offered for free, it is now for sale for 350 yen (or \$5.00 US). Additional 360-degree views of the other statues of the Eight Hosts are sold in 350-yen/five-dollar increments.

National Treasure and Tokyo National Museums, cite a long-held record of the Asura statue being the number-one, most-recognized Japanese sculpture.<sup>15</sup>

Actually, an earlier sculpted image of the asura still exists in Japan, the Horyū-ji Asura (dated to 711). These two early images of the Asura in Japan are quite similar but indicate a slight difference in influence from the Asian continent. The Hōryū-ji Asura, an earlier piece, is a three-faced, six-armed Asura made in a seated position. Like Silla Korean stone sculptures of the Asura, he has a peaceful mien yet his arms are merely crossed over his lap.

In the Kōfuku-ji sculpture, dated to approximately 734, this standing Asura has three faces and is six-armed like the one at Hōryū-ji. The face is relaxed and composed like the Hōryū-ji one, but it shared more in common with the Tang period wall painting Asura: his palms are pressed together in respect. Furthermore, this lacquer-made sculpture is painted and reveals important clues about the imagery of the Asura. His skin color is now reddish, although scholars know it was original a vermilion color, a common color for pagodas in 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century architecture.<sup>16</sup> Lastly, the clothes he wears are the sari and pantaloons of an Indian elite. The design of the pants is particularly curious because only the Asura among the Kōfuku-ji Eight Guardian Figures wears not armor but clothing. For Osabe, the Asura's clothing represents "the cutting-edge fashion from abroad" that the Japanese Imperial Court (particularly the cosmopolitan Emperor Shōmu and his wife Kōmyō) at the time were eager to learn of and flaunt as signs of their own advanced tastes.<sup>17</sup> The Asura's light clothing, its neck and arm bracelet accessories, and its slim body all suggest the model for the statue was not derived from descriptions of the asura in passages from the sūtras or Asian art; and it was modeled on Kōmyō herself. "Even though Empress Kōmyō was in her thirties (at the time of its creation), ...for people today, among whom there are many who even as they age, keep their youthful sensibility, it is not hard for us to imagine and thus we cannot simply dismiss the possibility Empress Kōmyō, too, had such a youthful vitality even in the remote past of the Tenpyō age (729-749)."<sup>18</sup>

Empress Kōmyō commissioned the Ten Disciples and the Eight Guardian set, of which the Asura figures prominently, for the repose of the soul of her mother, Tachibana no Michiyo. They were housed in the Western Golden Hall of the Kōfuku-ji complex; and the hall and its contents took over a year to construct but Kōmyō's hall was completed on the eleventh day of the first month in 734 to mark the first anniversary of her mother Michiyo's passing. For

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<sup>15</sup> Kaneko Hiroaki and Maruyama Shirō, "Kaisetsu: Ashura to wa nanimono ka?" ("Commentary: What is an Asura?"), in *Geijutsu shinchō* (Arts Shinchō), 60.3 (March 2009): 80.

<sup>16</sup> Nara Kokuritsu Hakubutsukan, 8.

<sup>17</sup> Osabe Hideo, "*Ashurazō*" *no shinjitsu* (The Truth behind the "Asura Statue") (Tokyo: Bunshun shinshō, 2009), 212.

<sup>18</sup> Osabe, 214. All translations from the Japanese are mine unless otherwise indicated.

Osabe, Empress Kōmyō is a mysterious yet extremely important figure in early Japanese history. Together with her husband, Emperor Shōmu, they represent a turning point in the Japanese imperial family and their rule. Having achieved their imperial status through the machinations of their father Fujiwara Fuhito (659-720), they saw the agony and suffering of the clans as well as the peasants who died in rebellions, in obligatory public-work projects, and in the famines that all resulted from their misappropriation of human labor. Kōmyō, perhaps more than Shōmu, developed an attitude of piety and reverence for the dead. Michiyo herself had taken the tonsure and dedicated services to the repose of the soul of her husband, Fuhito, creating a model of conduct for her daughter.<sup>19</sup> Not only did Kōmyō commission the Saikondō for her mother, and thus followed in her pious mother's footsteps, but also Kōmyō issued edicts to help alleviate the suffering of the peasants in her lifetime. In Osabe's view, the Asura in the Saikondō is reflection of the penitent Empress Kōmyō. Far from being a male warrior of anger, the Kōfuku-ji Asura is a reflection of a woman who wanted to spread the Dharma for the people and bring peace to their lives.

Although Kamei Katsuichirō (1907-1966), who famously abandoned left-wing politics and embraced Japanese nationalism like many other intellectuals in the 1930s, emphasized the "grotesque" aspect of the three-faced and six-armed Kōfuku-ji Asura, he nonetheless acknowledged it as a masterpiece of Japanese art.<sup>20</sup> Despite its shocking ugliness of its multiple faces and limbs, Kamei praised the way it maintained a harmonious balance so that one could notice its decorative qualities. "It overflows with a fresh and youthful feeling from its otherwise slender frame."<sup>21</sup> The figure, according to Kamei, is unique among many sculpted figures from ancient time. Although Osabe quotes Kamei at length in his book *The Truth behind the "Ashura Statue"* (*"Ashurazō" no shinjitsu*), in a bold move, he asserts that Kamei made a crucial mistake in how he viewed the Asura. Compared to Kamei's high volume of writing about other art and architecture of the Japan's early history, his commentary on the Kōfuku-ji Asura is scant (his "Ashura" essay is barely 400 characters long). Nonetheless, Osabe believes that when Kamei wrote about the Eleven-Faced Kannon of Hokke-ji, describing the figure as "something like a beautiful Indonesian girl", he was actually thinking about the Kōfuku-ji Asura.<sup>22</sup> The non-Japanese quality of the face(s) that Kamei attributes to Kannon, which according to legend was sculpted by a Indian artist who used Kōmyō as a model, Osabe argues, instead more likely fits the Kōfuku-ji Asura. Watsuji Tetsurō (1889-1960), who had

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>20</sup> Kamei Katsuichirō, "Ashura" ("Asura"), in *Kamei Katsuichirō zenshū* (Collected Works of Kamei Katsuichirō) (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1971), 9: 446. Originally Kamei wrote this essay on Japan's art treasures in a series of essays for *A Housewife's Friend* (*Shufu no tomo*), running from March 1957 through December 1958.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Kamei Katsuichirō, "Bibō no kōgō" (The Empress of the Beautiful Face), in *Kamei Katsuichirō zenshū*, 9: 143.

earlier described the serene beauty of the Eleven-Faced Kannon in *Kodera junrei* (Pilgrimage of Old Temples, 1918), felt that it “betrays our expectation that...we can see the flash of the refined feeling of Empress Kōmyō, the light of wisdom in her eyes, the soft movement of her sensitive heart in her mouth, the endless glow of passion in her face.”<sup>23</sup> Given the disappointment Watsuji felt when viewing this “model” of Kōmyō, Osabe feels that indeed, the Kannon is not the true reflection of the empress. Kamei describes the Eleven-Faced Kannon as “having a sense that no photograph can do it justice, especially so when it comes to its face(s), it gives the impression of profound wisdom while being extremely meek ...barely three-feet tall, so it gives off a darkening glow, one gets the feeling it is a bit like a beautiful Indonesian girl.”<sup>24</sup> Osabe feels that, again, these two cultural critics sought the reflection of Empress Kōmyō in the wrong place. Working from the legendary attribution that this Kannon was indeed Kōmyō’s image, both Watsuji and Kamei fail to consider the possibility that Eleven-Faced Kannon is not the best record of Kōmyō’s appearance. Osabe feels that instead the legendary image of Kōmyō that betrays Watsuji’s expectation can instead be found in the Asura statue; and likewise, the qualities that Kamei associates with the Eleven-Faced Kannon, especially as an “Indonesian girl”, instead more properly describe the Kōfuku-ji Asura.<sup>25</sup> Thus, Osabe believes the legendary beauty and wisdom of Kōmyō, originally thought to be captured in the Eleven-Faced Kannon, is instead best located in the Kōfuku-ji Asura that she herself commissioned to eternally serve as a part of a prayer diorama for the sake of her mother’s soul. Osabe may be overreaching the limits of his scholarship by making this extenuated argument, but his argument provides a new way to think about the Kōfuku-ji Asura, certainly one that many, including Kamei, agree is a unique masterpiece in Japanese art precisely for the peaceful and calming qualities this warrior-demon radiates.

Osabe’s thesis is twofold: he contends that the Kōfuku-ji Asura is modeled on Empress Kōmyō and thus does not have the look of a boy or even a girl, instead it reflects a (youthful) woman in her thirties who is repentant. Furthermore, he views the statue as an anomaly in the continuum of Japanese Buddhist art because the style of the statue is extremely “realistic” in that its sculptor Manpuku carefully captured his patron’s image. The fact that the asura has multiple faces and arms is not a problem for Osabe’s thesis that the Asura is a realistic reflection of Kōmyō. His explanation at times stretches belief, but he eloquently describes why Kōmyō would be best represented by a three-faced Asura:

In the Kōfuku-ji Asura statue, we will not err too greatly to see that its genius, the sculptor Manpuku, captured the spirit of Empress Kōmyō and thus rendered her in it: Kōmyō, who normally repressed great stress within herself, who could

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<sup>23</sup> Watsuji Tetsurō, cited in Osabe, 185-186.

<sup>24</sup> Kamei, 143.

<sup>25</sup> Osabe, 188-189.

stand fast and support her husband Shōmu, and could carefully fend off enemies to the state in order to become a divine protector of the Dharma, was literally, a woman who conducted herself as one with *three-faces-and-six-arms*.<sup>26</sup>

Further obfuscating his argument, he links this Asura statue and the Mona Lisa painting together as a pair, “the twins of the East and West”, which mutually remain in this world as two great unsolvable riddles in art history. Arguing by analogies, rather than direct evidence, Osabe fails to persuade his reader that Kōmyō must be feminine. Should one look a diagram of the arrangement of the Kōfuku-ji complex statues, the *Diagram of the Kōfuku-ji Maṇḍala* (*Kōfuku-ji mandara zu*), dated to the twelfth- or thirteenth-century, the Asura statue, depicted in the top left area of the Western Golden Hall section, seems far more husky and masculine than the actual slim, androgynous figure. Living some five centuries after the Kōfuku-ji Asura figure was created, the artist of the *Diagram* did nothing in his painting to suggest he felt the figure was feminized. Less a feminine image, it seems simply androgynous and in keeping with the depiction of the other guardian figures as yet-unformed adolescents. Nonetheless, I find Osabe’s “reading” of the statue’s three-faces to be extremely compelling. At once suggesting the larger mood of “penitence” he feels characterized Empress Kōmyō’s attitude about this world and the next, the Asura’s three faces reveal a nuanced political figure who could be shrewd and firm yet also compassionate. Is not the penitent pose of Kōmyō’s Asura one aspect of it that surely appeals to Japanese viewers even after its creation a millennium later?

The Tempyō-period Asura has a noble mien, dressed in proper attire, and, as one would expect of an asura, has a three-faced head that, regardless of the point of view, indicates the tranquility of a guardian of the Buddha. Certainly Osabe is correct in pinpointing how unique the Kōfuku-ji Asura is within the larger context and continuity of the depictions of the warrior-demon in Japan. The later Asura King of the Sanjū-Sangendō (built in 1164), after all, is decidedly marked by the fear and chaos of the Medieval Period (1185-1600), of which he only slightly predates. He is more muscular, threatening, and his three-faced head shows a far more limited range of emotions, mostly fear and anger. Even today in the Japanese language, there are a number of expressions that reaffirm the importance of the Asura’s warring aspect in the culture. “To step into the Asura Realm” is to enter a fight. In the language, it is the asura’s original warrior character that stands out. Thus, although the Kōfuku-ji Asura represents one of Japan’s earliest and certainly most important renderings of the warrior-demon in Japan art, it is idiosyncratic. Subsequent paintings and sculptures of the warring asura depict it as one would expect in the combined Asian Hindu-Buddhist tradition. As for Miyazawa Kenji’s view of the asura,

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 214.

from which model did he rely upon in creating his poetic version of the warrior-demon? To answer that question, we must next look at the tradition of asura figuration in the early Medieval Period of Japan.

## The Asura in Medieval Japan

When looking at the fierce mien of the Asura King at the Sanjū-Sangendō (The Thirty-Three Bay Hall, properly known as Rengeō-ji, now part of the Myōhōin complex), built in 1164, one is reminded that in Japan by the late 12<sup>th</sup> century, it was the warriors, not the aristocratic elite, that now seized the reins of power; and they desired a new culture that would mirror their own sensibilities.<sup>27</sup> The Asura King and his fellow Hosts of Twenty-Eight Divisions that protect the Kannon at Sanjū-Sangendō may have been commissioned by Emperor Go-Shirakawa, but this grand hall and its decorative statues were paid for by his generalissimo Taira no Kiyomori.<sup>28</sup> Reflecting the emerging dominance of the warriors as the ruling elite in Japan in late Heian and early Kamakura periods, the original warrior aspect re-emerges in asura images and statues made during this time. The Asura King is red, has three sets of arms, and three heads. Each of the three heads has three eyes, making this Asura a much fiercer looking figure than the Kōfuku-ji statue. Nakano Genzō writes of its appearance, “the difference is quite clear between the sculptural style of the two eras when you compare (the Nara-period Asura) and the unconcealed and violent rage that appears in its three-eyed-per-three-face image.”<sup>29</sup>

Although pictures or illustrated scrolls depicting the Six Realms flourished in the Heian and Kamakura periods, like the statues of asuras created in this latter, warrior-dominated time, artists of the pictures of asura increasingly become preoccupied with showing his warrior prowess. In the *Kitano Tenjin Engi e-maki* (Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Shrine) (13<sup>th</sup> century), an origin story of the Tenjin shrine dedicated to the memory of Sugawara Michizane, in the final two scrolls there is a *rokudō-e* (Paintings of the Six Realms) in which the Asura Realm is both beautifully and terrifyingly revealed. Sugamura Tōru

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<sup>27</sup> Despite the fire of 1249 and the destruction of the original building, the statues for the most part were saved; the Asura King statue is thought to be one of the original figures having survived the fire.

<sup>28</sup> Janet Goodwin, “The Buddhist Monarch: Go-Shirakawa and the Rebuilding of Tōdai-ji,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 17.2/3 (June-Sep. 1990): 224. The circumstances regarding the Rengeō-in’s construction is described in Jien’s *Gukanshō* (Notes on Foolish Views). See Delmer M. Brown and Ichirō Ishida, *The Future and the Past: A Translation and Study of the Gukanshō, an Interpretative History of Japan Written in 1219* (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1979), 118.

<sup>29</sup> Nakano Genzō and Kondō Yutaka, “Zuhan kaisetsu” (“Explanation of Illustrated Plates”), in Usumi Eiji and Misaki Kisen, eds., *Kodera junrei Kyōto: Myōhōin, Sanjūsangendō* (Pilgrimage of Old Temples in Kyoto: Sanjūsangendō, Myōhōin) (Kyoto: Tankō-sha, 1977), 134.

describes two Kamakura-period characteristics of *rokudō-e* found in the Asura scene of this *emaki*. “This Asura, depicted here with his (usual) three-faces and six-arms and his red-skinned body...who normally fears his enemy (Taishakuten), and who decides to fight yet can never feel confident, is (an image of the Asura) not to be found in (Genshin’s) *Essentials of Salvation*.”<sup>30</sup>

Sugamura notes that the difference between images of Six Realms depicted before and after the Kamakura Period begins is that, unlike the earlier Heian-Period *emaki*, those produced later rely much more heavily, indeed try to faithfully depict, the Six Realms that Genshin described in the *Essentials of Salvation* (*Ōjō yōshū*, 985).<sup>31</sup> However, the exception is that when it comes to depicting the Asura Realm, these Kamakura-period *rokudō-e* do not rely on *The Essentials of Salvation*. Other *rokudō-e* produced in or after the Kamakura Period, such as the Shōjuraigō Temple’s *rokudo-e* (13<sup>th</sup> century), depict an Asura Realm scene similar to the one the Kitano Shrine *emaki*. Kept in the Enryaku-ji complex, the headquarters of the Tendai school, on Mt. Hiei, the Shōjuraigō-ji Temple *rokudō-e* consists of fifteen hanging scrolls that depict the Six Realms with a different degree of emphasis. The Asura Realm is featured in one scroll painting. This Kamakura-period image, like the Asura Realm seen in the Kitano Shrine *emaki*, also relies on its description in the *Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sūtra* (J. *Shōbō nenjo kyō*) rather than on the one in *The Essentials of Salvation*. This is clear in the way they depict a scene of the Asura Kings’ battle with Taishakuten that is present only in the former text. What is interesting about this depiction of the war is that all four Asura Kings are here. Tracing them from the top left of the scroll to the bottom of the page, Kasuya Makoto describes the first, King Rago as having “a deep red skin color, three faces and two sets of arms (holding a bow and arrow with one set; and the moon and sun with the other)” and that Rago is “largest and most powerful.”<sup>32</sup> Immediately below Rago is Hakasha, who has a vermilion-colored skin, one face and two sets of arms. Hakasha, unlike Rago who appears more like a general commanding the forces, is on the ground directly confronting Taishakuten. Hakasha, with his two sets of arms, holds close combat weapons of a spear as well as ranged weapons of a bow with arrows. The third Asura, Keman, appears to be flanking Taishakuten further below in the painting. Mekan, like Hakasha, with two sets of arms, has a ranged weapon of a bow and arrow, but he has a sword instead of a spear. Commenting on the differences between the armies of

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<sup>30</sup> Sugamura Tōru, “Jigoku-e, rokudō-e no rekishi no naka no Kitano Tenjin Engi emaki” (The *Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Shrine* in the History of Hell Paintings and Six Realms Paintings), in Takei Akio, ed., *Kitano Tenjin Engi o yomu* (Reading the Illustrated Legends of the Kitano Shrine) (Tokyo: Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 2008), 168-169.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>32</sup> Kasuya Makoto, “Zenbamen kaisetsu” (Descriptions of All Scenes), in Izumi Takeo, Kasuya Makoto, and Yamamoto Satōmi, eds., *Kokuhō: Rokudo-e* (The Six Realms Paintings in Shōjuraigō-ji Temple) (Tokyo: Chūōkōron bijitsu shuppan, 2007), 295.

the Asura and Taishakuten, Kasuya keenly observes that the defeat and suffering of the Asura army is logically explained by the way the soldiers' dress is depicted. Compared to the "heavy armor" of the Taishakuten forces,

Even three of the four the Asura king-commanders are naked from the waist up, like most of their ground troops who otherwise might simply have helmets on their heads, so that no matter how brave the Asura army may be, looking at how poor their defenses are, their army is assuredly going to lose to Taishakuten's.<sup>33</sup>

One should note that the asuras wear armor in the Shōjuraigō-ji *rokudō-e* image. However light the armor of these Kamakura-period asuras may be, they have a more warlike appearance than the Nara-period Kōfuku-ji Asura, commissioned by Empress Kōmyō, that certainly only is adorned with thin clothes.

Another slightly common asura aspect found in both the Kōfuku-ji Asura and the Shōjuraigō-ji *rokudō-e* is an attitude of sadness particularly in the scene of the fourth and final Asura King Yūken. This Asura King is convalescing far from the battle at the bottom of the painting; and he is wounded, bleeding from his right leg and holds nothing in his two sets of arms. Surrounded by crying women (the wives of the Asura Kings), he is part of the "Pond of All Seeing" ("Issai-kanchi") scene, which Kasuya describes is a unique feature of the Shōjuraigo-ji *rokudō-e*. As briefly depicted in the *Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sūtra*, when the wives of the Asura look into the All-Seeing Pool and discover that the actual battle with Taishakuten was far from going well and that their husbands were retreating, they break down into tears. The keen eye and imagination of this painter to notice this scene and include it, in Kasuya's words, "should make us value this *rokudō-e* even more."<sup>34</sup> Unlike the Kōfuku-ji Asura, King Yūken does not seem repentant, although one could argue he is, by the proxy of the Asura wives surrounding him. The inclusion of tears and defeat in the Shōjuraigō-ji *rokudō-e* narrative provides some continuity to the Kōfuku-ji Asura statue and Miyazawa Kenji's poetic asura to come.

Although the images of the asura in the Kamakura period share much in common and often borrow from the *Meditation on the Correct Teaching Sūtra*, each image often has its own unique characteristic approach to depicting the demon-warriors or their realm. "A deeply interesting motif" Sugamura discovers in the *Kitano Tenjin engi emaki* is the Asura King's use of giant human-faced shields that form a poor line of bulwarks against the onslaught of Taishakuten. Sugamura feels these human-faced shields look like face-shaped earthenware shields that embody the epidemic gods/demons.<sup>35</sup> The variety of faces on each of the Asura's bulwarks reflects and perhaps even amplifies the multiplicity of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 296.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 298.

<sup>35</sup> Sugamura, 169.



emotions – a mixture of pain and anger – seen in the losing general’s own head of three faces.

Thus, looking back on the history on the asura imagery in Japanese from the Nara Period through the Kamakura Period, there is a noticeable shift as the asura moves from a figure of repentance and grace, exemplifying the nobility of the ruling elite, back to its origins in Asia as a figure craving a fight against his archrival Taishakuten. One on hand, it is curious that Japan’s earliest extant examples of the asura began with a highly stylized and unorthodox image of this figure. Only after centuries of unrest and the rise of the warriors to the ruling class in Japan did the Asura return to his more basic origins as a warrior demon in Japanese Buddhist art. On the other hand, it is equally curious why Miyazawa Kenji in modern times essentially returned to that older, Nara-period image of the asura when he cast himself as the warrior demon in his poetry.

Miyazawa Kenji’s asura, a literary creation, best represents a modern interpretation of the figure that displays a nuanced understanding of the asura’s complexity. His first (and only) collection of free verse, published in his lifetime, is entitled *Spring and Asura* (*Haru to shura*, 1924). In three important poems or “mental sketches” in the collection, he describes himself as a blue asura. Torn between feelings of frustration and anger as well as intense grief, Miyazawa’s blue asura not only embodies the earlier Nara-period traits of the asura, and in doing so underscores Miyazawa’s deep Buddhist knowledge, but at the same time his blue asura breaks the classical mold. His asura is a truly peaceful warrior, weighed down by a Romantically-inspired, blue melancholy. In Kenji’s verse, his asura “gnashes his teeth” in vexation, yet no one but himself suffers the wrath of his warrior-demon.

### **The Asura in Kenji**

Although it is not the first chronological instance of *shura* in Kenji’s poem collection, the first instance of the term after the title itself is found in the poet’s poetic “Preface” (“Jo”), which he describes was written some twenty-two months after the first poems in the collection were written (a total span of time from January 1922 through December 1923). In the preface, he explains his method of creating not poems but “mental (image) sketches,” which are products of sketching the world as it is hit by the alternating waves of light and darkness powered by a “karmic AC lamp”. He subtitled *Spring and Asura* as a “mental sketch collection”, so one understands that this distinction, that is, between modern free verse and his approach of sketching the world with words, was important to the poet. His “mental sketches” are thus a record by a living being to describe both the movement of through time as well as how cause-and-effect relationships (or karma) shape life in all of its forms. The diversity of life is important to Kenji, a soil scientist and amateur astronomer. His worldview of the cosmos includes not only the smallest biological forms and larger cosmic

entities, but also religious realms. He places his asura into a combined scientific and religious context, as seen in the opening of the poem:

“Preface to *Spring and Ashura*” (“Jo”)

The phenomenon called I  
 Is a single blue illumination  
 Of a presupposed organic alternating current lamp  
 (a composite body of each and every transparent specter)  
 The single illumination  
 Of karma’s alternating current lamp  
 Remains alight without fail  
 Flickering unceasingly, restlessly  
 Together with the sights of the land and all else  
 (the light is preserved...the lamp itself is lost)

These poems are a mental sketch as formed faithfully  
 Passage by passage of light and shade

....

People and galaxies and Ashura and sea urchins  
 Will think up new ontological proofs as they see them  
 Consuming their cosmic dust...and breathing in salt water and air  
 In the end all of these make up a landscape of the heart  
 I assure you, however, that the scenes recorded here  
 Are scenes recorded solely in their natural state  
 And if this is nihil, it is nothing but nihil  
 And the totality is common in degree to all of us  
 (just as everything forms what is the sum in me  
 so do all parts become the sum of everything)<sup>36</sup>

According to Kenji, all life forms, even Asura, eat. They breathe. They also reflect on their existence (“think up new ontological proofs”). Moreover, through their ontological queries, they write their own “mental sketches” recording their reality as they see it. The prejudices one has as a result of one’s point of view shapes the record of one’s world. What ties Kenji’s “mental sketches” together with the sea cucumber and the Asura is that they are all pictures of the same “sights of the land” or landscape. The interpenetration of life (“just as everything forms what is the sum in me / so do all parts become the sum of everything”) seen in this section demonstrates the poet’s personal expression of the concept *ichinen sanzen* (three thousand realms in one thought), a concept that was crucial to Nichiren’s (1222-1282) concept of the universe, and thus this passage reminds one of Kenji’s faith in the Nichiren or Lotus (Hokke) school of Buddhism.

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<sup>36</sup> Miyazawa Kenji, “Preface to *Spring and Ashura*,” in Roger Pulvers, trans., *Strong in the Rain* (Northumberland, England: Bloodaxe Books, 2007), 31.

In terms of what Kenji's image of the asura is, we should note that the asura he describes in this section of the preface is not an angry or warring demon. He does not even appear with three-faces or three sets of arms like in pre-modern Buddhist imagery. Like the smallest sea cucumbers (who also exist at the bottom of the sea) and the greatest cluster of stars, like people and one specific person, Miyazawa Kenji, the asura here is a peaceful and thoughtful being that examines his own existence. One might construe that he is, like Kenji, a vegetarian, from the fact that he eats "cosmic dust" and not meat and thereby he indicates that the asura is peaceful rather than barbaric or warlike. In a sense, for Kenji, the asura is an ideal form of existence. Thus, Kenji's "Preface" not only imparts to the reader Kenji's interest in the Asura Realm, but more importantly he also shows the wide dimensions of his cosmic view, obviously shaped by both Buddhism and science. Hagiwara Takao rightly describes Kenji's poetry as "modernist" in the way Kenji synthesizes opposing worlds — the scientific and non-scientific, the modern and the pre-modern, and inorganic and nonorganic — without bearing any modern sense of pessimism or gloom.<sup>37</sup>

### Internal Strife in Kenji's Asura

Although Kenji mentions the asura in the collection's preface poem, his characteristic mode of the being does not truly appear until the tenth poem in the collection, the title-cut "Spring and Asura". For many scholars, this is a significant poem because Kenji gave the poem an English subtitle, marked with parenthesis: "(mental sketch modified)". Although a discussion of Kenji's composition process of "sketching" could illuminate our understanding of his "Asura", it is quite complex and outside the scope of this essay. Like many of Kenji's poems, it is typical in that his "mental sketch" records what the poem's speaker sees and hears on a walk. The poem's speaker passes into nature seemingly because he cannot contain his feelings of anger (glossed in line 4 of the poem as "a pattern or tune of self-flattery") in human society. This anger is most likely directed at the self, but it is significant that the poem's speaker cannot share these feelings with others and therefore he is further alienated from society. The poem begins:

"Spring and Asura" ("Haru to shura") (mental sketch modified)

Basket-weaving vines entangle the clouds  
 up above in that grey-steel mental image of mine:  
 a pattern or tune of self-flattery that's everywhere, every-  
 where, up there, in wild rose groves, and in humus bogs, etc., etc.,  
 (at a time when fragments of amber rain down  
 thicker than afternoon woodwinds).

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<sup>37</sup> Takao Hagiwara, "'Overcoming Modernity' and Miyazawa Kenji," in Roy Starrs, ed., *Rethinking Japanese Modernity* (Boston: Global Oriental, 2012), 313.

The sense of violent separation from society is seen in descriptions of fragments falling amber-rain. The poem ends on a similar image in its final line with sparks, or fragments of fire, raining down with a dark backdrop, which certainly imparts a feeling that this is the fighting Realm of the Asura. Through the use of these parallel images (water and fire, combined with earthen amber, reinforce the totality of the image), the mood of the poem yet strongly remains one of separation and fragmentation. When the Asura figure is introduced, he fits perfectly well into this scene of soul-rendering alienation:

The blue color and bitter taste of Wrath:  
 He walks gnashing his teeth, spitting, and pacing back and forth  
 through the abyss of the light of April's atmospheric layer  
 That solitary Asura is me  
 (Landscape wavering in my tears)

Although not quite a refrain, this passage is repeated again some ten lines later with some minor modifications.

Bound to the visual byways made by shattered clouds  
 there in that sparkling ocean of the sky  
 a wind made of holy crystal comes and goes  
 through a row of Spring ZYPRESSEN,  
 deep and black things, they breathe the ether  
 Even though Heavenly Mountain glitters with snow  
 that fell from the sky's dark stepladder  
 (shimmering waves of heat and polarized light)  
 The True Words have been lost  
 Clouds rip apart and dash through the sky  
 Ah! Gnashing his teeth, and in flames he paces back and forth  
 through the abyss of glittering April  
 That solitary Asura is me.  
 (Milky-crystal clouds flow on  
 and I know not where the spring bird sings)  
 When the sun's outline shimmers  
 the Asura forms a symphony with the forest  
 The cluster of blackwoods stretch down  
 from the sky's soup bowl, itself sinking and growing dim,  
 and their branches sadly bunch up  
 and while the treetops of the forest aren't watching  
 in a flash, the crows burst through everything that is  
 in this double-layered landscape.

The poem concludes with two coda sections. The first involves a speculation on the part of the speaker whether his internal emotional state that he describes as the asura can be seen by others. In other words, is his asura real?

And finally, the second coda properly works as a refrain echoing previous imagery that reinforces the sense of alienation felt by this vacillating spirit who is both outside of humanity and outside of nature's embrace. The hellish aspect of the Asura Realm follows him with sparks of fire raining from the sky.

(When at long last the atmosphere layer burns away clean  
and even the cypresses hush and stand to the sky)  
He who passes through the gold of the meadow  
he who surely has the form of man  
that farmhand, wearing a straw jacket, looks at me.  
Can he really see me?  
there in the deep abyss of the ocean that is this sparking atmospheric layer  
(The sadness is ever more blue, ever deeper)  
ZYPRESSEN quietly wavers  
A bird again cuts through the blue sky  
(The True Words are not here;  
The Asura's tears fall to the earth.)

Renewed, I breathe out to the sky and  
My lungs then contract, turning faintly white.  
(This body is interspersed throughout the dust of the firmament)  
Ginkgo treetops and light:  
At long last ZYPRESSEN darken  
and from the clouds sparks rain down.<sup>38</sup>

Kenji's Asura embodies a wrath that embodies "blueness" and "bitterness". The Blue color he chooses is unorthodox. The Kōfuku-ji Asura in Nara, which Kenji may have seen after he graduated high school and travelled with his father to Nara, is red colored.<sup>39</sup> It is quite different from Kenji's Asura. Whereas the

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<sup>38</sup> Miyazawa Kenji, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū* (New Definitive Edition of the Collected Works of Miyazawa Kenji) (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1995), 2: 22-24.

<sup>39</sup> Kenji ran away from home in January 1921 after mounting frustration at his inability to convert his family to Nichiren Buddhism. Only his younger sister Toshi converted with him. His father, Masajirō, had long led the family to be Pure Land Buddhists. Kenji, swayed by Tanaka Chigaku's writings and the Pillar of Nation Society's efforts to change Japan, tried to live in Tokyo near the organization's headquarters. In April of that year, Masajirō finally boarded a train to meet his son. They decided to go on a trip to Nara and Kyoto region, the birthplace of Japanese Buddhism, as a part of the 1,300<sup>th</sup> anniversary memorial of death of Prince Shōtoku. His father hoped that through this Buddhist-themed journey they could reconcile their religious differences. Kenji at that time had been writing tanka (thirty-one syllable poetry) for nearly ten years. His "Song Manuscript" ("Kakō"), which he presumably wished at one point to publish but never did, retains a record (in tanka poems) of their trip to important Buddhist sites such as the Ise Shrine, Mt. Hiei, and Kasuga Shrine. Although Kenji and his father stayed at an inn outside of Kōfuku-ji, no mention is made of the temple in this diary-like manuscript. (The Kōfuku-ji statue at this time anyway would have been on display not at

Kōfuku-ji Asura is seen as an image radiating peacefulness, Kenji's poetic alter-ego is angry and bitter: he paces back and forth, spits, and gnashes his teeth. Furthermore, he is burning. Although one can burn with passion, Kenji often uses the verb to mean suffering. In the poem "Love and Sick Fever" ("Koi to byōnetsu"), which precedes "Spring and Asura", Kenji describes his sick sister Toshi "burning" with a fever. Yet her "burning" is a result more from emotional suffering. Her brother, who is walking outside, tells her he will be cruel to her by not bringing flowers to comfort her. Self-revulsion is a strong aspect seen in his early poetry and is usually focused through the Asura image.

Amazawa Taijirō challenges the views of Onda Tatsuo and Nakamura Minoru who conflate the initial line's "shinshō" (mental image, or feelings) with the "self-flattery" of the fourth line. For Amazawa, the poem is less about the inner landscape of the poet's mind and instead, through the use of the asura image, Kenji shows how he has objectified his feelings as a part of a larger landscape.<sup>40</sup>

'Anger' is so abruptly announced here, but what is the object of his anger? ... what is at stake here is not that his anger is a closed-off inner world of self-abuse, self-denigration, or self-loathing. Instead, the anger is connected to the entirety of 'the sights of the land and all else' (mentioned in the "Preface" poem) – everything outside of himself.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, Kenji's alter-ego emerges through the process of objectifying his feelings towards the outside world. He should not hate the world, but he does hate it, and that discovery of his own weakness leads to the metaphor of the Asura. Kenji's mental sketches often reveal how one's subjectivity is constituted when one becomes aware of how others see oneself. Instead of indulging in mere self-loathing, Kenji's Asura is aware that others may loathe him. Amazawa explains how this dark self-doubt obscures his self-love and love for others in the following way:

(Kenji's) Asura is not frustrated by the love for one specific woman, instead the (Asura's) darkened image (eclipse) lurks in the background for the very thing called 'love', which he uses to sublimate his feelings for something higher, into a metaphysical concept.<sup>42</sup>

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the temple, but at the Nara Museum.) Kenji revised this "Song Manuscript" at least twice, so one wonders if perhaps he had not seen an asura statue on this trip to Nara (Kōfuku-ji) and Kyoto (Thirty-Three Bay Hall) and either simply did not write about it or that he did write about it but discarded the poem. The 1921 Kyoto/Nara poems can be found in the "Taishō 10, April" section: Miyazawa, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 1: 280-285.

<sup>40</sup> Amazawa Taijirō, "Kenji shi ni okeru 'shura'" (The 'Asura' in Kenji's Free Verse), in "*Miyazawa Kenji*" *kagami* (Mirror of "Miyazawa Kenji") (Tokyo: Chikuma shobō, 1986), 147.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 149.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 153.

For Amazawa, Kenji's self-loathing is linked to his sense of compassion or love that is seen in the references to the asura, especially in the later "Voiceless Lamentation" poems.

Elsewhere in the collection, the asura image briefly appears in "Mt. Iwate, East Crater" ("Higashi Iwate-kazan"), a long soliloquy poem in which Kenji describes a trip he made up the region's largest mountain with the students he taught at Hanamaki Agricultural School. The poem displays Kenji's passion for hiking and geology, and when the asura appears near the end of the piece, it comes as a bit of reflection of himself. Despite his energy and enthusiasm about sharing his love of geology with the young men, he finds himself alienated from them. Although in the "Preface" poem, the asura appears to be existing in harmony with other creatures, in this poem the reality of being an asura is quite different as seen in the following excerpt.

The lanterns float above crater like before  
and someone is whistling  
I too head back  
Do they see my outline, that's why the lanterns too are heading back?  
(My outline for them must seem like a solitary Asura  
in this steel-colored landscape.)<sup>43</sup>

Like in the closing of the "Spring and Asura" poem, not only does the poetic speaker view himself as an asura, but also he expects others to see him that way as well. By believing himself to be an asura, the speaker believes that others, especially those who know him well, will therefore understand his conflicted and troubled nature (indicated by his dim, "steel-colored" background). Blended into both the comic and relaxed atmosphere on the mountain, Kenji's description of himself as an asura reveals that irrepressible melancholy that figures so largely in his alter-ego image. Here in the dim pre-dawn light, the color of the Asura is nearly monochromatic; and the blue color of the Asura is only suggested by the background of the "steel-colored" landscape. When Kenji invokes his Asura identity, it reveals his conflicted, self-alienated, and melancholic nature – perhaps the three faces of his Asura alter-ego. Given that Kenji published so few pieces in local and national journals, it is noteworthy that he did want this poem, one that has both the Asura alter-ego and the "mental sketch" subtitle, to see print. It ran in the *Iwate Daily Newspaper* on April 8, 1923. The connection between the appearance of the asura and poems that carry the title or subtitle "mental sketches" is strong, and thus further contributes to how the asura is strongly connected to his poetic worldview.

Finally, the blue color suggested in the "Spring and Asura" and "Mt. Iwate, East Crater" poems is seen again in other poems and writings by Kenji. He is

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<sup>43</sup> Miyazawa, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 2: 128.

most explicit about the blue color's connection to his imagined asura in a letter he wrote in either June or July of 1920 to Hosaka Kanai (1896-1937), a literary confidant and former classmate. To this friend whom Kenji had been proselytizing the *Lotus Sūtra*, encouraging him to become a convert to Tanaka Chigaku's (1861-1939) Pillar of the Nation Society (Kokuchū-kai), Kenji attempted to describe his own weakness in Buddhist terms:

Anger appears red. When it's really strong, the light of anger becomes more intense and instead it can seem like water. It's then that it becomes pure blue in color; yet anger, as a feeling, is certainly not bad...I've now come to automatically put my palms together and shout the True Title (the *Lotus Sūtra*) like a machine as a reaction when I feel like I'm going mad. The human world is the Asura's Becoming-Buddha World.<sup>44</sup>

Although "blue" may be too extreme of a translation for the Japanese *aoi*, which traditionally can mean either green or blue-green, Kenji's additional gloss of the world of anger being like water certainly enables us to imagine his Asura painted more of a bluish, or blue-steel tint. What's more, Kenji's asura is most assuredly not red, like the Kōfuku-ji Asura. Indeed, Kenji's true Asura state, or his alter-ego, goes beyond the red traditional color of the asura into a new, perhaps hyper-asura state.

With the exception of the "Preface" poem (for its description of his scientific-Buddhist worldview), the most important poems that reveal the Asura's inner meaning for Kenji are those in the "Voiceless Grief" ("Musei dōkoku") section.<sup>45</sup> The first three poems of the section, written about and close to the time of the death of Kenji's closest sibling, his younger sister Toshi, reveal the true emotional upheavals between love and hate that the asura embodies for the poet.

Although no mention is made of the asura in the first poem "Morning Farewell" ("Eiketsu no asa") in that section, a revision made to the ending indicates the juxtaposed and contradictory states of the warring demon. Like the three-faced Asura of Kōfuku-ji, his Asura simultaneously presents a series of conflicting emotions. As Toshi's fever consumes her, the speaker attempts to provide comfort for her:

I now pray from my heart  
that the snow you will eat from these two bowls  
May it become ice cream of the highest heaven  
for both you and others to become a sacred provision  
I so pray, wishing you the most happiness.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Miyazawa, letter #165, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 15: 186.

<sup>45</sup> This group is often called the "Toshiko poems" because in them Kenji calls his sister "Toshiko" in the poem, not by her true name, Toshi.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 140.



In a revised (but never realized) version of the poem, Kenji rewrote the middle line to read “may it become food for Tuṣita heaven” and thus indicates how Toshi, on her way to Tuṣita Heaven to be reborn, is already alienated from Kenji, who, as an asura, must reside at the base of Mt. Sumeru.

The strife felt as an asura is felt ever more strongly in the second poem in the series, “Pine Needles” (“Matsu no hari”); and in this poem, a slightly weaker version of the first, the speaker reiterates his journey to find something from nature that will comfort his dying sister. Now requested to find a fresh sprig of pine, he journeys into the woods outside their home. He agonizes with the realization that Toshi will soon pass from this world. She will be reincarnated in a better world, but it will be a world far away from him. When presented with the pine branch, she seems to be already transmigrating into the Animal Realm. Kenji is loath to see her leave and is torn between giving her comfort in this world if it means she will soon leave him for the next:

Like a squirrel, like a bird  
 You were longing for the forest.  
 Do you know just how envious I was?  
 Ah! Little Sister who in today’s time will be going so far away!<sup>47</sup>

Kenji’s “envious” nature is a sign of his Asura self. In the third and most emotional poem, “Voiceless Grief” (“Musei dōkoku”), Kenji opens the poem with lines that clearly establish his Asura persona as the “dark blue” vacillating demon. These lines mostly clearly reveal his personal twist on the Asura icon.

While you are being watched over like this by everyone  
 Must you still suffer here?  
 Ah! I am all the more further removed from the great power of faith  
 and I lose things like purity, a number of small morals,  
 and when I am walking through the dark-blue Asura’s realm  
 Are you, sad and lonely, about to go out  
 on your own self-determined path?<sup>48</sup>

Like in “Pine Needles”, Kenji’s warring self is at once envious of Toshi being able to leave (on her “self-determined path”) and also saddened at being left alone in his dim, dark-blue Asura realm. Kenji again contrasts his own realm of the *shura-dō* with the inevitable-yet-freely-accepted other path that Toshi, as a transmigrating soul, will take. In these seven short lines, Kenji uses the asura image to speak of a traditional aspect of Buddhism while making the imagery of his faith extremely personal. She knows “purity”, but the asura knows it not. He feels “loss”, but she does not. Aware of his attachments to his sister, he is

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 2: 141-142.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2: 143.

nonetheless caught in delusion. His “dark-blue” Asura aspect should know better that the “loss” of the “purity” of his greatest confidant and “separation” from her, the great rock of his faith, is not only inevitable but part of this transient life. Nonetheless, he clings to her, somewhat irritated and saddened, that she will leave him for a path she “decided herself.” Since he cannot die with her, he walks instead frustrated and angry that he must remain in this world weaker than he was when she was here. In this fractured asura state, without Toshi by his side, he is really only half the man he was. Although the “Voiceless Lamentation” poem appears only two-thirds into *Spring and Asura*, it is certainly one of the high points of the collection. It is the asura image in “Voiceless Lamentation” that makes Kenji’s pain fully resonate with his audience.

### Once an Asura, Always an Asura?

After 1924, one sees less and less of the asura appear in Kenji’s poetry. It is true, the figure may be gone but the feelings of a conflicted soul do remain in his poetry as well as his children’s story. For example, one of Kenji’s most beloved children’s stories, “The Nighthawk Star” (“Yodaka no hoshi”) describes the transcendence of a nighthawk (*Caprimulgus indicus*) that is bullied by other hawks into a constellation. Because the nighthawk is not a true “hawk”, the other hawks in the forest pressure him into changing his name, even threatening him with violence: “If you don’t, I’ll squeeze the life out of your neck”.<sup>49</sup> Because the name was given to him by the gods, he cannot forsake his name so he has no other choice but to leave the bird community. Furthermore, the hawks’ questioning of his name triggers self-doubts about his existence: if his name is a joke, why must he prey, like other hawks, on other animals in order to live? That self-doubt is figuratively manifested in the nighthawk’s choking on his insect prey. “Another beetle went into the nighthawk’s maw, but this one flapped about as though it were actually scratching at his throat. The nighthawk got it down somehow, but even as he did so his heart gave a lurch, and he started crying in a loud voice.”<sup>50</sup> Bereft of the will to fight back and even live, and certainly unable to challenge the bigger birds, the nighthawk begs the divinities of the stars to free him from the earth.

Although given the nighthawk’s inability to swallow (or stomach) insects because of his depression, one might better attribute the nighthawk belonging to the Preta Realm rather than that of the Asura, “Nighthawk Star” typifies the Asura-like alter-ego that he first developed in his 1920s poetry. At the core of Kenji’s Asura is an ego that is destabilized and demoralized when faced with questions of self-worth (“As a result people and galaxies and Ashura and sea

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 8: 84.

<sup>50</sup> Miyazawa Kenji, “The Nighthawk Star,” in John Bester, trans., *Once and Forever* (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1997), 270.

urchins / Will think up new ontological proofs as they see them”). Kenji’s nighthawk, much like the Asura in the Toshiko poems, vacillates between the needs of himself and the needs of the family or community. Forced to choose between the two, Kenji’s protagonists always forsake the ego and ultimately make the right choice for the community, the super-ego. Anger towards the outside world is always turned inward. Kenji’s Asura-like figures are never violent to other beings. Instead, self-hatred, carried to the point of self-annihilation, is required to transmute the anger, pain and tears into a higher state of love and compassion.

Certainly Kenji’s love of the asura image remained with him even in his final years. His insistence on using the *Spring and Asura* title for each projected volume of his free verse indicates how strongly he felt about the warrior demon being a part of his poetic voice. Although it was once believed that Kenji had organized even the beginnings of the fourth volume in the series, today most Kenji scholars recognize he had only organized material for a third volume in his final years. Although his persistence in recycling the asura image in the sequel volumes of *Spring and Asura* makes it hard to disprove how much Kenji wanted this alter-ego to manifest in his later poetry, it is far more accurate to say that Kenji’s life as an asura mainly overlapped with the years 1920 to 1924; and scholars who assert otherwise are given somewhat to hyperbole.

The case of the reception of Kenji’s trademark poem, “Never Yielding to the Rain”, certainly one of his most important poems from his final years, best indicates the over-identification made between Kenji and the warrior-demon alter-ego of his youth. The lack of explicit mention of the warrior demon has not prevented many from reading this poem as one informed by the spirit of the asura. The poem begins with seven well-known lines:

Never losing to the rain,  
 never losing to the wind,  
 never losing to snow, nor to summer heat,  
 having a sound body  
 without desire, 5  
 never to anger,  
 he is always smiling quietly.

The final section of the poem has made many readers recall earlier images of Kenji’s crying asura, especially seen in the Toshiko poems from volume one. The final section is certainly Asura-like:

Letting flow tears during times of drought,  
 walking fretfully during cold summers, 25  
 being called a dunce by everyone,  
 never being praised,  
 never being reviled,  
 let me be

a person like him.<sup>51</sup>

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True, the lines reading “Letting flow tears” and “walking fretfully” will remind many readers of a parenthetical couplet in “Spring and Asura” where the speaker notes “(The True Words are not here; / The Asura’s tears fall to the earth)”. Moreover, the sense of alienation felt by the poem’s speaker in “Never Losing to the Rain” certainly has echoes of the “walking, teeth-gnashing” self-doubting asura seen in poems like “Spring and Asura”, “Mt. Iwate, East Crater”, and “Voiceless Lamentation”. Alienation, commonly seen in Kenji’s poetry, originates from the speakers in the poems sensing that they are different from the surrounding community. In his poetry from the 1920s, the figures in Kenji’s poetry “walk the Asura Realm” because they cannot communicate their intense emotions (love, frustration, anger, etc.) for a variety of reasons: the speaker feels that being stoic is perhaps more respectable; and the speaker does not have a suitable partner who can understand and sympathize with him; or, in the Toshiko poems, it is for both of the above mentioned reasons, because Kenji’s true confidant Toshi is dying, he does not want to burden her with his own feelings of selfishness and his fear of being alone. In “Never Losing to the Rain,” however, the alienation the speaker feels is entirely generated by the tension between him and his community, the poor farmers of Hanamaki with whom he greatly desired, but was denied, membership.

The strife felt by the poem’s speaker is seen in how he walks “fretfully during cold summers”, the onomatopoeic word *orooro* serves to keenly emphasize his worries about the farmers whose crops will surely fail without warmer summer months. However, is this strife truly worthy of being seen as Asura-like? Instead of anger, the poem’s closing section indicates a high degree of sorrow for the plight of the farmers. Like the saddened Asura in Toshiko poems and “Spring and Asura”, the ambulating Asura-like speaker lets “flow tears”, but these tears are not the result of a state of frustration with one’s lack of communicative power. The asura in those early poems was born out of a communicative paradox: the speaker in the poem could not share his feelings like a regular human with other human beings and instead resorted to mental sketches, such as the poetic use of the hyperbolic Asura image, in order to vent his pent-up feelings. Unlike that highly poeticized Asura image, the poetic persona in “Never Losing to the Rain” has less of the metaphorical charge of the earlier Asura poems; and Kenji is more prosaic in the description of the speaker’s appearance and feelings through the use of *Orooro aruki* instead of the choice of a bolder expression like *shura o aruku*.

### **The Asura in the Reception History of Kenji’s “Never Losing to the Rain”**

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<sup>51</sup> Miyazawa, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 13.1: 521-525.

Nonetheless for many Kenji scholars, his signature poem “Never Losing to the Rain”, which was most likely written in November 1931, is not just an extension of the Kenji’s grand theme of compassion; and the thirty-line poem represents its apotheosis. Although I do not share this view, I do think an understanding of the elevation of his poem in Kenji Studies illuminates how both the image of the asura and peaceful practices are strongly linked in Japanese culture. For several important critics of the poem, even though there is not one mention of “asura” in it, they feel that it is best understood as crystallization of Kenji’s “Asura” poetics. Therefore, in the remaining section of this paper, I would like to briefly describe how three different critics approached “Never Losing to the Rain” (Tanikawa, Satō, and Taguchi) and how their readings of the asura into the poem represents the current understanding of Kenji’s Asura. Since they framed their arguments using the asura, for better or worse they have contributed either directly or indirectly to the trend of reading the warrior-demon in all of Kenji’s works.

The story of Kenji’s most famous poem is curious. In the years following Kenji’s death, his brother Seiroku found a small leather notebook inside a suitcase Kenji had last used on a business trip to Tokyo in late 1931. Having slightly recovered from pneumonia, Kenji worked for a manufacturer of fertilizer and stone tiles; and urged by his employer to travel to the capital to promote their tiles, he boarded a night train for Tokyo with a heavy, twenty-kilo suitcase filled with samples. Someone next to him on the train left the window open all night long and the already weakened Kenji arrived in Tokyo nearly incapacitated, having a relapse of pneumonia. Barely able to make it to an inn, he collapsed with fever. In the week that followed, alone and with minimal aid from the staff at the cheap inn, he began writing in his black notebook what scholar Ogura Toyofumi describes as his last will and testament. There are numerous places in the black notebook where Kenji copies down the Nichiren (Hokke) object of worship, the *go-honzon*, a textual maṇḍala consisting of the *daimoku* reverence to the Lotus Sūtra as well as a list of important Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Over the four pages preceding one of Kenji’s copied *go-honzon*, Kenji drafted an untitled poem that has come to be known as “Never Losing to the Rain” (from its first line).<sup>52</sup> In other words, the poem may have been meant as a kind of poetic final testament he wrote before paying reverence to the *go-honzon*.

Given the poem’s long reception history, first dating to 1934 when Seiroku presented his discovery of it in Kenji’s suitcase to poets and writers of the Miyazawa Kenji Association, which became his literary estate and helped publish his collected works, until today where it is still widely enjoyed as an

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<sup>52</sup> Writing in blue pencil, a different color from the text of the poem, Kenji wrote “11.3” which many believe to be the dating of the poem to November 3, 1931. For this reason, some scholars and translators, such as Hiroaki Satō, have chosen to keep “November 3” as the title of the poem. The common practice is to call it by its first line, “Ame ni mo makezu”.

object of scholarly interest as well as for its popular sentiment, there are three important scholarly analyzes of the poem that are premised on the idea that the poem reflects Kenji's Asura spirit.

Tanikawa Tetsuzō was the first to present and provide commentary on the poem as early as 1935, but it was in his speech to a graduating class of the Tokyo Women's University in 1944 where he first fully expounded on the meaning and significance of the poem.<sup>53</sup> Not only was it Kenji's finest poem, he said, but it was "the greatest among all of the poems created by the Japanese since the Meiji period (1868-1912). There might be a poem more beautiful, or a poem that is deeper; however, as for its having spiritual loftiness, I know of nothing to compare it to. The great meaning of this poem is, perhaps, lost on today's generation."<sup>54</sup> Written and published during the beginning of the Pacific War with the United States, Tanikawa's essay is particularly curious in that he stresses that the new generation cannot understand the poem. In other words, the sense of sacrifice as well as the speaker's sage-like humility belong to an earlier time. They are qualities that cannot be understood in this day and age, but they should be. He encapsulated the nobility the poem with the term "spiritual loftiness". Here in this second of five essays on the poem he would eventually write, Tanikawa expresses an absolute, all-encompassing quality to the poem: its spiritual nobility. In his latter essays on the poem, he would be more specific and he would divide and specify different aspects of the poem's complicated and conflicted spirit.

Another early commentator on the poem, perhaps now mostly forgotten, was Satō Katsuji, an educator and activist living and working in Kenji's hometown of Hanamaki, who first saw the multi-faceted aspects of the poem. In "Ame ni mo makezu", an essay he devoted to the poem in his book *Portrait of Miyazawa Kenji (Miyazawa Kenji no shōzō, 1948)*, Satō not only locates in specific lines the Asura figure but also nearly all of the "Ten Worlds" of Buddhist cosmology. His approach was unique for the time and represents a problematic theme in Kenji Studies: namely, does the specific reading of Kenji's Nichiren faith into his work help us understand it any better? Satō was not loathe, like later commentators, to connect Kenji's problematic relationship to Nichiren Buddhism, particularly to Tanaka Chigaku's Pillar of the Nation Society. By

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<sup>53</sup> Tanikawa Tetsuzō published a short, early evaluation of the poem, "Kenja no bungaku" (Sage Literature) in the July 1935 issue of *Shisō* (Thought). See Tanikawa, "Kenja no bungaku," in Tsuzukibashi Tatsuo, ed., *Miyazawa Kenji kenkyū shiryō shūsei* (Tokyo: Nihon tosho sentaa, 1990), 1: 252.

<sup>54</sup> Tanikawa Tetsuzō, "Ame ni mo makezu" (Never Losing to the Rain) in *Ame ni mo makezu* (Never Losing to the Rain) (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1979), 8. Tanikawa's "Ame ni mo makezu" essay first saw print a year later in a monograph by the same name, published in the 1945 issue by Seikatsu-sha. Later in 1963, he collected his five essays on Kenji, three of which deal mainly with the poem, in his book *Miyazawa Kenji no sekai*, which has been republished by Kōdan-sha as *Ame ni mo makezu* in multiple re-printings since 1979.

reading the poem as Kenji's "map" of the "Ten Worlds", Satō positively reinforced how even at the end of Kenji's life, it was Nichiren Buddhism, and perhaps even Tanaka Chigaku's version of it, that inspired the poet. (One suspects Satō's work has not endeared him to posterity in Kenji Studies precisely because he did so forcefully assert Kenji's connection to the Tanaka Chigaku's Kokuchū-kai, a group that was closely associated with wartime nationalism.)<sup>55</sup>

The poem, for Satō, represents Kenji's "view of humanity", or "how best to live". As the poet cycles through metaphors for each of the Ten Worlds, the poet expresses how humans should avoid vice and temptations and strive for a Dharma-informed perfection. The asura, according to Satō, can be seen in second line of the couplet in lines 6-7, "never to anger / he is always smiling quietly". Satō points to Kenji's irregular use of "ikaru", rather than "okoru" to show the Buddhist defilement of anger/wrath actually more fitting of the realm of hell, whereas the speaker had transcended the anger of the Asura Realm and is now "smiling quietly". Other Realms exemplified in the poem's verses include: the realm of the *preta* (hungry ghosts): line 5's "without desire", "*yoku wa naku*"; and the realm of animals line 6's again, "never to anger", showing the speaker's conquering ignorance; and the human in opening four lines and also in lines 8-9 "Eating four cups of brown rice, / miso, and a bit of vegetables each day"); the voice-hearers and self-enlightened beings together in lines 10-13: "...so he understands by watching and listening carefully / and never forgetting"; the bodhisattva in lines 16-23 where he carries out service to those in need; and finally, the Buddha in the final six lines (note: "let me be / a person like him").<sup>56</sup> Of the Ten Worlds, only that of the deva/divine is omitted. Satō apologized for this oversight in a postscript by saying there is an "unconscious" connection to that realm.<sup>57</sup> One of the problems of Satō's argument is that, although he does delineate how nearly all of the Ten Worlds can be seen in the poem, he makes no effort to explain Kenji's ordering of them. The random attributions Satō makes to the Ten (Nine?) Realms is ultimately disappointing, and while he is right to argue that it makes more sense to see, as Kenji would have following Nichiren's teachings, that each world is not ultimately mutually exclusive but rather interpenetrating, (i.e., one thought in three-thousand worlds), Satō fails to coherently account for a poem that, given its heavy use of parallelism, is clearly far more structured than for which Satō gives it credit.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Moriyama Hajime and Ryūmonji Bunzō have written about the "allergy" Kenji Studies scholars have had about the Kokuchū-kai and Kenji's lifelong Lotus School beliefs. See Ryūmonji Bunzō, "*Ame ni mo makezu" no konpon shisō* (The Thought Underlying "Never Losing to the Rain") (Tokyo: Daizō shuppan, 1991), particularly pages 15-16.

<sup>56</sup> Satō Katsuji, *Miyazawa Kenji no shōzō* (Portrait of Miyazawa Kenji) (Tokyo: Jūjiya shoten, 1948), 119.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 81.

Two years after Satō's argument appeared, Tanikawa returned to analyze the poem again in his essay "Tears of the Asura" ("Shura no namida", 1950), in effect, to reclaim the poem from Satō's attempt to lock it into the context of Nichiren Buddhism. In fact, throughout Tanikawa's scholarship on Kenji's life and writings, one detects a strong move by Tanikawa to obfuscate the specific details of Kenji's Nichiren Buddhism as a part of a larger project to connect Kenji to a broader audience. When Tanikawa speaks of the Asura in Kenji's work, it is in the most general sense found in Mahāyāna Buddhism. Unlike Satō, who teased out esoteric formulations from Nichiren's writings in Kenji's verse, Tanikawa wrote of Kenji's religion in a way that all Japanese, regardless of their particular Buddhist leanings, could relate to Kenji's works. At the end of "Tears of an Asura", Tanikawa returns to his theme of "sage literature" (the theme of his first essay on the poem, published in 1935). Instead of the "spiritual loftiness" he mentioned in his 1944 address, he describes the speaker in "Never Losing to the Rain" as a sage-like person who chose to live a life of "spiritual labor" over the life of physical labor. His final pronouncement that "there was not a lack of influence here from the principles of Buddhism that Kenji knew all too well" clearly shows Tanikawa's preference to indirectly, rather than directly, connect Kenji's poetry to his religious faith.<sup>59</sup>

Given the overall context in which Tanikawa describes Kenji's Buddhism, why does he insist on using the Asura as a rallying point to understanding Kenji's life and oeuvre? Moreover, how does he describe Kenji's Asura-like alter-ego? In "Tears of an Asura", Tanikawa draws from Kenji's biography to advance his own idea of Kenji's literary avatar. Among the qualities of the asura are empathy, patience, intolerance of violence, anger, and love. Anger, a quality that one certainly attributes with an asura, is, for Tanikawa, different in Kenji's version of it. Kenji, the man and poet, felt anger, but, as one would expect from a sage, he was able to overcome those feelings.<sup>60</sup> (In this sense, like Satō, Tanikawa reads the overcoming of anger, rather than the display of anger, as the basis to equate the speaker in Kenji's poem to the asura image.) Perhaps because of the range of emotions Kenji's "Asura" have, Tanikawa feels that "sensitivity" is the term that best encompasses Kenji's Asura ideal. It is because he can feel so much and sympathize with so many, that caught between his own feelings and the feelings of others, the depth of his compassion becomes all the more evident. Two lines of the poem, lines 24-25, remain a constant place for Tanikawa to identify both the climax of the poem and the essence of the poet and speaker (Tanikawa clearly conflates the two): "letting tears flow during times of drought / walking fretfully in cold summers". These lines of course recall the image of the Asura found in "Spring and Asura" and the Toshiko poems previously mentioned, when Kenji describes his vacillating speakers, "walking the Asura Realm," albeit in the ten-year interval his Asura has

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<sup>59</sup> Tanikawa Tetsuzō, "Shura no namida" (Tears of the Asura), in *Ame ni mo makezu* (Tokyo: Kōdan-sha, 1979), 183.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 178.



mellowed (he is no longer spitting and gnashing his teeth). Despite these similarities, Tanikawa's equation of Asura to the "Never Losing to the Rain" speaker is flawed precisely because ultimately "Tears of an Asura" connects the poem not to the figure of the Asura, but to that of the Sage, Tanikawa's preferred way of envisioning Miyazawa Kenji, the man and the poet.

Taking Tanikawa to task for this oversight, scholars, who have been pro-Lotus, for a lack of a better expression, have rebuked Tanikawa for overlooking the connection between the ending of the poem and the *go-honzon*, which appear respectively on pages 44 and 45 of the notebook. Following the critic Moriyama Hajime, who was an early critic seeking to reconcile Kenji's specific religious views with his writing, Taguchi Akisuke has continued to push for a deeper understanding of how Kenji's specific religious worldview is manifested in his literary works. What Taguchi finds is that, far from Tanikawa's vague, generalized view of a Buddhist Asura, he sees a more direct connection to Bodhisattva Never Disparaging; and this paragon proselytizer was praised by the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* for having the courage to connect others, no matter what the cost, to the *Lotus*. For Taguchi, lines 25-27 speak of a specific Buddhist figure Kenji had in mind when writing "Ame ni mo makezu": "being called a dunce by everyone, / never being praised, / never being reviled".<sup>61</sup>

Following Taguchi, I feel that for Kenji, especially in his later years, the asura was crowded out for other, more pressing role models, such as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. Nichiren equated himself with that bodhisattva because of his tireless energy in demonstrating the importance of the *Lotus Sūtra*. Earlier in his life, Kenji copied out a passage from Nichiren's Writings that demonstrates the importance of this bodhisattva. "Now is the time to benefit the world in the same manner as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging. You who are my disciples, each of you should work diligently at this, work diligently at this!"<sup>62</sup> In the passages of scripture that Kenji copied out (presumably as a primer to aid in proselytizing), not one mention is made of asura, although the term bodhisattva appears quite numerously. Kenji, as a follower of Nichiren's teachings and a devotee to the *Lotus Sūtra*, highly idealized the bodhisattva, particularly the bodhisattva Never Disparaging. The passages he copied out from scripture in his notebooks make that clear. Returning to Tanikawa's argument, it is therefore

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<sup>61</sup> Taguchi Akisuke, *Miyazawa Kenji nyūmon: Miyazawa Kenji to Hōkke-kyō ni tsuite* (Introduction to Miyazawa Kenji: Miyazawa Kenji and the *Lotus Sūtra*) (Kamakura: Dekunobō shuppan, 2006), 205.

<sup>62</sup> Kenji entitled this collection of copied passages of scripture "Writings on Peaceful Practices and Forceful Conversions; Critique of the Priests and Laity" ("Shōshaku gommon, Sōzoku go-han") found in Miyazawa, *Shin kōhon Miyazawa Kenji zenshū*, 14: 312. The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's name comes from his treatment of those who disbelieve him. "He would run away and abide at a distance, yet he would still proclaim in a loud voice, 'I dare not hold you all in contempt. You shall all become Buddhas!' Since he constantly said those words, (they) called him Never Disparaging." Hurvitz, trans., 258.

puzzling why he would suggest that it is the asura that dominates Kenji's mental outlook, leaving no room for the bodhisattva. Indeed, the lack of even one mention of an asura in Kenji's black "Ame ni mo makezu" notebook and the repeated mention of the Bodhisattva Never Disparaging makes Tanikawa's thesis that we understand Kenji's oeuvre through the lens of the asura all the more untenable. Instead, we must appreciate how the asura is central to the period when Kenji's writings came into maturation (1920-1924) rather than the whole span of time in which he wrote.

## Conclusion

Miyazawa Kenji's contribution to asura lore in Japanese culture is significant in that during a brief resurgence of interest in religious exploration in literature in the Taishō Period, Kenji's Asura is perhaps one of the best-articulated reinterpretations of Buddhism's message of compassion and peaceful practices. At once orthodox and completely original, Kenji's use of the asura image both reinforces the traditional Buddhist, particularly Japanese Buddhist, worldview while at the same time he describes a different, far more individual side to the warrior demon. Kenji's Asura shares much in common with the Kōfuku-ji Asura, which originally was created to celebrate the sophistication of Japanese awareness of both Asian fashion and Buddhist compassion. Like the Kōfuku-ji Asura, his Asura is an angry demonic warrior but the anger is tempered by a stronger sense of sadness and compassion. The love of the Dharma is more strongly exhibited in Kōmyō's and Kenji's asura than the angry and fearsome warrior mien of other Japanese asuras. If Osabe is correct in that Empress Kōmyō strongly wanted a sense of "repentance" to be felt in the Kōfuku-ji statues, particularly with the Asura figure, one may say Kenji's Asura is one that carries on that line of tradition, skipping over the Asura images of the Medieval Period, such as the Shōjuraigō-ji *rokudo-e* example, that emphasize the Asura's warrior might. An Asura that comforts the sick and solves quarrels, like Empress Kōmyō herself, is perhaps like the paragon that Kenji perhaps had in mind when he wrote "Never Losing to the Rain", but more precisely, the Asura he actually described in the Toshiko poems is much more similar to Kōmyō's. He fights only with himself and recognizes he must be compassionate to others. This aspect of the asura certainly resonates more with contemporary Japanese audiences who enjoyed the "Ashura boom".

Did Kenji walk the Asura Realm alone? Previously Ozawa Toshirō suggested that Kenji may have not discovered the asura on his own. Discoveries of the notebooks, letters, and poems written by Kenji's higher school classmate and good friend, Hosaka Kanai, suggest that, in Ozawa's words, "it is possible that even some terms that seem characteristic of Kenji's literature (such as the asura, the heavenly cup (*tenwan*), etc.) may reveal an influence that Hosaka had

on Kenji.”<sup>63</sup> Hosaka, it will be recalled, was the classmate to whom Kenji wrote explaining his “blue Asura”. Although Ozawa originally made this claim in 1968, with the curatorial work recently done by the Hosaka family and the Yamanashi Prefectural Culture Committee to reconstitute Hosaka’s writings, it may be possible to further trace where the Kenji’s interest in the Asura originated and what role, if any, Hosaka had in the germination of the idea in Kenji.

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<sup>63</sup> Ozawa Toshirō, “Miyazawa Kenji, Hosaka Kanai to no kōyū” (The Friendship between Miyazawa Kenji and Hosaka Kanai), in Kurihara Atsushi and Sugiura Shizuka, eds., *Ozawa Toshirō Miyazawa Kenji ronshū* (Collection of Ozawa Toshirō’s Essays on Miyazawa Kenji) (Tokyo: Yūseidō, 1987), 1: 73.

# THE GLOBAL AND CIVIL DIMENSIONS OF TZU CHI COMPASSION SOCIETY'S PEACE WORK IN AMERICA

**Jonathan H. X. Lee**

*In Buddhism, there is a bodhisattva who embodies the spirit of compassion. This Bodhisattva, named Avalokiteśvara, is so full of love that she cannot bear for people to suffer. When she sees or hears people in distress or difficulty, she goes to them very quickly to offer aid and relief. Exercising wisdom and compassion, she not only helps them out of their material difficulties, but guides them with the Dharma so they may gain the insight to liberate themselves from their suffering and attain true happiness.*

*Actually, all of us can be Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva. Deep in our hearts, we have the same great compassion.”*

Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>1</sup>

The Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation was founded in 1966 by Venerable Master Cheng Yen (b. 1937)<sup>2</sup> and thirty female followers. Today, it celebrates its forty-seventh anniversary, as one of the world's largest non-profit relief and charitable organizations. Worldwide this lay Buddhist organization claims more than ten million volunteers and supporters, with branches in fifty countries.<sup>3</sup> Since its humble beginnings, Tzu Chi has provided

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<sup>1</sup> “Bringing Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva to Life,” January 3, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Her name is also transliterated as Zhengyan. At the time of the founding of Tzu Chi Buddhist Compassion Relief, the only other charity organization in Taiwan was a Christian organization (see documentary film entitled *A Glimpse into the Heart of Master Cheng Yen: An Interview by Filmmaker Hsiao Chu-chen*).

<sup>3</sup> Refer to the Tzu Chi Foundation website, <http://www.us.tzuchi.org> (accessed July 2, 2012).

relief work in over seventy countries, to people suffering from disasters such as the Southeast Asia tsunami, Myanmar cyclone, and earthquakes in Turkey, Pakistan, Sichuan China, Haiti and Chile.<sup>4</sup> Tzu Chi is intimately involved in providing social, educational, charitable, and medical relief to the underprivileged and underserved, throughout and beyond Taiwan, reaching the United States, the world, and even into the geo-politically sensitive Chinese mainland.<sup>5</sup> Tzu Chi's transnational structure grows larger and more intricate day-by-day, and its global mission of environmentalism, healthcare, education and culture, and disaster relief extends worldwide. San Dimas, California is home to Buddhist Compassion Relief Tzu Chi Foundation USA's headquarter, established in 1984.<sup>6</sup> Since then, Tzu Chi USA maintains more than 80 offices and facilities in the US with over 100,000 volunteers and donors working to make a difference in their local communities. In this chapter, I seek to examine the role of Tzu Chi USA in negotiating inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations, linguistic and cultural diversities, and the re-imagination of community boundaries, in and throughout American civil society, vis-à-vis its various relief efforts in the United States, and its implications abroad. I will argue that even though Tzu Chi's organizational structure is transnational in scope, its mission is "global" in ambition.

This chapter seeks to discuss how Tzu Chi's relief work crosses, transcends, and negotiates the boundaries of religious, linguistic, inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations, together with cultural and national identities. First, I will examine Tzu Chi's medical and general healthcare outreach in California, Hawai'i, and New York, in addition to its international bone marrow bank, which has provided an outlet for a relatively new ethnically Chinese immigrant Buddhist mission society to transplant itself onto American mainstream society. Second, a discussion of Tzu Chi's educational and cultural outreach will follow, reflecting degrees of "acculturation," civic responsibilities, and inter-ethnic cooperation. Third, I will explore the national attention gained by Tzu Chi's outreach after the horrific terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, and the devastating impact of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, affecting the boundaries of international US-Taiwan relations. While racial and ethnic tensions pierced America in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Tzu Chi's relief workers provided a platform for new dialogue of inter-ethnic and inter-racial relations between African-Americans and Asian-Americans in general, and Chinese-Americans in particular. Finally, I will argue that even though Tzu Chi's organizational structure is transnational in scale, its mission of peace work is "global" in ambition.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> André Laliberté, "'Love Transcends Borders' or 'Blood is Thicker than Water'?" The Charity work of the Tzu Chi Foundation in the People's Republic of China," in *The European Journal of East Asian Studies* 2.2 (2003): 248

<sup>6</sup> The Buddhist Tzu Chi Foundation was established in 1984 as a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization in California. The first office in the US was established in Alhambra, CA.

## Tzu Chi's "Just Do It" Ethos

Tzu Chi has transplanted its "Just Do It" socially engaged Chinese Buddhist relief work onto the "new American religious landscape."<sup>7</sup> This interpretation of Buddhism reflects Ven. Cheng Yen's core belief that Buddhist teachings are not abstract theories, but rather, concrete and applicable principles that one may apply to one's daily life. Ven. Cheng Yen teaches, "In Tzu Chi, our practice is to enter into society with the spirit of selfless love that the Buddha teaches – the Four Immeasurable Minds of loving-kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity."<sup>8</sup> This principle is manifested in Tzu Chi's fourfold mission, which encompasses disaster relief, medical and general healthcare, education and culture, and environmentalism, together reflecting a global orientation.<sup>9</sup> *Compassion* coupled with *upāya* (expedient means), two central teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism, guide its relief efforts to serve clients without regard to age, sex, race, ethnicity, class, or religious affiliation.<sup>10</sup> Although a religious institution, its primary goal is not evangelical, but rather, encourages followers to emulate or to become living bodhisattvas who bring "compassion" into "action" to assist others in need. In the early nineteenth century, French sociologist Alex de Tocqueville (1805-1859) observed and admired American society because of its voluntary associations and civic society,<sup>11</sup> which continues to this day. Although social service work is nothing new to Tzu Chi, its relief work in American society has impacted the role of religion in the public sphere and, further, it has comprehensively redefined notions of race and ethnicity, interfaith dialogue and practices, and by extension, has brought new attention to Buddhism and civic service, which legitimates Chinese Buddhism in particular, and Buddhism in general within American society.

## Tzu Chi's Medical and Healthcare Relief

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<sup>7</sup> Diane Eck, *A New Religious America: How a "Christian Country" Has Now Become the World's Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002).

<sup>8</sup> Inner Practice for the Tzu Chi Path, <http://www.us.tzuchi.org> (accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Tzu Chi's official ideological fourfold mission includes charity, medicine, culture, and education.

<sup>10</sup> Jonathan H. X. Lee, "Chinese Religions in North America," in James Miller, ed., *Chinese Religions in Contemporary Societies* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 252-254.

<sup>11</sup> See Alex de Tocqueville, Arthur Goldhammer, trans., *Democracy in America* (New York: The Library of America, 2004). The core of de Tocqueville's idea contends that civil society is the sphere of intermediary organizations standing between the individual and the state.

*In this world, there are people who see life as a very valuable gift. They feel it to be as precious as a diamond because with it, they can make a contribution to the world and make life better for others. In their thinking, life is to be made use of, and they take care in using it wisely, with love for others.*

Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>12</sup>

In November 1993, under the leadership of Ven. Cheng Yen, Tzu Chi USA established its medical outreach free clinic in Alhambra, California, providing Chinese and western medicine, in addition to dental care – that includes two mobile dental units – to the disadvantaged, underprivileged, and uninsured communities of Los Angeles proper. In May, 1997, Tzu Chi USA founded its second free clinic on Honolulu, Hawai'i, serving the economically disenfranchised indigenous populations of the islands, focusing on providing primary healthcare for school aged children, and free vaccinations. From its base in Honolulu, Tzu Chi extends its medical outreach to the outlying Pacific Islands (e.g., Samoa), just as the Alhambra branch extends its medical services to the migrant Mexican populations of California's agricultural Central Valley.<sup>13</sup> In 1997, Tzu Chi's medical outreach was established in New York City. Tzu Chi's New York mobile free clinic travels around the New York area, delivering and providing basic healthcare to low income families, homeless residents, and the uninsured. Since its founding of Tzu Chi's mobile clinic in New York has already served thousands of patients.<sup>14</sup> In 2005, Tzu Chi established a community clinic in South El Monte, CA. Then, again, in 2010, the Tzu Chi Community Clinic at Wilmington, CA was established to offer affordable dental care and acupuncture therapy to the local community.

Ven. Cheng Yen's medical mission started while in Taiwan, whereupon she realized that the primary cause of people's suffering stems from the lack of adequate healthcare and inability to cultivate and sustain healthy living. It was one incident in particular, that motivated her to vow, to provide healthcare for the residents in the rural county of Hualien, in eastern Taiwan, wherein she witness a woman turned away from a hospital, after traveling several hours, because she was uninsured. Ven. Cheng Yen's vision has made its way to America, and the spirit of assisting the uninsured poor remains just as strong, all the while upholding Ven. Cheng Yen's position of non-partisanship and political dispassion. In Taiwan, Ven. Cheng Yen has taken a very steadfast apolitical non-partisan position, which secures and ensures her trust among the people. Therefore, any volunteer or follower who becomes politically active, or run for

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<sup>12</sup> Cheng Yen, "Life, Like a Diamond," April 09, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Buddhist Tzu Chi Free Clinic, Hawaii is located at 100 North Beretania St., Suite 122, Honolulu, HI 96817.

<sup>14</sup> See the Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation's website, [www.Tzuchimedicalfoundation.org](http://www.Tzuchimedicalfoundation.org) (accessed July 2, 2012). Tzu Chi's free clinic medical mission outreach in other countries: Canada established in October, 1996; the Philippines in December, 2001; Brazil in 1996; Indonesia in 1995; Vietnam in 1998; Japan in 2001; and mainland China in 1999.

political office, or is employed by a political party is required to resign as a Tzu Chi worker. Furthermore, Ven. Cheng Yen does not permit the use of Tzu Chi's logo, or the likeness of her image in any political campaigns, be it implicit or explicit.<sup>15</sup> Tzu Chi's apolitical stance plays itself out in America as well.

In America, various forms of financial resources are accessible through the local, state, and federal governments to support civic service groups, albeit minimal, however, Tzu Chi USA has refused to apply and/or receive such government funding, exclusively relying on private fundraising and donations, fearing that their services to those most in need may be compromised due to limitations and restrictions which may accompany such funds. For instance, in California as well as in New York, Tzu Chi serves many new immigrant Americans, some legal, some not, hence, accepting government funding means they may have to restrict themselves from serving residents in need, which they compassionately refuse to do.<sup>16</sup> Recent developments over immigration legislation present Tzu Chi USA's medical relief with new challenges, namely the proposal for immigration reform which condemns both the immigrants as well as those who assist them.<sup>17</sup> Will Tzu Chi USA be able to continue providing health care to new immigrants without proper documentation, or will they obey the discriminatory immigration law if it should become a reality?

Serving the new immigrant communities comes with linguistic challenges, for example, Compassion Relief's medical outreach in the Central Valley of California, serves mainly migrant farm workers who speak Mixtec (or Mixteca), rather than Spanish, although possessing a working knowledge of Spanish.<sup>18</sup> Tzu Chi's volunteers, although primarily Taiwanese Americans, for whom Mandarin Chinese and/or Taiwanese is their mother language, either start to learn Spanish themselves, or seek out volunteers who are capable of communicating in both Spanish and Chinese or English. At times, there is a domino relay translation among English, Chinese, and Spanish, if they are lucky enough to have two volunteers – one bilingual in Chinese and English, the other Spanish and English. Besides English, Mixtec, or Spanish speaking new immigrant Americans, Tzu Chi USA also serves diverse immigrant-Chinese communities for whom Cantonese is their primary language of communication.

Bilingual Tzu Chi volunteers are few and precious as they are at the forefront of assisting non-English speaking new Chinese Americans, be they Mandarin, Cantonese, or Taiwanese speakers. Bilingual Tzu Chi volunteers assist patients in hospitals who do not have immediate family or friends to assist

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<sup>15</sup> Guo Chengtian, "Taiwan de minzhu yu zongjiao" (Religion and Politics in Taiwan), in *Yazhou zhengjiao guanzi* (Taipei: Weibo wenhua chubanshe, 2003), 114.

<sup>16</sup> Lee, 252-263.

<sup>17</sup> See the article "Immigration fight looms in Senate" at the CNN website, <http://www.cnn.com/2006/POLITICS/03/28/immigration/index.html> (accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> The Mixtec (or Mixteca) are indigenous people centered in the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Some Mixtecan languages are called by names other than Mixtec, particularly Cuicatec (Cuicateco), and Triqui (or Trique).



them upon entering the hospital as a result of an emergency or other medical complication. Unable to communicate with the healthcare staff, Tzu Chi volunteers are crucial to both the patients and medical personnel who treat them. Tzu Chi volunteers also visit patients, while hospitalized who have no family or friends, and if the situation deems it necessary, they will recite the *Guanyin sūtra* as a healing technique or to prepare them for the next stage of *samsāra*.<sup>19</sup>

Ven. Cheng Yen created a bone marrow bank in Taiwan, in response to the plea of a young lady named Win Wen-Ling, who discovered she had leukemia while studying for her doctoral degree at Ohio State University.<sup>20</sup> Unable to find a matching donor in the United States, she returned to Taiwan, and upon realizing that Taiwan lacked any organized bone marrow registry, she wanted to establish one. In order to do so, she would need someone whom people can trust, hence, she turned to Ven. Cheng Yen, to beseech her support. After thoughtful deliberation, and ensured that donors themselves will not be harmed in the process, Ven. Cheng Yen publicly announced in 1994 her endorsement of a bone marrow bank in Taiwan, and encouraged volunteers and members to organize blood drives in their neighborhood throughout the island.

Within two years, Tzu Chi's Bone Marrow Bank became one of the major bone marrow banks in East Asia. Today, Tzu Chi's Bone Marrow Bank is connected to those of other countries, making it more efficient, and hence, crossing national, as well as, potential ethnic and racial boundaries.<sup>21</sup> Today, there are 354,549 donors registered with Tzu Chi; and nearly 3,000 transplanted have been performed.<sup>22</sup> It is here, that notions of race and ethnicity potentially become dissolved. For instance, a German man, who had successfully received a bone marrow donation from Tzu Chi, expressed his feelings of gratitude and desires to visit Taiwan, coupled with the fact that he never thought he shared the same blood with "Asians."<sup>23</sup> Consequently, people who receive benefit from Tzu Chi's bone marrow registry are not limited to one ethnic group – the Chinese and Chinese Americans – although it was established to meet their needs, which has great implications for changes in America's inter-ethnic and inter-racial dialogue, because racial ideologies may slowly be deconstructed at the level of flesh-and-bone. For example, non-Chinese recipients of successful bone marrow transplantation – as illustrated by the above example of the German man – may arrive at a new understanding of race and ethnicity when

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<sup>19</sup> The reference to the *Guanyin Sūtra* is the chapter in the *Lotus Sūtra* entitled "Guansiyin pusa pumen-pin" (The Universal Gateway of the Bodhisattva, the Perceiver of the World's Sounds). See Burton Watson, trans., *The Lotus Sūtra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 298-306.

<sup>20</sup> Her Rey-Sheng, *Great Love as a Running Water: Witnessing of the Development of Marrow Transplantation* (Taipei: Jing Si Publications Company, 2006), 9.

<sup>21</sup> Tzu Chi's Bone Marrow registry is linked to the US National Marrow Donor Program, Japan and Germany's Bone Marrow Banks.

<sup>22</sup> See the Buddhist Tzu Chi Stem Cells Center web page, <http://tw.tzuchi.org/btccsc/english> (accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>23</sup> Her, 93.

they discover that they had received bone marrow from a non-white donor, and vice versa.

## Tzu Chi's Educational Programs

*In Tzu Chi, as we walk our path, we are also continuing to pave the path for others, so that they may join us on our journey. This is important because we should not only care about our own enlightenment, but should vow to help all living beings to enlightenment. Without wisdom and insight, it will be hard to continue with this.*

Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>24</sup>

Tzu Chi's educational mission started after its disaster and medical relief programs were firmly in order. To this end, they have built elementary, junior high, and high schools throughout Taiwan, in addition to a university located in Hualien, which houses a graduate school of nursing. Tzu Chi has also established schools in the United States. Since 1996, Tzu Chi has established 20 Chinese schools across the United States. These schools emphasize humanitarianism and character building in their educational curriculum. Moreover, they offer Mandarin language and Chinese culture course. Founded in 1996, the Hawaii Tzu Chi Academy has become the largest local Chinese school in Honolulu. "Currently, there are 11 classes, with 100 students (ages between 4-15), 13 teachers, 10 staff members, and numerous volunteers who serve as room mothers/sisters/brothers to assist the teachers and students in class, or as room fathers to direct traffic thus assuring safety on campus."<sup>25</sup> Besides Tzu Chi schools, Tzu Chi USA established many other educational programs, such as "Everybody Read" in addition to a newly established scholarship foundation to assist economically disadvantaged high school students as they enter college.

Although "Everybody Read" is an educational program, it is simultaneously an implicit interfaith activity as well. Volunteers, from any and all religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds, are all welcome to participate. They meet once a month at a local elementary school, providing reading lessons, storytelling, arts and crafts, and gifts for elementary school students in disadvantage inner-city public schools. The majority of "Everybody Read" volunteers are younger generation Taiwanese Americans, because they are bilingual in both English and Chinese, unlike their parents and grandparents, for whom English is not yet a primary language of communication. A self-described Catholic Latina Tzu Chi volunteer at "Everybody Read" reflects on her experiences and says:

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<sup>24</sup> Ven. Cheng Yen, "Inner Practice for the Tzu Chi Path," September 2, 2010.

<sup>25</sup> See the Hawaii Tzu Chi Academy, [http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1436%3Ahawaii-tzu-chi-academy-&catid=157%3Ahawaii-tzu-chi-academy&lang=en&Itemid=402](http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1436%3Ahawaii-tzu-chi-academy-&catid=157%3Ahawaii-tzu-chi-academy&lang=en&Itemid=402) (accessed February 4, 2013).

I was made aware of Tzu Chi through a youth group friend who introduced me to the “Everybody Read” Tzu Chi staff. She learned of it through an online volunteer website. I’ve volunteered with the “Everybody Read” for about half a year before I moved away. I am a late teen Catholic (sorry I’m not Buddhist or Daoist) who enjoys volunteering and experiencing new things. Even though my time conniving with them was short, I enjoyed every last minute. They were a pleasure to volunteer with, and have a positive attitude towards others. They are the nicest people I’ve met and they made me feel welcomed even though I wasn’t part of their religion. They are open for anyone who is searching for a little help. While volunteering they were very compassionate and patient towards the children, their patience made the kids enjoy them as much as I did.<sup>26</sup>

Our self-identified Catholic Latina’s reflection highlights Tzu Chi’s interfaith consciousness and inclusive approach to civic work in the American public sphere.

Another example comes from a self-identified bilingual “Asian mother” who expressed:

I am an Asian mother who have volunteered with Tzu Chi approximately two years or so. The program I am currently actively participating is the “Everybody Read” program. I also join them during the year-end delivery of goods and gift cards to the needy, and have visited with patients in the “New Start Home” program. Some memorable experiences I have had while volunteering would be receiving a big hug from a small girl and hearing her say ‘Thank you and I will miss you’ after the “Everybody Read” program. I also witness how several needy families survive in cramp living spaces, watched patients in the “New Start Home” program cope with their limited ability to move. Tzu Chi is a great organization.... It believes in the equality of all beings and the Buddha-nature potential in every person....

The motivation to volunteer expressed by the aforementioned ladies are common to all Tzu Chi’s volunteers, however, the personal profile and linguistic abilities are markedly different because the majority of Tzu Chi volunteers are middle aged, and/or semi-retired or retired Taiwanese/Chinese housewives and mothers for whom English is not a viable language of communication.<sup>27</sup>

Besides educational programming such as “Everybody Read” Compassion Relief Tzu Chi USA has been active in community fairs, both interfaith and secular. For instance, each year, the Santa Anita community holds a back-to-school fair and here, Tzu Chi provides new clothes, shoes, and school supplies for economically disadvantaged children, catching the attention of the local

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<sup>26</sup> Interview, March 8, 2006.

<sup>27</sup> Julia C. Huang and Robert P. Weller, “Merit and Mothering: Women and Social Welfare in Taiwanese Buddhism,” in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 57.2 (May, 1998): 3.

press and evening news.<sup>28</sup> Recently, Tzu Chi established a scholarship foundation to support economically disadvantaged high school students throughout the US, moreover, they continue to sidestep restrictions, by making the eligibility requirements vague, hence, not restricting their scholarship to “legal residents” alone, as state and federal financial aid is.<sup>29</sup>

### Tzu Chi's Cultural Outreach and Acculturation

*With the spirit of Great Love, may our volunteers sow seeds of goodness in the wounded land. May all the seeds sprout and flourish and further give rise to countless other seeds of goodness.*

Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>30</sup>

Similar to other modern large scale transnational lay Buddhist groups,<sup>31</sup> Tzu Chi makes full use of in-house publishing facilities, radio and television broadcasting, video and internet conferencing, and the use of the internet to maintain close contact with followers around the globe. Publications of books, magazines, and journals, for example, *Tzu Chi Shijie* (Tzu Chi World) or *Tzu Chi Quarterly – Buddhism in Action*, are available in simplified and/or traditional Chinese, English, Spanish, Japanese, and German.<sup>32</sup> In 1995 Tzu Chi founded Da'ai, Great Love, television and radio, as a way to reach people worldwide, purifying TV culture, constantly reminding followers of their successes, and work that still needs to be done, in addition to hearing and seeing Ven. Cheng Yen's daily Dharma lessons, in which she transitions, smoothly,

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<sup>28</sup> I first saw Tzu Chi on the Channel 4 evening news, participating in the Santa Anita community fair, during the summer of 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Beside academic excellence and graduating high school senior requirements, they require demonstration of financial need, and intent to enroll in an accredited US college full-time, with no mention of “legal” residency common to other scholarship programs in the US. See Tzu Chi Scholars 2013 web page, [http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=1774%3A2013-tzu-chi-scholarship-application&catid=140%3Anorthwest-region-information&Itemid=248&lang=en](http://www.us.tzuchi.org/us/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1774%3A2013-tzu-chi-scholarship-application&catid=140%3Anorthwest-region-information&Itemid=248&lang=en) (accessed February 4, 2013).

<sup>30</sup> Ven. Cheng Yen, “The Most Beautiful Scenes of Life,” May 27, 2010.

<sup>31</sup> Taiwan based Foguang Shan, Dharma Drum Mountain, etc.

<sup>32</sup> English books on Ven. Cheng Yen's teachings published by Tzu Chi include the following examples, *Still Thoughts*, Volume One and Two, *Enveloping the World with Great Love*, *Great Love across the Taiwan Straits*, *The Thirty-Seven Principles of Enlightenment*, *People Have Twenty Difficulties*, *The Sūtra of the Bodhisattva' Eight Realizations*, *Overcoming the Ten Evil Forces*, *Three Ways to the Pure Land*, *The Master Tells Stories*, Volume One and Two, *Rebirth – Transformation in Tzu Chi*, and *Inspiring Aphorisms – The Phrase that Benefits Me Most*. *Stille Gedanken*, the German translation of *Still Thoughts*, 2 volumes, are also available. In addition, Tzu Chi publishes a series of children's books, for instance, *A Child's Heart Reflects the Moon*, *The Little Monk Called "Amo,"* and so on.

between Taiwanese and Mandarin.<sup>33</sup> Da'ai's dramas are series of shows that are didactic, providing examples of individual heroism, filial piety, compassion, and humility, all the while reinforcing the importance of Tzu Chi's charity and relief work, and now, made available via the Public Broadcasting Station (PBS), in the Bay Area, Los Angeles Area, New York Area, and Houston Area, and other cable networks around the world, in addition to live online video streaming. While conducting field research, one expatriate shared with me that she watches Da'ai every afternoon, after her morning recitations of sūtras, commenting that one day, she would like to visit Tzu Chi's headquarter in Hualien, Taiwan.

Tzu Chi has been active, since it transplanted itself on American soil, assiduously endeavoring to be inclusive, although difficult because the majority of their staff and/or volunteers are non-native English speakers, for Taiwanese and Mandarin Chinese are their primary or secondary languages. Even so, Tzu Chi takes care to serve their larger communities through their social services and energetic participation in American holidays, for instance, during Thanksgiving – they provide baskets of essential holiday goodies, during Christmas – gifts and foods, to economically underprivileged local residents, all the while, serving the diverse ethnically Chinese immigrant communities. Beyond cultural, medical, and educational outreach and programming, Tzu Chi is active in local interfaith community activities as well.

Tzu Chi takes every opportunity to be involved in interfaith activities and community meetings. They also welcome, open heartedly, request from other religious groups who need assistance to help their followers. For instance, if a Christian church refers someone who needs money, for rent or food, over to Tzu Chi, they do not hesitate in receiving and assisting them. Tzu Chi realizes that it is located in a multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-religious environment, in Taiwan and throughout the world, hence disregards religious affiliation in its outreach programs, because all people are capable of meeting with hard times, and in need of compassionate aid.

### **Tzu Chi's Disaster Relief**

*When we give with a heart of willingness and joy, when we overcome all problems to provide support and comfort to the suffering, a resonance of love will naturally be generated.*

Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>34</sup>

Tzu Chi's international outreach started in 1984 with overseas Taiwanese expatriates. From a humble beginning of 30 female followers, Tzu Chi now claims ten million members worldwide, with branches in 50 countries, and to date, has implemented rescue and relief work in over 70 countries. In the US

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<sup>33</sup> See Da Ai Television web page, <http://en.newdaai.tv/> (accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>34</sup> Ven. Cheng Yen, "The Most Beautiful Scenes of Life," May 27, 2010.

alone, there are more than 80 Tzu Chi branches / chapters, including several free health and dental clinics. Tzu Chi's global relief workers respond to victims of natural as well as human caused disasters in South and Southeast Asia following the December 26, 2004 earthquake and Tsunamis, in addition to Afghanistan, Iran, El Salvador, Haiti, and the US Tzu Chi USA became a national player in relief work following the terrorist attack of 9/11, and in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina that shattered the gulf coast.

While chaos and terror filled the minds and hearts of all Americans immediately after the terrorist attack of 9/11, Tzu Chi's New York office joined forces with the American Red Cross, at ground zero, to provide emergency medical aid. Tzu Chi's medical volunteers, Tzu Chi International Medical Association (TIMA),<sup>35</sup> quickly mobilized in the hours after the morning of 9/11 ready to assist the injured. Beyond the immediate large scale relief efforts, Tzu Chi also paid attention to the minor details of post-9/11 relief, for instance, providing food and water to rescue workers. Tzu Chi USA has committed itself to long term recovery efforts, continuing to financially assist working class families – factory and restaurant laborers – survive, day by day. Jarcy Zee documents Jackson Chen's relief work, immediately after the 9/11 attack, noting, "That evening, he and the other Tzu Chi volunteers began their relief efforts by supplying more than two hundred sets of pillows and blankets to stranded victims sleeping on bare cots set by the Red Cross in Weehawken, New Jersey."<sup>36</sup> Tzu Chi USA relief workers faced resistance in their efforts to contribute because "the US government and most other organizations did not know about Tzu Chi."<sup>37</sup> As such, Tzu Chi USA volunteers relied on the Red Cross and the Salvation Army who provided Tzu Chi USA relief workers access. To mitigate future problems in their relief effort, "On June 18, 2008, representatives from the American Red Cross and the Tzu Chi Foundation signed a memorandum of understanding at the Tzu Chi Humanities Center in Taipei. The two organizations will combine their respective strengths and cooperate in disaster relief operations, emergency preparedness and response, cross training, and other cooperation actions in the United States."<sup>38</sup>

Hurricane Katrina was the sixth-strongest, costliest, and deadliest Atlantic hurricane ever recorded in US history. The storm surge caused major damage along the coastlines of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama, however, it was damage to the levees separating Lake Pontchartrain from New Orleans,

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<sup>35</sup> TIMA was founded in 1996 by a group of healthcare professionals under the auspices of Tzu Chi, and relies solely on donations and funding raising activities. TIMA provides the highest possible quality healthcare to individuals around the world who are in need of medical attention at minimal or no cost to the patient. Currently, TIMA has 17 branch offices worldwide in 9 countries including Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Philippines, United States, Paraguay, and Brazil.

<sup>36</sup> Jarcy Zee, "9/11: An Indelible Memory," *Tzu Chi USA Journal* (Fall 2011): 36.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> See the Tzu Chi Foundation website, [www.us.tzuchi.org](http://www.us.tzuchi.org) (accessed July 2, 2012).

Louisiana that flooded roughly 80 percent of the historic city, subsequently causing gargantuan social and public disorder, leaving many people homeless, in addition to extensive injuries, and fatalities. The September 19, 2005 international edition of *Newsweek* conveys America's racial and economic inequality depicting an African American baby with tears streaming down her cheeks, entitled "Poverty, Race, and Katrina: Lessons of A National Shame."<sup>39</sup> Then, Senator Barack Obama (b. 1961) bewailed, "I hope we realize that the people of New Orleans weren't just abandoned during the hurricane.... They were abandoned long ago – to murder and mayhem in the streets, to substandard schools, to dilapidated housing, to inadequate health care, to a pervasive sense of hopelessness."<sup>40</sup> Better yet, let us call to mind former First Lady Barbara P. Bush's statement, "So many of the people in the arenas here, you know, were underprivileged anyway. So this is working very well for them," referring to the crowded 10,000 plus strangers cramped into the makeshift evacuation center.<sup>41</sup> Not to mention Yahoo News' coverage, which described waterlogged whites as "carrying food" whereas blacks holding food were depicted as "looters."<sup>42</sup>

Let us journey back to April 1992 when a mostly white jury acquitted four white police officers accused in the videotaped beating of African American motorist Rodney King, which instantaneously erupted into a massive inner-city riot whereupon thousands of young African American and Latino males<sup>43</sup> participated in what has often been characterized as a "race riot" in which racial and ethnic tensions turned from a "black v. white" issue, to one of inter-ethnic discontent involving African Americans and Korean Americans. During and after the riots, the cultural misunderstanding and inter-ethnic, inter-racial tensions between African Americans and Korean Americans were of principal concern for the rebuilding of Los Angeles. Post-Katrina offers new fertile ground for increase dialogue between African Americans and Asian Americans, many time viewed as modeled-minority citizens or as "honorary whites" who are sheltered, privileged, and secluded away in their upper-middle class communities.

Tzu Chi workers were at the forefront of post-Katrina relief efforts, donating millions of dollars to families and taking into their own homes countless dislocated survivors. At one moment, Tzu Chi volunteers withdrew \$50,000 dollars from their own personal accounts to purchase gift-card and vouchers for families in need because banks were not open. In total, "Tzu Chi USA mobilized over 1,000 volunteers to distribute emergency cash worth 4.12 million dollars to 22,487 households, or over 58,553 people. A fundraising campaign was held in more than 30 countries to raise funds to assist the disaster

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<sup>39</sup> *Newsweek*, international edition, September 19, 2005.

<sup>40</sup> Jonathan Alter, "The Other America," *Newsweek*, September 19, 2005, 14.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>43</sup> Young white males from outside the district looted as well, but the media mainly showed African Americans and Latinos.

survivors.”<sup>44</sup> Post-Katrina relief work provides fertile possibility for inter-ethnic and inter-racial solidarity between African Americans, white-Americans, and Asian Americans, as they come into contact with one another, and stereotypes give way to positive experiences, encounters, and memories.

### **Tzu Chi USA: American or Global Civil Society?**

*Only by transforming the hearts of humanity can our world be saved.*  
Ven. Cheng Yen<sup>45</sup>

The new American religious landscape is multi-religious, multi-cultural, and multi-ethnic (racial), hence, American civil society is permeated with such complex characteristic as well. Economic disparity continues to grow and the growing split between the haves and have-nots continues to become more distinct. The high cost of healthcare places many Americans at risk. The possibility of equal access to higher education remains bleak for many American of color, as recent trends in freshmen admission among African Americans may demonstrate, or the perpetual low rate of college admissions or even high school graduation for Cambodian Americans, Lao Americans, and Hmong Americans. Or the discriminatory new educational policy that separates native-English students from new immigrant American students from receiving a high school diploma or a certificate based on satisfactory performance on an existing examination. Supporters of this new policy in some school districts of California view it as fair and proper, rewarding students who worked hard and learned their basic three R's (*reading, writing and arithmetic*). On the other hand, opponents see it as another racist policy to disenfranchise new immigrant Americans, ignoring their home language and socio-economic status.

Robert Neelly Bellah (b. 1927) first coined the term “American civil religion,”<sup>46</sup> albeit overwhelmingly white, middle-class, and Protestant, which has since been a topic of major discussions and critiques.<sup>47</sup> According to Bellah, Americans embrace a common civil religion with certain fundamental beliefs, values, holidays, and rituals, parallel to, or

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<sup>44</sup> About Tzu Chi, see [www.us.tzuchi.org](http://www.us.tzuchi.org) (accessed July 2, 2012).

<sup>45</sup> Ven. Cheng Yen, “A Time of Crisis, A Time for Great Awakening,” March 8, 2011.

<sup>46</sup> Robert N. Bellah, “Civil Religions in America,” in *Daedalus* 96 (1967): 96-121.

<sup>47</sup> Robert N. Bellah and Phillip E. Hammond, *Varieties of Civil Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980); Gail Gehrig, *American Civil Religion: An Assessment* (Indianapolis: Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, 1981; Cynthia Toolin, “American Civil Religion from 1789 to 1981: A Content Analysis of Presidential Inaugural Addresses,” in *Review of Religious Research* 25.1 (1983): 39-48; and James Treat, ed., *For This Land: Writings on Religion in America* (New York: Routledge, 1999).



independent of, their chosen religion. In *Beyond Belief*, although Bellah spoke of “religion” generically, contending that “religion” instead of disappearing is again moving into the center of our cultural preoccupations, to which I like to add, in the guise of “civil society.” Can we rightfully describe Tzu Chi’s socially engaged relief work as a new form of “American civil religion” *a la* Bellah? Will Tzu Chi USA’s efforts forge a new understanding of race and ethnicity, religious pluralism, and civil society in America, and will it influence how other religious groups, other ethnic-American community, or future new immigrant Americans transplant and “acculturate” themselves into American society and soil? Central to Tzu Chi USA growing its roots on American society, it must invest in a public relations campaign to become a visible part of American civil society.

The post 9/11 atmosphere in America makes their efforts more daunting as American national identity is considered by the majority to be threatened by competing ideologies and theologies of social order.<sup>48</sup> Samuel P. Huntington (1927-2008) argues, these diasporas cum transnational identities are the singular cause of a weakening American national identity.<sup>49</sup> The xenophobic rhetoric in America post-9/11 is a tremendous challenge to Tzu Chi USA’s continued “civil society” work on American soil. Ironically, the most influential actor in the production and extension of modern globalization processes seems to be unable to negotiate its own byproduct – namely, the process that Michael Kearney calls the “peripheralization of the core.”<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, diversity is seen as the gravest internal peril to American solidarity and identity. Therefore, we must ask: Is Tzu Chi USA an “internal peril” because it is Buddhist instead of Christian, “yellow” instead of “white,” “minority” instead of “majority”? Here, the transnational characteristics of Tzu Chi manifest itself clearly! Its membership is mainly composed of new-Taiwanese-American immigrants, majority female, and mostly localized in communities where Taiwanese Americans have settled. Although Tzu Chi shares the same fundamental goal as Protestant-Catholic-and-Jewish civil religious groups that dominated the American arena in the past, namely helping those in need and bettering the common good of American society. Tzu Chi’s social work is the “public face of religion”! It is “public religion” in the public sphere. The critical question is: does Tzu Chi qualify as “American civil religion” or is it “something else”?

On a larger scale, we must ask: Is Tzu Chi’s work part of a larger growing “global civil society” based on an emerging reality of global civil

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<sup>48</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Who Are We?: The Challenges to America’s National Identity* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2004).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Michael Kearney, “The Local and the Global: the Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism,” in *The Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 147-162.

action and global inter-connectedness?<sup>51</sup> Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius proposed that “global civil society is about people, organizations, and the values and ideas they represent, but with the major difference that these are, at least in part, located in some transnational arena and not bound or limited by nation-states or local societies.”<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, they suggest that global civil society encompass the meaning and practice of human equality in an increasingly unjust world, and provide individuals with means and alternatives to search and develop new forms of civic participation and involvement in a global world.<sup>53</sup> In this way, Tzu Chi USA is part of a larger emerging “global civil society” which bespeaks its mission of “global compassion” that is not limited by its transnational structure.

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<sup>51</sup> Mary Kaldor, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius, “Global Civil Society in an Era of Regressive Globalization,” in Kaldor, Mary, Helmut Anheier and Marlies Glasius, eds., *Global Civil Society 2003* (London: Oxford University Press, 2003), 3.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*



# THE CONCEPT OF ENGAGED BUDDHISM IN SHINRAN: REFLECTIONS ON LIVING AS “NEITHER A MONK NOR A LAY PERSON”

Naoyuki Ogi

## Introduction

Today, the term "Engaged Buddhism," coined by Vietnamese Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh (b. 1926), is used to express the social engagements of Buddhist followers and Buddhist organizations with regard to various social problems, environmental problem, political activities, etc. Although there are several Japanese translations of this term such as “*Shakai wo tsukuru Bukkyō*” (Society-Making Buddhism), “*Tatakau Bukkyō*” (Fighting Buddhism), “*Shakai Sanka Bukkyō*” (Engaged Buddhism), etc, there is no official Japanese translation.<sup>1</sup>

Recent studies in Western countries outline two types of interpretation about the principles of engaged Buddhism; and the traditional interpretation, and the modern interpretation. The traditional interpretation emphasizes only Buddhist social teachings with reference to the past, and does not consider the content or implications of its actions. On the other hand, the modern interpretation emphasizes the Buddhist social teachings as “new” or “*navayāna*” which does not aim to engage only with suffering, but also to engage in society.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Ama Toshimaro, *Shakai wo tsukuru Bukkyō* (Society-Making Buddhism) (Tokyo: Jinbun shoin, 2003); Maruyama Teruo, *Tatakau Bukkyō* (Fighting Buddhism) (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1991); and Ranjana Mukhopadhyaya, *Nihon no Shakai sankā Bukkyō: Hōon-ji to Risshō Kōsei-kai no Shakai katsudō to Shakai rinri* (The Social Activities and Ethics in Hōon-ji Temple and Risshō Kōsei-kai) (Tokyo: Toshindo, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Christopher S. Queen tries to define Engaged Buddhism in Buddhist precepts as a fourth *yāna*, signifying a means of attaining enlightenment. See Christopher S. Queen,

However, both interpretations seem to have a mutual concept that originated from an awakening with regard to Buddhist followers' social consciousness and their self-realization as Buddhists. This concept can be understood as "Revitalizing Buddhism," which Thich Nhat Hanh originally expressed as the meaning of Engaged Buddhism.

This concept, which attempts to reconsider the meaning of and adherence to Buddhism, can be viewed through Shinran's (1173-1262) self-reference as a "Foolish Stubble-Headed (One)" (*gutoku*) and the theory of "Neither a Monk Nor a Lay Person" (*hisō hizoku*).<sup>3</sup> Shinran reached this stage through various struggles against a contradiction between his ideal Buddhism and reality.

In order to clarify the mutual concept between Engaged Buddhism and *hisō hizoku* theory, this paper will consider Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of Engaged Buddhism. Following this, I will consider Shinran's *hisō hizoku* theory with reflecting Buddhism in his age. Finally, this paper will give what Engaged Buddhism means for Shinran and Shin Buddhists.

## The Concept of Engaged Buddhism in Thich Nhat Hanh

### 1. The Background of the Term "Engaged Buddhism"

Thich Nhat Hanh is a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk, poet, and peacemaker. Before being exiled from Vietnam in 1966, he was a cofounder of Van Hanh Buddhist University, An Quang Buddhist Pagoda, the School of Youth for Social Service, and the Order of Interbeing. Since that time, in Europe and North America, he has worked tirelessly for peace, chairing the Vietnamese Buddhist Peace Delegation to the Paris Peace Talks, founding Plum Village, a Buddhist training monastery near Bordeaux, and lecturing and leading retreats worldwide on the art of mindful living.

The relation between Thich Nhat Hanh and "Engaged Buddhism" is set against the background of the Vietnam War.<sup>4</sup> One of the many results of the war was that Vietnamese Buddhism suffered under the Ngo Dinh Diem's political forces and the South Vietnamese Catholic bureaucrats.<sup>5</sup>

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"Introduction: A New Buddhism," in Christopher S. Queen, ed., *Engaged Buddhism in the West* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2000), 1-31.

<sup>3</sup> *The Collected Works of Shinran* (hereafter, CWS) (Kyoto: Jōdo Shin Sect Hongwan-ji Headquarters, 1997), 289.

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed relationship between Thich Nhat Hanh and Vietnamese war, see Thich Nhat Hanh, *Vietnam: Lotus in a Sea of Fire* (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1967).

<sup>5</sup> See Sallie B. King, "Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Church of Vietnam: Nondualism in Action," in Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, ed., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (Albany: State University of New

In Diem's control, the Vietnamese were suffering under Diem due to the oppression of religion. The most influential act conveying the suffering caused by the Vietnam War would be self-immolation. A Buddhist monk, Thich Quang Duc, self-immolated on a Saigon street on June 11, 1963. It was an expression of suffering stemming from terrible oppression, and shocked the entire world. It also brought thirty-six other monks and a laywoman to their deaths. Their intention was the wish for peace in Vietnam, and their suicides garnered much worldwide attention.

However, before shedding worldwide light on the reality of Vietnam, most Buddhist monks had to obey Diem's political policies, which "destroyed many things, including (the Vietnamese's) ability to stand on their own feet economically," and persuaded the followers to live under harsh conditions.<sup>6</sup> Under these complicated conditions, Thich Nhat Hanh criticized the Vietnamese monks. He showed his disappointment in Vietnamese Buddhism in those days. He states:

Intellectuals and students became increasingly disillusioned with the Buddhist hierarchy. Vietnamese Buddhism, two thousand years old, was not offering a way out of the noose that was strangling the Vietnamese South.<sup>7</sup>

Thich Nhat Hanh lamented that Vietnamese Buddhism depended on the hierarchy and was losing sight of the focus on liberation from suffering, which is the central purpose in Buddhism. Thich Nhat Hanh's idea of "Engaged Buddhism" would arise from these conditions in Vietnamese society and Buddhism.

## **2. The Concept and Meaning of Engaged Buddhism in Thich Nhat Hanh**

Thich Nhat Hanh's notion of "Engaged Buddhism" comes from the French word *engagement*, meaning politics joined with deliberate action. He explains the origin of his thoughts about Engaged Buddhism:

I started reflecting and writing of the possibility and practice of Engaged Buddhism in the 1950s, and in 1964 I wrote the book *Engaged Buddhism*. In an essay titled "The Basic Ideal of Buddhist Youth for Social Service," I

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York Press, 1996), 326-327 and Thich Nhat Hanh, *Fragrant Palm Leaves: Journals 1962-1966* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1966), 139, 145.

<sup>6</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, 145.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 139.

suggested how to apply Buddhist ideals to improve the conditions of life in a time of war and social injustice.<sup>8</sup>

In the concern for “how to apply Buddhist ideals to improve the conditions of life,” we find the conceptual ideal of Engaged Buddhism. In addition, the phrase “in a time of war and social injustice” implies suffering, and follows the phrase “the conditions of life.” We can interpret this to mean that Engaged Buddhism is a means “to apply Buddhist ideals to improve” the sufferings. Thich Nhat Hanh also states the following:

We needed the teachings of the Buddha about self-protection and self-healing in our personal practice and then took them out into the world. This was Engaged Buddhism in its purest form.<sup>9</sup>

The purest form of Engaged Buddhism is based on “self-protection” and “self-healing.” In other words, it has a component of “self-reflection” that tries to turn selfish minds into selfless minds at its very foundation. In addition, he explains:

From a very young age, I had a strong desire to put the Buddha’s teaching into practice in order to improve the lives of the people around me, especially those of the poor peasants. Many monks, including myself, had a deep desire to bring Buddhism into every walk of life. For us, taking action according to the principles of what I called Engaged Buddhism – Right action based in compassion – was the answer.<sup>10</sup>

Thich Nhat Hanh’s writings reflect his commitment and desire to help others. In turn, this living thought creates various individual and social actions, and is considered the core of his Engaged Buddhism. Sallie B. King explains: “Consequently, an emphasis upon the necessity of meditative practice for the social activist is probably the most fundamental of Hanh’s teaching.”<sup>11</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh himself states:

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<sup>8</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Creating True Peace: Ending Violence in Yourself, Your Family, Your Community* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 94. Sallie B. King states that the essay titled “The Basic Ideal of Buddhist Youth for Social Service” was included in the magazine *Vietnamese Buddhism* (Phat Giao Viet Nam), the official Voice of the Association of All Buddhists in Vietnam (Tong Hoi Phat Giao Viet Nam). See her article titled “Thich Nhat Hanh and the Unified Church of Vietnam: Nondualism in Action,” in Queen and King, eds., *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, 322.

<sup>9</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, 95.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>11</sup> King, 342.

Engaged Buddhism does not only mean to use Buddhism to solve social and political problems, protesting against bombs, and protesting against social injustice. First of all we have to bring Buddhism into our daily lives.<sup>12</sup>

For Thich Nhat Hanh, meditative practice is the Buddhist foundation of Engaged Buddhism. In other words, “engaging in ourselves” is the purest form of Engaged Buddhism. In this ideal, we can see the concept of “living thought” as its premise. That is, Engaged Buddhism, as a central concept, responds to the suffering in our life, and, accordingly, creates action (movement) using the Buddhist principle of self-reflection (practice).

Thich Nhat Hanh’s central concept of Engaged Buddhism was described as “engaging in ourselves” and responding to the conditions of life, and, accordingly, creating action using the Buddhist principle of self-reflection. Also, the reason why he created the term “Engaged Buddhism” was clarified as a principle of criticism of the form of Buddhism that lacks reactivity to societal demands. This can be expressed as a reconsideration of the meaning of and adherence to Buddhism. So, within these contexts, how should we interpret the notion of Engaged Buddhism as it is framed by Thich Nhat Hanh?

The term “Engaged Buddhism” according to Thich Nhat Hahn reflects a series of concepts that create adequate actions, movements and teachings for each country, place, environment, culture, etc., in order to alleviate societal suffering. However, what Thich Nhat Hanh emphasizes most is one’s response to the condition of life and the Buddhist principle of self-reflection. It is what I choose to call, “Revitalizing Buddhism.”<sup>13</sup> Buried and latent teachings, which can lead to actions and movements of equality for a peaceful society, are renewed by reconsidering one’s Buddhist way of life and engaging with suffering, and in so doing, they retrieve their radiance for life. In other words, we have to criticize our understanding of Buddhism and Buddhist way of life by “engaging in ourselves.” Social actions that are engendered by the name Engaged Buddhism must lead to the actualization of the question “What can we do for the others as Buddhists?” Questioning and responding to human suffering in the present as a human who lives according to the teachings of the Buddha is what the term “Engaged Buddhism” means for Thich Nhat Hanh.

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<sup>12</sup> Thich Nhat Hanh, *Being Peace* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1987), 53.

<sup>13</sup> I use “revitalizing Buddhism” instead of the expressions “revitalized Buddhism” and “revitalization of Buddhism” to emphasize one’s constant and immediate attitude of making buried and latent teachings exposed in one’s living life.



## The Meaning of Revitalizing Buddhism in Shinran

### 1. Buddhism in Shinran's Age

Shinran, the founder of Jōdo Shinshū, lived during the Kamakura period in medieval Japan. At this stage in history, people lived in despair, and society was marked by natural disaster, starvation and war. The conditions of their daily life were almost like “the pictures of hell within the six realms of saṃsāra.”<sup>14</sup>

In the Kamakura period, Buddhist monks and nuns were governed by the *Sōni-ryō*, a system of rules issued by the Imperial Court. That is, the Imperial Court “controlled the structure of the Buddhist community as their own Buddhism.”<sup>15</sup>

The Kōfuku-ji Petition notes the importance of the government as the controlling body of Buddhism: “Even if he were a man of ability and virtue, it is only proper that he address the court and wait for the imperial permission to preach. It is quite improper to establish a sect privately.”<sup>16</sup> That is, the Imperial Court had the authority to control the priesthood, and accordingly “Buddhist monks had to perform services for the court and aristocrats, ‘the service of the Imperial Court’s authorities’.”<sup>17</sup>

This structure of religion and state was the ideal for the “old” Buddhist schools, referred to as *ōbō buppō*, “the king’s law (is) the Buddha’s law.” Concerning this, Taira Masayuki states that:

The emperor was regarded as the wheel-turning noble king, and the ex-emperor was regarded as a transformation body of the Tathāgata. Like the theory of the “imperial law” and the “Buddhist law” mutual dependence, the fate of the nation was believed to be directly connected with the decline of Dharma. Regarding the paying of taxes as a religious (good) practice, the secular society was colored by Buddhism, and praying for prosperity (rice, wheat, millet, beans and barnyard grass in exoteric and esoteric Buddhist practices) resonated

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<sup>14</sup> Ihara Kesao, *Chūseijiin to minshū* (The Medieval Time and People) (Kyoto: Rinsen shoten, 2004), 243.

<sup>15</sup> *Sōni-ryō* means the monks’ and nuns’ ordinance, of thirty-seven articles. In the Kamakura period, Buddhist monks and nuns were governed by the Ordinance of Monks and Nuns constituting thirty seven articles. The Imperial Court controlled the Buddhist community as their own Buddhism. See Futaba Kenkō et al., *Rekishi no naka no Shinran* (Shinran in History) (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshodo, 1998), 124.

<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Morrell, *Early Kamakura Buddhism: A Minority Report* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1987), 76.

<sup>17</sup> Futaba, 125. Moreover, Kuroda Toshio says that “the Buddhist clergy lived within the establishment, in institutions – temples – founded and authorized by state authority. In this context, Buddhism’s highest duty was spiritual protection of the state.” Kuroda Toshio, Suzanne Gay, trans., “Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23/3-4 (1996): 313.

deeply with the life of the people. The society and the nation were saturated with Buddhism.<sup>18</sup>

That is, there was a strong relationship between general Buddhism and the authority of the nation. However, this was not a peculiar condition in those days. Jacqueline I. Stone says that it “characterized the older Buddhist institutions – Tendai, Shingon, and the Nara schools” as the exoteric-esoteric system, and that exoteric-esoteric Buddhism “was not only an all-encompassing religious system but had important political dimensions as well.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover Kuroda states that the exoteric-esoteric system maintained “its vitality throughout the medieval period and (formed) the traditional and authoritative ideology.”<sup>20</sup>

For example, the theory that Buddhas manifest themselves in the form of *kami* was endorsed by the exoteric-esoteric system and was tied to estate rule by aristocratic and religious overlords.<sup>21</sup> Branch temple priests of exoteric-esoteric

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<sup>18</sup> Taira Masayuki, *Shinran to sono jidai* (Shinran and His Period)(Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2001), 52. Concerning the theory of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence, Kuroda says that “*ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence meant not only that Buddhism served political power but also implied a peculiar adhesion of government and religion in which Buddhism, while constituting a distinctive form of social and political force, entered into the structural principle of the state order as a whole. Such was the basis in actual events of the theory of *ōbō-buppō* mutual dependence. Kuroda Toshio, “The Imperial Law and the Buddhist Law,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23/3-4(1996): 276.

<sup>19</sup> Jacqueline I. Stone, *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1999), 60-61. The Nara schools are; Hossō-shū, Kegon-shū, Kusha-shū, Sanron-shū, Jōjitsu-shū, and Risshū. These schools, plus Tendai and Shingon, were legalized as national Buddhism by the Imperial Court and called six schools of Nara. Kuroda defines exoteric-esoteric system. “Medieval Japan was dominated by a religious system, the so-called (exoteric-esoteric system), which provided a cohesive ideological structure for its social and political order. It arose against the backdrop of the medieval estate system and the emerging peasant class. The core of the (exoteric-esoteric system) was esoteric beliefs and practices, around which the different exoteric doctrines of Tendai and other schools coalesced. Esoteric practices were thought to embody the truths of Mahāyāna Buddhism, but also to provide thaumaturgic means to control the ominous spirit world recognized by society. The teachings and practices of Pure Land Buddhism were born out of this system, and the Tendai doctrine of original enlightenment was an archetypal expression of it. The *kenmitsu* worldview provided the ideological basis for the medieval Japanese state, and was integrated into its system of rule.” Kuroda Toshio, “The Development of the *Kenmitsu* System As Japan’s Medieval Orthodoxy,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 23/3-4 (1996): 233.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 266.

<sup>21</sup> The estate means various forms of governmental and private control over the nominally public provincial lands. See Kuroda, “Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System,” 287.

Buddhism created the “historical and doctrinal justification for peasant service to the lord” so that peasants had to work hard under the harsh reality.<sup>22</sup>

However, in these circumstances, those who denied the superstitious and quasi-Buddhist rituals and teachings appeared and established their own Buddhist schools apart from exoteric-esoteric Buddhism. They focused not on the Imperial Court and not on the ideal society of exoteric-esoteric Buddhism, but on the people’s dignity. Accordingly, the new Kamakura Buddhism was born.

## 2. Shinran in New Kamakura Buddhism

The sole-practice of calling on the Name of Amida Buddha developed by Hōnen (1133–1212) and his followers, including Shinran, was one of the New Buddhist movements.<sup>23</sup> Some of their teachings, such as the instruction not to worship *kami*, and the disregard for the precepts related to sexual behavior, were seen as heretical by the old Buddhist schools<sup>24</sup>. These teachings were not the kind of Buddhism that the Imperial Court could endorse. In particular, the admonition not to worship *kami* signified “the prime criticism of the essence in the (Japanese) medieval nation ritual which preceded the *kami* rite.”<sup>25</sup>

The major criticism against Hōnen’s teachings by other Buddhist schools started in 1204 because some followers abused his teaching and caused many unmoral matters. Hōnen addressed such attacks by writing two documents, “Pledge Sent to Enryaku-ji” (“Sō sanmon kishōmon”) and “Regulations in seven articles” (“Shichikajō seikai”).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 304. In Kamakura period, local societies were controlled by their residential powers, the lord of the manors including *ryōshu*, *jitō*, and *meishu*, who were in Kamakura shogunate construction. The farmers of lower class were suffered of stern harvest and hard labor by them. See more Moriyama Yoshio, *Shinran no “Shōsoku” ni mana bu* (Learning from Shinran’s letter) (Kyoto: Nagata bunshodo, 2000), 45.

<sup>23</sup> Actually *senju nembutsu* (the sole-practice of calling on the Name of Amida Buddha) by Hōnen and Shinran was not only Buddhist movement for the human dignity. Dōgen’s “sitting only” Zen meditation and Nichiren’s recitation of the *Lotus Sūtra* title were also categorized in Kamakura New Buddhism and “all shared the singlemindedness and exclusivity characteristic of Kamakura New Buddhism.” See Kuroda, “Buddhism and Society in the Medieval Estate System,” 305.

<sup>24</sup> Old Buddhism means eight schools composed of six schools of Nara, Tendai Sect, and Shingon Sect.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>26</sup> These two documents were directed to the followers. Fabio Rambelli interprets two documents, “(in two documents), Hōnen made clear, using strong language and an unusually strict tone, that his followers should stop all free interpretations of his teachings and cease any actions and speeches against dominant religious institutions and their followers.” See Fabio Rambelli, “Just behave as You Like; Prohibitions and Impurities Are Not a Problem: Radical Amida Cults and Popular Religiosity in Pre-modern Japan,” in Richard K. Payne and Kenneth K. Tanaka, eds., *Approaching the Land of Bliss:*

The Kōfuku-ji Petition (“Kōfuku-ji sōjō”), submitted in October 1205, demanded a ban on Hōnen’s teachings to the Imperial Court due to its heresy. It was drafted by Jōkei (1155-1213), a prominent monk of the Hossō school, a Japanese version of Yogācāra Buddhism.<sup>27</sup> The petition contained nine objections to Hōnen’s teachings.<sup>28</sup> From the perspective of Jōkei, Hōnen’s teaching was seen as heretical by the standards of old Buddhism (the eight schools), because his teaching did not support the Imperial Court through *kami* worship, a central feature of old Buddhism’s ideal society. In other words, Hōnen’s teaching “erased two thousand years of tradition and practice” and “apostasy” because Hōnen and his followers, who believed in *senju nembutsu*, seemed to distort social and political tradition.<sup>29</sup>

The Imperial Court, however, did not recognize the accusations until 1206, when two of Hōnen’s disciples caused a scandal with several court ladies of retired emperor Gotoba-in.<sup>30</sup> We can consider the scandalous affairs by Hōnen’s disciples as the trigger that started the Nembutsu persecution movement with the mutual criticized point between the context of Hōnen’s thought and of Jōkei’s thought, non-permission of the Imperial Court.

After this scandal, in 1207, the followers of *senju nembutsu* were persecuted and punished. Four of Hōnen’s disciples, including two of his disciples who took part in the scandal, were executed. Eight of his disciples were dispossessed of their monkhood, given secular names, and exiled to distant places. Shinran himself was one of the exiled monks, and at this point, he assumed the position of being “neither a monk nor a lay person” and took the name “foolish/stubble-headed” in this complicated situation.

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*Religious Praxis in the Cult of Amitābha* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), 173–174.

<sup>27</sup> Concerning Jōkei’s thought, see James L. Ford, “Jōkei and the Rhetoric of ‘Other-Power’ and ‘Easy Practice’ in Medieval Japanese Buddhism,” in *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 29/1-2 (2002): 67-106 .

<sup>28</sup> The nine objections were: (1) the Error of Establish a New sect, (2) the Error of Designing New Images for Worship, (3) the Error of Slighting Śākyamuni, (4) the Error of Neglecting the Varieties of Good Deeds, (5) the Error of Turning One’s Back on the Holy Gods of Shintō, (6) the Error of Ignorance Concerning the Pure Lands, (7) the Error of Misunderstanding the *nembutsu*, (8) the Error of Vilifying the Followers of Śākyamuni, and (9) the Error of Bringing Disorder to the Nation. See Morrell, 75.

<sup>29</sup> James L. Ford, “Jōkei and Hōnen: Debating Buddhist Liberation in Medieval Japan – Then and Now,” in *Pacific World: Journal of the Institute of Buddhist Studies*, 3.3 (Fall 2001) : 212. Hōnen’s new insight against old Buddhism can be seen in his work *Senchaku hongan nembutsushū* (Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow). See Genkū (Hōnen), Morris J. Augustine and Kondo Tessho, trans., *Senchaku hongan nembutsushū (Passages on the Selection of the Nembutsu in the Original Vow)* (Berkeley: Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai and Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1997), 36-37.

<sup>30</sup> Two of Hōnen’s disciples, Jūren and Anraku are said to have slept with Gotoba-in’s women. Morrell, 73-74.

### 3. The Intent of Shinran's Self-Reference

With the background of Kamakura Buddhism and the *nembutsu* persecution, let us consider Shinran's response to the punishments. He wrote:

The emperor and his ministers, acting against the Dharma and violating human rectitude, became enraged and embittered. As a result, Master Genkū – the eminent founder who had enabled the true essence of the Pure Land way to spread vigorously (in Japan) – and a number of his followers, without receiving any deliberation of their (alleged) crimes, were summarily sentenced to death or were dispossessed of their monkhood, given (secular) names, and consigned to distant banishment. I was among the latter. Hence, I am now neither a monk nor a worldly person (*hisō hizoku*).<sup>31</sup>

Here, Shinran calls himself “*hisō hizoku*” as a result of the punishments that he received. The phrase can be understood as follows. He is “not a monk,” because he is not allowed to be a monk by the Imperial Court. Yet, he is “not a worldly person,” because he refused to accept the secular name he had been given. When Shinran was punished by the Imperial Court because of the persecution of *senju nembustu*, he was given the secular name Fujii Yoshizane and exiled to Echigo, modern Niigata, in the northern part of Japan.<sup>32</sup> However, he refused to accept it stating “I have taken the term *toku* (“stubble-headed (one)”) as my name.”<sup>33</sup>

Shinran's use of the expression was paradoxical. In Buddhism, *toku* is used when monks refer to themselves humbly or disparage others. The Imperial court and its ministers no doubt considered Shinran as “*toku*” in the disparaging way. However, by using this name, Shinran himself claimed independence from their authority. Shinran utilized this paradox to express his freedom from their authority – that he would not be a monk if the definition of a monk or lay person is to be determined by secular authority. At the time he was being oppressed, society was ruled by the emperor and his cohorts (including monks). The social morality and/order were governed by “the emperor and the priesthood.” With this fact in mind, it is possible to conclude that Shinran was expressing his intent paradoxically. That is, the word *toku* meant that Shinran, who believed he was a genuine Buddhist monk, refused to yield to any authority that deprived one of religious truth.

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<sup>31</sup> CWS, 289.

<sup>32</sup> Hōnen was given the secular name Fujii Motohiko and exiled to Tosa. Actually, however, he was allowed to stay in Sanuki, one of Shikoku Island.

<sup>33</sup> CWS, 289.

When Shinran's exile ended, he did not cease using the name *toku*, but rather added the word *gu* to this name. Concerning this fact, Rennyō (1415-1499) states:

Shinran was deprived of his status as priest and given a secular name. Hence, he was neither (a) monk nor layman. Because of this, he took as his own surname the word *toku* (stubble-headed). For this, he applied to the court and obtained permission. This petition is still preserved in the Office of Records. After his exile, he signed his name Gutoku Shinran.<sup>34</sup>

*Gu* means foolish and silly. He came to call himself "Gutoku Shinran" from the period after his exile. Therefore this name can be considered paradoxically to reflect his strong determination to live with individual religious freedom. Shinran also used the term *gutoku* to describe his mind. He states:

Through hearing the *shinjin* of the wise, (Hōnen), the heart of myself, Gutoku (foolish/stubble-headed (one)), becomes manifest: The *shinjin* of the wise is such that they are inwardly wise, but outwardly foolish. The heart of Gutoku is such that I am inwardly foolish, outwardly wise.<sup>35</sup>

In this statement, Shinran describes his mind itself as *gutoku*. That is, he expresses that he saw himself as *gutoku* from a paradoxical perspective, and, moreover, thought that his mind included various attachments. This is the condition of *gutoku*. I believe that this same paradoxical thinking can be seen in Shinran's use of the phrase "*hisō hizoku*" as well. The intent of "*hisō hizoku*" cannot be considered only by interpreting it literally and by viewing its historical background. By also considering the paradoxical understanding of the intent of his name Gutoku, Shinran's intent in using the phrase becomes clear. Shigaraki states, "I believe that the words "*hisō hizoku*" express Shinran's fundamental attitude toward his own humanity, which permeated his entire life."<sup>36</sup> So what was Shinran's humanity? It was to seek human dignity. By calling himself "*hisō hizoku*" and Gutoku, he declared that he was a human who could live in the *nembutsu* teaching regardless of any restrictions from the Imperial Court. Specifically, he recovered his dignity as a human, which had been deprived by the authorities for a long time. He uttered these words to express his life in relation to the true teaching by challenging the Buddhist tradition in his age and to protect his human dignity. This is the spirit of revitalizing Buddhism.

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<sup>34</sup> Rennyō, "A Note on the Persecution of the Nembutsu Appended to the Rennyō Manuscript," in *A Record in Lament of Divergences* (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwan-ji Headquarters, 2005), 45.

<sup>35</sup> CWS, 587.

<sup>36</sup> Shigaraki Takamaro, *A Life of Awakening: The Heart of the Shin Buddhist Path* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 2005), 190.

## Living as *Hisō hizoku* for Human Dignity

By living as *hisō hizoku*, he discarded his social status and tried to be one of people who were discriminated as socially low class people called *akunin*. *Akunin* is literally translated as evil person, however, in the Shinran's age, it meant various people who were discriminated against *akunin* such as *karyū* (hunters), *ryōnin* (fishermen), *shōnin* (peddlers), *inujinin* (mercenaries), *raisha* (lepers), etc. By stripping himself of his status of Buddhist monk, he was able to stand on the same level as an *akunin*. This can be seen in his writings:

When we entrust ourselves to the Tathāgata's Primal Vow, we, who are like bits of tile and peddles, are turned into gold. (Fishermen) and hunters, who are like stones and tiles and pebbles, are grasped and never abandoned by the Tathāgata's light.<sup>37</sup>

In the life of *akunin*, he realized that the low class people including himself can't do anything to save themselves except just entrusting themselves to workings of Amida Buddha because they were discriminated socially and religiously. Therefore, he emphasized and developed the teaching of Nembutsu (reciting the Name of Amida Buddha) in his own way because he believes that Amida Buddha saves all sentient beings including the discriminated people without any exception. He expresses this, "the nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances."<sup>38</sup> Shinran's life as *hisō hizoku* meant that he lived in the true teaching (i.e., nembutsu), which could not be violated by anyone else. His relation to governmental and societal authorities was expressed in this attitude. That is, to "live in the true teaching," his attitude had to be firm; and he could not yield to societal authority when it violated his life as a true Buddhist living in nembutsu.

After his break with official Buddhism, Shinran always denied that such authorities had any authority over true belief and practice. This was demonstrated in his relations with his followers. Some people, however, collaborated with the authorities while trying to live "the true teaching." While they understood Shinran's attitude to mean that they should not violate living in nembutsu, their understanding of Shinran was not exact. Shinran addressed these misperceptions:

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<sup>37</sup> CWS, 459-460.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 665. The intention of "the nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances" is expressed in a different way. "I know nothing at all of good or evil. For if I could know thoroughly, as Amida Tathāgata knows, that an act was good, then I would know good. If I could know thoroughly, as the Tathāgata knows, that an act was evil, then I would know evil. But with a foolish being full of blind passions, in this fleeting world – this burning house – all matters without exception are empty and false, totally without truth and sincerity. The nembutsu alone is true and real."

You must not in any way design to spread the nembutsu by utilizing outside people for support. The spread of the nembutsu in that area must come about through the working of the revered Buddha.... If you accept what Jishin-bō is saying – that I have instructed people to spread the nembutsu by relying on outside people as powerful supporters, which I have never said – it will be an unmitigated error.<sup>39</sup>

Shinran rejected the notion that one should rely on or abide by an authority that oppresses the true teaching of Nembutsu and he opposed its transmission. He preached not to live for Nembutsu, but “to live in Nembutsu” and “to live to become able to live in Nembutsu.” Shinran’s understanding was that the nembutsu itself was the only authority for how to live, for morality, and for proper understanding. This idea is seen in Shinran’s writings about what nembutsu means:

Those passages reveal that saying the Name breaks through all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations. Saying the Name is the right act, supreme, true, and excellent. The right act is the nembutsu. The nembutsu is *Namu-amida-butsu*. *Namu-amida-butsu* is right-mindedness.<sup>40</sup>

Shinran explains that saying the Name breaks “all the ignorance of sentient beings and fulfills all their aspirations.” However, the true reason for describing the importance of saying the Name connects to Shinran’s strong devotion to living in Buddha’s teaching which was at the root of his Buddhist understanding. That is, eliminating ignorance is the practice of benefiting others through “turning” one’s self-mind. Therefore “the right act is the nembutsu. The nembutsu is *Namu-amida-butsu*. *Namu-amida-butsu* is right-mindedness.” “To live in Nembutsu” is receiving Amida’s Primal Vow, and living by relying on Dharma (truth). This way of thinking about the nembutsu and religious practice and life extended even to Shinran’s ideas about the contemporary society. For example, he stated:

Even though manor lords, bailiffs, and landowners are involved in wrongdoing, people should not be confused. No one can destroy the Buddhist teaching. As a metaphor for those affiliated with the Buddhist teaching who act to destroy it, it is said (in a sūtra) that they are like the worms within the body of the lion that injure the lion. Thus, there are people affiliated with the Buddhist teaching who attack and obstruct people of nembutsu.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 568. This statement is a part of letter Shinran wrote to Shinjō-bō, one of Shinran’s followers in the northern area in Japan. After Shinran left this area, the dispute about the interpretation of his thought brought out by some misinterpreters. This letter was written to solve the problem in these contexts.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 566.



In this passage, Shinran states that although "manor lords, bailiffs, and landowners" have large forces for the oppression for nembutsu, they cannot confuse the people who believe in nembutsu. That is, to live in nembutsu is to live and be in a way that is not disturbed by power. Here, too, is the root of Shinran's description that "the nembutsu is the single path free of hindrances." That Shinran is not describing any secular power, but rather the people who live in nembutsu themselves, is emphasized by his use of the metaphor of the lion. He states that these may be wrong-minded people and these people with power may even call themselves Buddhists who act to hinder the true teaching of the nembutsu, but the true teaching itself will never be destroyed, and the nembutsu followers who must face such hindrances are nevertheless free to live the true teaching for themselves. However, without a strong trust and deep understanding, the people cannot live in the nembutsu by themselves. This explains Shinran's strict attitude toward living in society and honoring the practices of Buddhism. In addition, Shinran provides a caveat:

In the final analysis, it would be splendid if all people who say the nembustu, not just yourself, do so not with thoughts of themselves, but for the sake of the imperial court and for the sake of the people of the country.<sup>42</sup>

That is, Shinran intended that the people who live in nembutsu should live in nembutsu for the wellbeing of all, powerful and weak. This thought clarifies Shinran's wish for equality. Powerful people could never truly disturb the people who truly live in nembutsu. Rather, powerful people were disturbed living in nembutsu, due to their own self-attachment. Shinran's strong rejection of political authorities and his great emphasis on the equality of all people became the impetus for a new way of thinking about religion and society in medieval Japan. Even in Shinran's own time, he used the word *dōbō*, equally illuminated by Amida's light and working, to refer to his fellow practitioners. Although Shinran himself may not have used such modern concepts as human freedom and human dignity, we can see that these kinds of human rights are certainly at the core of Shinran's way of thinking about people, power, and society. And for Shinran, the nexus of both individual freedom and social harmony was the nembutsu.

### **Conclusion: Engaged Buddhism According to Shinran**

In sections one and two, the shared nature between Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of Engaged Buddhism and Shinran's intent of using the words "*gutoku*" and "*hisō hizoku*" was clarified as "revitalizing Buddhism." Revitalizing Buddhism does not only refer the concept, but it also means how we live as those who live with the teachings of the Buddha.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 560.

Therefore, Shinran had already argued Thich Nhat Hanh's concept of Engaged Buddhism through his declaration of being *gutoku* and *hisō hizoku*. In other words, to live as *hisō hizoku* itself means the beginning of Engaged Buddhism.

However, in Shinran and Jōdo Shinshū's thought, how Engaged Buddhism can be related is debated today, and I would like to suggest that there is a key to developing Engaged Buddhism in Jōdo Shinshū with consideration of living as *hisō hizoku* in the present.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Kenneth Tanaka suggests that Engaged Buddhism can be understood as a benefit of Jōgyō Daishi. From another perspective, Esho Shimazu considers Engaged Buddhism in the Sango Wakuran Incident.



## D. T. SUZUKI AND THE QUESTION OF WAR

**Kemmyō Taira Satō**

*in collaboration with*

**Thomas Kirchner<sup>1</sup>**

### Introduction

Few books in recent years have so deeply influenced the thinking of Buddhists in Japan and elsewhere as Brian Daizen Victoria's *Zen at War*.<sup>2</sup> The book's great contribution is that it has succeeded, where others have not, in bringing to public attention the largely unquestioning support of Japanese Buddhists for their nation's militarism in the years from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 (when Japan opened up to the world after nearly 250 years of feudal isolation) to the end of the Second World War.

As a Japanese Buddhist myself, I personally feel a deep sense of gratitude that this aspect of our history has been so clearly brought to light because it is

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<sup>1</sup> This article was first published in Japanese as "Suzuki Daisetsu no makoto," in *Matsugaoka Bunko kenkyū nenpō* 21 (2007): 1-56. It was translated and revised by the author and his translator-collaborator for publication in English in *The Eastern Buddhist*, 39.1 (2008): 61-120; and reprinted in a slightly updated form in three installments in *The Middle Way* (TMW), published by the Buddhist Society, London: Part I, August 1, 2009, TMW, 84.2: 99-113; Part II, November 1, 2009, TMW, 84.3: 139-157; and Part III, February 1, 2010, TMW, 84.4: 1-16. We wish to thank the Eastern Buddhist Society (EBS), Kyoto, and the Buddhist Society, London, for permission to republish it here. The essay in the present book incorporates further updates to the previous versions. Scholars are referred to the EBS online version for more detailed bibliographical information. *The Collected Works of D. T. Suzuki* refers to the new enlarged forty-volume edition of the *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshū* (SDZ) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1999-2003), the new volumes were edited mainly by Kirita Kiyohide.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Daizen Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

imperative that all Japanese Buddhists recognize and take responsibility for their tradition's complicity in the militarist government's actions. This applies to the Pure Land and Nichiren traditions as much as it does to Zen. Unless Japanese Buddhists sincerely repent of these mistakes and determine never to repeat them, they cannot awaken to the true spirit of peace that is the necessary starting point for the creation of a world free of war. Buddhists everywhere must rediscover this spirit and make it the basis of all their activities, both at the personal and institutional levels. Otherwise, even if we promote harmony and nonviolence externally, internally our thoughts and actions will not partake of the Dharma-seal of Enlightenment.

Despite its influence, however, *Zen at War* left me with the impression that Victoria, in his desire to present as strong a case as possible, often allowed his political concerns to take precedence over scholarly accuracy. This was especially the case with regard to his portrayal of Daisetz Teitarō Suzuki (1870-1966), whom the author depicts as an active supporter of the Japanese war effort. This is a very serious accusation in view of the importance of the issues raised in *Zen at War*.

I became closely acquainted with Suzuki and his views on war when I worked at the Matsugaoka Bunko in Kamakura under his guidance from 1964 until his death in 1966. This period of contact with Suzuki, as well as my own study of his works in the years since then, have left me with an impression of Suzuki and his thought that is far different from the picture presented by Victoria. This disparity, combined with a desire to set the record straight, has inspired the present attempt to clarify what I regard as Suzuki's true attitude to war.

All scholars employ quotations from relevant texts to support and develop their arguments, and are of course at liberty to select those passages that best suit their purposes. Even so, Victoria's highly selective citations from Suzuki's works often seem motivated less by a desire to clarify Suzuki's actual views than by a determination to present a certain picture of the man and his work. As I read *Zen at War*, wondering if Suzuki had indeed taken the positions that Victoria attributes to him, I checked each and every quotation against the original Japanese texts, an experience that left me with a number of questions regarding Victoria's use of Suzuki's writings. Ideally, every position attributed to Suzuki in *Zen at War* deserves close re-examination, but considerations of space do not allow this. I shall attempt, nevertheless, to evaluate the points Victoria raises and the evidence he presents as I clarify what I feel are Suzuki's true views on war. In the process I shall quote liberally from his works in order to provide the reader with as full a context as possible.

Victoria attacks Suzuki on several different points: (1) Suzuki, particularly in his first book, *A New Theory of Religion*,<sup>3</sup> and subsequent writings on the samurai and bushido, actively supported Japan's militarist expansionism and its

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<sup>3</sup> *A New Theory of Religion* (*Shin Shūkyō Ron*, 1896, in SDZ, 23: 1-147).

actions; (2) he was a proponent of Japan's aggression in China during the Second World War; and (3) Suzuki in his postwar writings continued to defend the war and attempted to evade responsibility for his own wartime complicity.

These criticisms, if true, would of course reveal Suzuki to be a willing collaborator in the tragic course followed by Japan during the Second World War. Let us therefore examine Suzuki's writings in the context of Victoria's critiques in order to determine the merits of the latter's allegations. I have adopted a primarily chronological approach, not only for the sake of clarity but also to show how Suzuki's thought developed over the course of his long life.

### **A New Theory of Religion**

*A New Theory of Religion*, and in particular the chapter "The Relationship of Religion and the State", is the text most often cited by Victoria, whose interpretation of it forms one of the foundations of his characterization of Suzuki's views as nationalist and militarist. As it is also Suzuki's first published book, it is an especially appropriate text with which to begin our discussion.

It would be helpful first to briefly situate the book in the context of Suzuki's seventy-year career as an author and educator. *A New Theory of Religion* was published in 1896, when Suzuki was just twenty-six years old and before he had undergone any of the most formative experiences of his early adulthood: the Zen awakening that he describes as occurring in December 1896 and as fundamentally altering the way he interacted with the world; his first extended residence in the United States and Europe, between 1897 and 1909; and his marriage in 1911 to the American woman Beatrice Erskine Lane (1875-1939).<sup>4</sup> His country, Japan, was just twenty-eight years out of the feudal era and still under the threat of colonization by the Western powers that controlled much of the rest of Asia. Although in the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War Japan had prevailed over the forces of Qing-dynasty China, the tripartite intervention of Russia, Germany and France in 1895 deprived it of its territorial gains, forcing it to recognize that it was not yet in a position to resist the European powers militarily and leaving it acutely aware of the fact that nearly every other nation in Asia had been colonized either economically or militarily by European nations.

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<sup>4</sup> From a Zen point of view, the fact that Suzuki spent the years after his first awakening – the time of "post-Enlightenment training", traditionally regarded as the period when the awakening is clarified, refined, and then integrated into everyday life – in America is highly significant, for it means that the foundations of his development as a Zen thinker were laid while he was in constant contact with the peoples, cultures, and languages of the West. Suzuki's eleven years working under the liberal thinkers and publishers Edward Hegeler (1835-1910) and Paul Carus (1852-1919) in the town of LaSalle, Illinois, virtually without contact with other Japanese provided him with the ideal situation in which to internalize the English language and to assimilate cultural views quite different from those of Japan.

Citing these historical circumstances, Victoria presents *A New Theory of Religion* as a central text in the development of a Buddhist rationale for the military build-up that Japan had embarked upon in response to the challenge from the West:

The short period of peace that lasted from 1896 to 1903 was also a time for Buddhist scholars to turn their attention to the theoretical side of the relationship between Buddhism, the state, and war. Interestingly, it was the twenty-six-year-old Buddhist scholar and student of Zen, D. T. Suzuki, who took the lead in this effort. In November 1896, just one month before having his initial enlightenment experience (*kenshō*), he published a book entitled *A Treatise on the New (Meaning of) Religion (Shin Shūkyō Ron)*... (in which he devoted) an entire chapter to “The Relationship of Religion and the State.”<sup>5</sup>

*A New Theory of Religion*, as Victoria notes, is a wide-ranging collection of essays on various subjects relating to religion, with chapter titles such as “God”, “Faith”, “The Relationship of Religion and the State”, “The Distinction between Religion and Morality” and “Religion and the Family”. The chapter in question, “The Relationship of Religion and the State”, deals with an issue of natural concern in any overview of the meaning of religion: the relation between the political reality of the state, the ideals of religion, and the inner, spiritual life of the individual. As part of its consideration of this relationship, it discusses the subject of religion and war. The following are the passages in “The Relationship of Religion and the State” most directly related to this particular topic:

Let us look at the actual situation among the world’s nations today. Each has established a country on a piece of this tiny earth, claiming that country’s territory as *its* territory, that country’s products as *its* products, and that country’s people as *its* people. If conflicts arise between the interests of the respective nations, they soon forsake peace and, taking up arms, kill people, halt commerce, and destroy production, continuing at this until one side or the other is defeated. However, owing perhaps to their ideals of civilized behavior, they prefer not to admit that self-interest is behind all of this, so they always use “justice” as an excuse. “We attack them,” they claim, “for the purpose of maintaining long-term peace in the East (or the West, or the World).” Or, “They ignored our rights, and so, in the name of justice, we cannot remain silent.” Or, “We desire only to help that weak and impoverished nation attain independence and raise it to the status of a civilized state.” All this talk sounds so reasonable, as if war could not have been avoided. But the truth of the situation is ugly indeed. Such countries are simply pursuing their own self-interests and at the same time curtailing the power of the other country. And this is accepted, because regardless of what the truth of the matter might be, “justice” can always be invoked as an excuse.

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<sup>5</sup> Victoria, 22.

And what of the weak and impoverished nations? No matter how much their rights are violated and their peace destroyed, no matter how much justice for them is ignored, and no matter how much humiliation they are subjected to, they have no choice but to stifle their anger and hide their resentment as they keep silent and bide their time. It is they who are truly in a position to cry for justice, but because they lack the power to implement it, they cannot even invoke its name. International law exists in name only and is of no help to countries such as they. Those with the military power to do so call that which is wrong, right, and that which is evil, good, and in broad daylight rob and pillage as they please.

Even so, the age of barbarism is long gone. Nations are ever more clever in their strategy, ever more subtle in their approach. No longer do they turn immediately to force when faced with a problem, as the barbarians did. Their first tactic is diplomacy, through which they attempt to negotiate a solution. These so-called "diplomatic" initiatives are nothing but grand deceptions, employing bluffs to intimidate or cajolery to deceive, forming alliances in secret while feigning antagonism in public, or begging for compassion in front while sneering scornfully in back. Although the strategies are infinite in variety, in the end all are nothing but scheming and intrigue. Only after they see that all their subterfuges have been tried and no more tricks remain do the nations send their iron warships out to sea and dispatch their cannons to the fields. This is done as a last resort, and therein, I believe, lies the real difference between barbarism and civilization. We might therefore characterize present-day international relations as beginning in self-interest, continuing in abuse, and ending in exhaustion.

This is, unfortunately, a credible depiction of contemporary associations between the nations. One has to admit that it diverges sharply from the ideals of religion, and it is only natural to question whether the state and religion can ever coexist. . . .

Argued in temporal terms, the formation of the state necessarily occurs at some point during the evolution of society, and must serve as a means to help humanity bring to realization the purpose of its existence. However, if seen as a stage that must be passed through in order to realize our purpose, we have no choice than to bear with it even if, for a time, it seems to be distancing us from that purpose. This is because that which exists as a necessary response to the demands of a particular time and place always partakes of the truth of that particular time and place; and this is known as relative truth. Moreover, if a relative truth appears in response to a natural necessity, how does it differ from an absolute truth? Insofar as both bear the nature of truth, we should act in accordance with them. Thus, although the state may be but a means, it comprises an intimation of truth. Religion too must to some extent vary in form according to time and place. That is, religion must, at the beginning, seek to support the existence of the state,<sup>6</sup> in accordance with its history and the feelings of its people. . . .

Although we do not know today what direction the future progress of society will take (and even if, as some scholars foretell, it becomes a single

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<sup>6</sup> This clause that "religion must, at the beginning, seek to support the existence of the state" appears in SDZ, 23: 139.



undifferentiated global entity), no one would agree that the present condition of international confrontation and rivalry constitutes the ideal state of things.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, for the present one must act in accordance with the situation as it is. Therefore, as is clear from the discussion above, all enterprises that contribute to the progress of the nation should be undertaken, while keeping in mind that the nation as it is today is still short of the final goal and that it is desirable always to seek to improve it. This (dynamic toward improvement) is truly the sphere of religion. Religion does not attempt to subvert the foundations of the state and replace them with something new; and it simply strives for the state's progress and development in accordance with its history and makeup.

Thus the interests of religion and the state do not clash; and rather, both sides can only hope for wholeness when they aid and support each other. Granted, the present state of ethics governing the relations between nations smells of the barbaric and is thus quite contrary to the ideals of religion, but the fact that justice and humanitarianism are even spoken about indicates that at the core (of those ethics) there is present at least a grain of moral sense. It is from within this inner moral sense that we must germinate the seed of religion. How, then, is this to happen?

The problem is easily resolved if one thinks of religion as an entity with the state as its body, and of the state as something that develops with religion as its spirit. In other words, religion and the state form a unity; and if every action and movement of the state takes on a religious character and if every word and action of religion takes on a state character, whatever is done for the sake of the state is done for religion, and whatever is done for the sake of religion is done for the state. The two are one, and one is the two; differentiation is equality, and equality is differentiation; and perfectly fused, there is not a hair's width of separation between religion and the state.

If we look at this (unified relationship between religion and the state) from the point of view of international morality, we see that the purpose of maintaining soldiers and encouraging the military arts is not to conquer other countries and deprive them of their rights or freedom. Rather they are done only to preserve the existence of one's country and prevent it from being encroached upon by unruly heathens. The construction of heavy warships and the casting of cannon are not to increase personal gain and suppress the prosperity of others. Rather, they are done only to prevent the history of one's own country from disturbance by injustice and aggression. Conducting commerce and working to increase production are not for the purpose of building up material wealth in order to subdue other nations. Rather, they are done only in order to further expand human knowledge and bring about the perfection of morality. Thus if an aggressive country comes and obstructs one's commerce or violates one's rights, this would truly interrupt the progress of all humanity. In the name of religion one's country could not submit to this. There

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<sup>7</sup> This portion of the article is also quoted in Kirita Kiyohide, "D. T. Suzuki on Society and the State", in James W. Heisig and John C. Maraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994), 53-54 and Victoria, 23-25. The translation here is based largely on their translations, but we have made significant editorial changes.

would be no choice other than to take up arms, not for the purpose of slaying the enemy, nor for the purpose of pillaging cities, let alone for the purpose of acquiring wealth. It would be, instead, simply to punish the people of the country representing injustice in order that justice might prevail.<sup>8</sup> What could be self-seeking about this? In any event, this would constitute religious conduct. As long as the state takes care not to lose this moral sense, one can anticipate the step by step advancement of humanity and the fulfillment of universal ideals.

The morality of the individual toward the state is similar to this. In peacetime one works diligently, day and night, seeking to promote the advancement of (such endeavors as) agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, art and science, and technology, never forgetting that the purpose of these endeavors is the advancement of all humanity. This is what is called “peacetime religion.” However, should hostilities commence with a foreign country, sailors fight on sea and soldiers fight in the fields, swords flashing and cannon smoke belching, moving this way and that while “regarding their own lives as light as goose feathers and their duty is as heavy as Mount Taishan.” Should they fall on the battlefield, they have no regrets. This is what is called “religion during the time of a (national) emergency.” Religion does not necessarily involve concepts like “Buddha” or “God.” If one fulfills the demands of one’s duties, what could be more religious than that?<sup>9</sup>

There is certainly much in these passages that raise images of nationalism, particularly when viewed in the context of Japan’s subsequent history. An in-depth examination of this issue is obviously beyond the scope of this article, but I think it is at least necessary, before rushing to label Suzuki as a nationalist on the basis of the nineteenth-century prose of his youth, to consider whether

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<sup>8</sup> The translation of the preceding four sentences follows Victoria, with several significant differences. Victoria has, “Therefore, if there is a lawless country which comes and obstructs our commerce, or tramples on our rights, this is something that would truly interrupt the progress of all humanity. In the name of religion our country could not submit to this. Thus, we would have no choice but to take up arms, not for the purpose of slaying the enemy, nor for the purpose of pillaging cities, let alone for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Instead, we would simply punish the people of the country representing injustice in order that justice might prevail.” The terms that he translates as “our commerce”, “our rights” and “our country” can just as legitimately be translated with the more neutral expressions “one’s commerce”, “one’s rights” and “one’s country”. These renderings are closer to the overall tone of the article (which is expressed in general terms) and of the paragraph in which they appear, where clearly neutral terms such as “one’s country” precede the usage of “our commerce”, “our rights” and “our country”. The use of “we” as the subject of the last two lines in Victoria’s translation does not reflect the original Japanese sentences, which are general statements in which no subject is identified.

<sup>9</sup> *A New Theory of Religion*, in SDZ, 23: 134-140.

motives other than a desire to support militarism might have informed his words.<sup>10</sup>

As a starting point to clarifying Suzuki's position in "The Relationship of Religion and the State", it is helpful to examine the interpretation of this chapter given by Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–1986), a Japanese scholar whose views on the relation between Japanese Buddhism and militarism were one of the primary influences on Victoria's thought.<sup>11</sup> Ichikawa, quoting statements in the chapter such as "religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state",<sup>12</sup> regards the "The Relationship of Religion and the State" as a nationalist essay supportive of the 1894–1895 Sino-Japanese war:

Suzuki writes further that "if a lawless country (referring to China)<sup>13</sup> comes and obstructs our commerce, or tramples on our rights, this is something that would truly interrupt the progress of all humanity. In the name of religion our country could not submit to this. Thus, we would have no choice but to take up arms, not for the purpose of slaying the enemy, nor for the purpose of pillaging cities, let alone for the purpose of acquiring wealth. Instead, we would simply punish people of the country representing injustice in order that justice might prevail. How is it possible that we could seek anything for ourselves? In any event, this is what is called religious conduct."<sup>14</sup> Suzuki was claiming, in other words, that the Sino-Japanese War was a religious action undertaken to chastise the "belligerence" of China and promote human progress. This argument is, in form at the very least, precisely the same as the line of reasoning that Japan used to justify its fifteen-year conflict in Asia and the Pacific, glorifying it as a "Holy War for the Establishment of a New Order in East Asia." It seems not to have occurred to Suzuki that this "punitive war against a belligerent nation" was fought, not on Japanese soil against an invading China, but on the Asian continent in the territory of the Chinese. Nor did he seem able to see the situation from the standpoint of China, whose land and people were what was being "violated" in this conflict. It was his unreflective stance that allowed Suzuki to regard this invasive war as "religious action" undertaken "in the name of religion." This way of thinking is, to use the words of the *Record of Linji*, "To be misled by the delusions of others, to be taken in by the falsehood around one."<sup>15</sup>

Victoria, following Ichikawa's views, states in his Foreword:

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<sup>10</sup> It is relevant to note that the types of expressions seen in this early piece regarding the relation of religion and the state are not seen in Suzuki's later works, which, as we shall see below, are clearly cautious regarding this relationship.

<sup>11</sup> Victoria, ix-x, 167.

<sup>12</sup> The source of this quotation is *A New Theory of Religion*, in SDZ, 23: 139.

<sup>13</sup> The words in parentheses are Ichikawa's.

<sup>14</sup> The source of this quotation is *A New Theory of Religion*, in SDZ, 23: 139-140. The translation of the quoted material is that in Victoria, 24-25.

<sup>15</sup> *The Religion of Japanese Fascism (Nihon fashizumuka no Shūkyō)*, 35; as cited in Victoria, x.

With his oft-pictured gentle and sagacious appearance of later years, Suzuki is revered among many in the West as a true man of Zen. Yet he wrote that “religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state,”<sup>16</sup> followed by the assertion that the Chinese were “unruly heathens”<sup>17</sup> that Japan should punish “in the name of religion.”<sup>18</sup>

Despite these depictions of “The Relationship of Religion and the State”, a fair reading of the chapter reveals little to support Ichikawa’s and Victoria’s contention that Suzuki is referring to China when he speaks of “a lawless country” or that his comments on war apply to the Sino-Japanese War. The three-paragraph section (above), beginning with “Let us look at the actual situation among the world’s nations today”, is clearly a generalized portrayal of the contemporary attitudes and actions of the world’s powerful nations, modeled on those of the Western imperial nations. Suzuki’s description, flowery though it is, provides a fairly accurate picture of the sort of political and economic strategies that these countries employed in subjugating China, Southeast Asia and the East Indies and were still attempting to apply, with considerably less success, to Japan during the late nineteenth century.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> From *A New Theory of Religion*, in SDZ, 23: 139. Victoria’s translation of Suzuki’s original Japanese is problematic. “Religion should, first of all, seek to preserve the existence of the state”, a translation of *sunawachi shūkyō wa mazu kokka no sonzai o ijisen koto o hakaru*, is questionable for its rendering of the word *mazu* in the original. *Mazu* can mean anything from “the most important thing” or “first of all” (the nuance that Victoria gives it) to “for a start” or “to begin with”. The context of the full discussion (see the text indicated at note 6 above) is one in which the existence of the state is regarded as a temporary stage in the development of human society but an unavoidable one (and thus one that religion must work with during that stage of social development). It suggests that a closer translation would be, as it is rendered above, “That is, religion must, at the beginning, seek to support the existence of the state.”

<sup>17</sup> The term translated by Victoria as “unruly heathens”, *jama gedō*, and linked by him and Ichikawa to the Chinese, would logically apply not to the Chinese but, if anything, to non-Asian powers. Both *jama* and *gedō* are originally Buddhist terms that refer to those who hinder or oppose the Buddhist teachings, which the Chinese unquestionably were not. See also note 19.

<sup>18</sup> Victoria, x.

<sup>19</sup> In the decades before Suzuki wrote, China had been attacked by Britain during the two opium wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860), wars fought by the British to preserve the Chinese opium trade (lucrative for Britain but tragic for China). After its defeat China was forced to sign a series of “unequal treaties” in which it agreed to pay large indemnities, open a number of ports for trade, accept extraterritoriality for British citizens, and permit the sale of opium. France, Germany and Russia soon demanded, and received, trading rights similar to those of Britain. By the mid-nineteenth century Britain had also colonized India and Burma, and France’s colonization of Indochina was complete. Meanwhile Russia had moved into Central Asia and had further designs on territories in East Asia. All this was common knowledge at the time when Suzuki was writing. The

The second section quoted above, in which Suzuki explicitly speaks of war – the section that Ichikawa and Victoria represent as justifying Japan’s actions in the Sino-Japanese War – never mentions China, and its description of a possible attack and defensive response is written in the conditional tense, not in the past tense as would be the case with a war already finished. The very fact that Suzuki does *not* refer to the war (and, indeed, rarely mentions it anywhere in the massive body of writings he produced)<sup>20</sup> is significant in itself given the virtually universal approval of the war in Japan at the time and the enthusiasm with which it was supported by other Japanese intellectuals. Moreover, Suzuki is clearly describing a defensive war fought on the home territory of the threatened nation, which was manifestly not the case for Japan in its war with China. Ichikawa provides no reason, much less any evidence, for his assertion that this quite self-evident fact “did not occur” to Suzuki.

Furthermore, a nationalistic reading of the entire chapter would be out of accord with the rest of *A New Theory of Religion*. As mentioned above, the book is composed of a series of essays on topics of basic concern to religion, such as God, faith, ethics and the role of religion in family life – subjects that are precisely what one would expect to find in a general overview of religion and its place in human existence. The chapter in question, “The Relationship of Religion and the State”, follows this pattern, discussing in a general way the evolving relationship between the individual, religion and the political reality of the state, with no specific religions or nations being named. The discussion includes the question of war, as any responsible analysis of the relationship between religion and the state must. Although the passages on war are expressed in a nineteenth-century prose that does have a certain nationalistic tone, a balanced view of their content shows them to constitute, as we shall consider below, a justification of defensive war only (as we shall also see, the record shows Suzuki to have been consistently opposed to invasive war).

These early comments by Suzuki on religion and the state can easily be seen in a context that is not nationalistic. For example, let us look at the following passage cited earlier:

The problem is easily resolved if one thinks of religion as an entity with the state as its body, and of the state as something developing with religion as its spirit. In other words, religion and the state form a unity; and if every action and movement of the state takes on a religious character and if every word and action of religion takes on a state character, whatever is done for the sake of the

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mention of “aggressive nations” would have brought the Western powers to mind, not China.

<sup>20</sup> One case is his article 1910 in the journal *Shin Bukkyō* (New Buddhism) (see the text cited below at note 42: SDZ, 30: 407–408), in which he mentions the war in a context unflattering to the Japanese military.

state is done for religion, and whatever is done for the sake of religion is done for the state.<sup>21</sup>

This passage, taken alone, can certainly be seen as advocating the de facto subordination of religion to the state, but, appearing as it does in the context of Suzuki's explanation of how it might be possible to nurture the flicker of spirituality that exists even in the contentious environment of governmental and international relations, it can also be seen as a relatively straightforward expression of the Confucian ideal of a balanced and harmonious relation between the spiritual and political aspects of human existence.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Suzuki sets quite strict conditions for attainment of this unity between religion and the state. He describes a mutual dynamic in which "if every action and movement of the state takes on a religious character", "whatever is done for the sake of the state is done for religion," and "if every word and action of religion takes on a state character", "whatever is done for the sake of religion is done for the state". This was for Suzuki clearly the ideal and not the reality. As we shall see shortly, Suzuki's later writings show that when it came to the actual political situation in Japan at this time, he was quite critical of the direction in which the country was heading.

Viewed in this context, Suzuki's statements on the legitimacy of resistance when "an aggressive country comes and obstructs one's commerce or violates one's rights" can most reasonably be seen not as a description of the war with China but as a general, straightforward argument for the justness of defensive war, an argument in which Suzuki outlines the conditions under which armed resistance would be warranted. Indeed, one can take the evidence just as it is – Suzuki's support of defensive war, coupled with his willingness to resist the current of Japanese public opinion by remaining silent on the Sino-Japanese conflict – and arrive at a conclusion quite the opposite of Ichikawa's. Given the facts that the conditions Suzuki describes as justifying armed defense – an impoverished nation exploited by stronger ones, its culture suppressed, its commerce obstructed, its rights trampled and its territory invaded – applied more to late-nineteenth-century China than they did to Japan and that Japan was among the nations threatening China, Suzuki's words can even be seen as an implicit criticism of the Sino-Japanese War insofar as it was aggressive in nature. At the very least, this interpretation is more in accord with the evidence than is Ichikawa's in view of the silence Suzuki maintained on this war and the consistently critical stance he took with regard to the Japanese military, as we shall see in his writings below.

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<sup>21</sup> *A New Theory of Religion*, in SDZ, 23: 139.

<sup>22</sup> Suzuki did in fact have deep connections with Confucianism. His first Zen teacher, Imakita Kōsen (1815-1892), was a Confucian scholar before turning to Zen, and many of Suzuki's publications during his early stay in America dealt with Confucianism (e.g., "A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy", published in three parts in *The Monist*, vols. 17 and 18, in 1907 and 1908).

Before considering these writings, there is an important issue that must be addressed, that of pacifism. Suzuki's forthright support for defensive war raises one of the issues central to the present discussion: whether war of any sort, aggressive *or* defensive, is justified in the context of Buddhism. This is a complex question for that religion, which has evolved from a tradition of world-renouncers to one that serves as the major faith of many large nations. Buddhism is usually associated with a strong emphasis on peace and nonviolence, and indeed much of Victoria's attack on Suzuki rests on a presumption that true Buddhism is necessarily pacifist. *Zen at War* discusses the "just war" concept in Buddhism at length, particularly in Chapter 7, but always in contexts where the concept has been abused to justify wars that are manifestly unjust.<sup>23</sup> No serious discussion is given to the possibility that there may indeed be situations – for example, clear-cut cases of genocide or invasive wars – where the use of force is warranted even for Buddhists. Suzuki's position was that of someone who recognized that war has been a persistent element in the lives of nations and that aggressive countries throughout history have attacked weaker ones, forcing even Buddhist nations to face the question of when armed resistance may be justified.

There is no consensus on this issue – even the briefest review of the literature on the subject shows that serious, thoughtful Buddhists have been debating it for centuries, without reaching any final conclusions. Since a full discussion of the issues involved is beyond the scope of this article, it will have to suffice for present purposes to acknowledge that there are at least two sides to the issue and that the position Suzuki took in this early volume is one that other committed Buddhists have publicly preferred to an absolutely pacifist position.

The pacifist position, in the sense of a total rejection of war and killing, has always been the ideal for the world-renouncing ordained saṅgha, enjoined upon them by numerous passages in the Buddhist canonical literature,<sup>24</sup> but Buddhist supporters of the notion of just war point out that with respect to his lay followers the Buddha recognized the necessity of armies and, by implication, the use of those armies.<sup>25</sup> With the emergence of Buddhism as a religion of governments and large numbers of householders, questions that committed world-renouncers do not have to face take on great importance. Do Buddhists have the right to defend themselves and their families from attackers? Or their

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<sup>23</sup> In the second edition of *Zen at War*, Victoria devotes an entire chapter, "Was it Buddhism?" (pp. 192-231), to the question of Buddhism and pacifism.

<sup>24</sup> The Pāli *Vinaya* states that "A member of the Buddha's order should not intentionally destroy the life of any being down to a worm or an ant" (H. Oldenberg, ed., *Vinaya piṭakam* (London: Luzac and Company, 1964), 1: 78.4).

<sup>25</sup> In the conversations recorded in numerous Pāli canonical texts between the Buddha and rulers, prominent among them the kings Pasenadi and Bimbisāra, the Buddha never enjoins them to abandon the maintenance of armies or the protection of the state. Certain Mahāyāna canonical scriptures, notably the *Upāya Kauśalya Sūtra*, go further, hypothesizing situations in which it would be justifiable for a bodhisattva to kill in order to prevent a greater number of deaths.

countries from invaders? If not, were the Chinese Buddhists wrong to defend themselves against the Japanese armies in the 1930s? In point of fact, throughout history all Buddhist nations – including those with strong traditions of *ahimsā* – have recognized the right of self-defense and found it necessary to maintain militaries. To reject defensive war for Buddhism is to reject virtually every historical manifestation of this important world religion and to restrict “true Buddhism” to a pristine “original Buddhism” (itself a hypothetical construct) and certain groups of world-renouncers.

It is in this context, I believe, that the statements on war by Suzuki in “The Relationship of Religion and the State” must be understood. If the maintenance of a military, and thus by implication its use, have been found necessary by all Buddhist nations, this is clearly a topic that an author writing on the subject of “The Relationship of Religion and the State” must comment upon. When doing so – if the author is to deal with the topic honestly – it is essential to clarify the criteria that determine when the use of force is justified (*jus ad bellum*), precisely *because* nations waging invasive, aggressive wars attempt to characterize them as just (militarist Japan during the 1930s being, of course, a prime example). The conditions that Suzuki delineates in “The Relation of Religion and the State” – opposing obstructions to commerce, resisting invasion, preserving the existence of one’s country – although they could have been more diplomatically expressed, are basically ones that have been recognized everywhere as *jus ad bellum*.

There is one more matter that needs to be considered before continuing, a procedural issue relating to Victoria’s use of source materials both here and elsewhere. In introducing the chapter “The Relationship of Religion and the State”, he writes:

(Suzuki devotes) an entire chapter (of *A New Treatise on Religion*) to the “Relationship of Religion and the State.” If only because Suzuki’s views in this area are so little known in the West, it is instructive to take a careful look at his comments. Much more important, however, the views that Suzuki expressed then parallel the rationale that institutional Buddhism’s leaders would subsequently give for their support of Japan’s war efforts up through the end of the Pacific War.<sup>26</sup>

The claim that Suzuki’s views “parallel” the rationale of institutional Buddhist leaders who supported the war, in itself a questionable assertion, implies that Suzuki shared the views of those leaders and that his obscure early text, published half a century earlier, was in some way responsible for their thinking. As Victoria provides no evidence of an actual connection between Suzuki’s views and those of the pro-war Buddhist leaders, this claim amounts to an attempt to insinuate such a connection through guilt by association. Unfortunately, guilt by association is a polemical device Victoria employs

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<sup>26</sup> Victoria, 22-23.



repeatedly in *Zen at War* and in other writings criticizing Buddhist figures. One such instance, and a clear refutation of the type of logic behind it, is offered by the Japanese scholar Miyata Kōichi of Sōka University:

Victoria quotes a passage from Makiguchi's 1903 work *Jinsei Chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life), in which Makiguchi notes that Russia was engaged in a policy of expansionism in the search for year-round harbors. Victoria asserts that this world view was identical to that of the government of Japan, a view used to justify the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), then the annexation of the Korean Peninsula (1910) and the founding of the puppet state of Manchukuo (1932). Victoria's assertion, and his implicit criticism of Makiguchi, simplistically links analysis of the global situation with the policies taken in response to that. Makiguchi was merely voicing what was then the accepted understanding of the geopolitical motives for Russia's expansionist policies, a view held not only by the Japanese government, but shared by the British, with whom Japan had formed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. Certainly I know of no scholar of political geography who rejects this commonsense view in favor of one that Russia posed no danger. If we were to extend Victoria's argument, the logical conclusion would be to find not only Makiguchi but everyone who studies political geography guilty of complicity with Japanese aggression.<sup>27</sup>

Similarly, it is hardly surprising that those who sought to justify Japan's invasive wars would use arguments "paralleling" Suzuki's attempts to define the legitimate use of force because those who support any war always endeavor to present that war as just. Any apparent connection between Suzuki's position and that of the pro-war Buddhist leaders is superficial, as Suzuki was making a philosophical case for war to defend the nation from an invading force while the Buddhist leaders were supporting what was clearly a war of aggression abroad. One can argue for the existence of certain circumstances in which armed resistance is just, and without contradiction one can strongly oppose wars that do not fit those conditions. In Suzuki's case, the issue thus becomes not whether he expressed ideas that "paralleled" or "were similar to" the ideas expressed by war supporters but what his actual views were regarding Japan's military and its wars.

## Writings Prior to Pearl Harbor

Despite Victoria's efforts to portray Suzuki as an important militarist thinker, it quickly becomes apparent from a review of Suzuki's writings that military issues were not of major interest to him. In the vast body of writing he

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<sup>27</sup> Kōichi Miyata, "Critical Comments on Brian Victoria's "Engaged Buddhism: A skeleton in the closet?""", in *Journal of Global Buddhism* 3 (2002): 80, available online, <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/3/miyata021.htm> (accessed January 24, 2013).

produced, filling forty volumes in *The Collected Works of D. T. Suzuki*, there is remarkably little material relating to the subject of war. There are several general articles on the subject, in which, as we have seen, Suzuki recognizes the persistent reality of war in the course of human history; there are his writings on Bushido, in which Suzuki describes the ethical ideals of the feudal Japanese warrior; and there are a number of explicit (and overwhelmingly negative) references to war in his journal articles, private letters and recorded talks.

It is important first to note that Suzuki was not without patriotic sentiment – on several occasions, for example, he mentions favorably the fortitude and valor with which the Japanese soldiery acquitted itself during the Russo-Japanese War. Suffice it to say that support for one's country's soldiers does not necessarily mean support for the wars they are fighting in. In any event, a review of his writings quickly shows that Suzuki's sympathy for the ordinary soldier did not extend to the military establishment, the ideologies it supported or the wars it engaged in.

Within two years of Japan's victorious conclusion of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895, and within six months of publishing *A New Theory of Religion* and departing from Japan for America, Suzuki was already writing letters to friends critical of the religious nature of state Shinto. This is a standpoint that hardly would have aligned him with the right-wing forces, and, coming so soon after the publication of *A New Theory of Religion*, it further suggests that this book was not written with nationalist goals in mind. On June 13, 1897, Suzuki wrote as follows to the owner of the publishing house Baiyō Shoin:

In our country an increasing number of people are promoting religion. Among the various attempts to satisfy the religious spirit is something called "New Shinto" that advocates a kind of nationalism. While it is laudable that religion is at last gaining the attention of the general populace, I have my reservations about this "New Shinto" as a religion. First of all, there appear to be some hidden motives behind the fact that it takes a position distinct from that of religious philosophy and ethics. If we do not now take up these motives for consideration, I think our efforts to discuss (this "New Shinto") will come to nothing. To conclude, it seems that these people have yet to arrive at a deep understanding of the depths of the human heart.<sup>28</sup>

This letter demonstrates that Suzuki's reservations about the new form of Shinto, and his belief that it did not represent a genuine system of spirituality, had their beginnings quite early in his life, and were not, as Victoria asserts, acquired only with the decline of Japan's wartime fortunes in the 1940s.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 36: 90.

<sup>29</sup> Victoria, 150. He, discussing Suzuki's postwar stance on Buddhist war support, writes: "Suzuki spoke again of his own moral responsibility for the war in *The Spiritualizing of Japan (Nihon no reiseika)*, published in 1947. This book is a collection of five lectures that he had given at the Shin sect-affiliated Ōtani University in Kyoto during June 1946. The focus of his talks was Shinto, for by this time he had decided that

Suzuki's critical comments on the emerging power of the nationalist forces were not confined to his private correspondence. In 1898, a year after he wrote the letter quoted above, the following comments appeared in an article published in the journal *Rikugō zasshi*:

They say, "Obey the rescripts on the Imperial Restoration," "Study the Imperial rescript on education," "Display a nation-building spirit," "Honor the ancestors of the country." All of this is fine. But while these people on the one hand proclaim reason as their supreme sword and shield and talk continually of the results of nineteenth-century historical research, on the other hand they manipulate the weaknesses of the Japanese people, embracing the Imperial family and the Imperial rescripts and attempting to imbue them with a religious significance. The hypocrisy of it all is quite overwhelming. . . .

Let us stop pretending that the Japanese are a great people merely because their Imperial family has continued unbroken for the past 2,500 years.<sup>30</sup>

Suzuki expanded on these themes in a letter to his good friend Yamamoto Ryōkichi (1871-1942) in a letter dated June 14, 1898:

It seems to me that the Imperial household still clings to the dream of its ancient days of transcendence and sanctity, while the Japanese people think there is nothing more wonderful than the Imperial rescripts and believe that modern progress will bring about no benefit. For that reason, when the government encounters a situation unfavorable to itself, it quickly tries to hide behind such attitudes and silence the voice of the people. Moreover, because of this the people find the path of free thought cut off to them. We are obliged to obey those who exalt the Imperial household and shield themselves with the Imperial rescripts. This is extremely unreasonable. (In the margin: These words must never be made public, I must wait for the right time.) Recent attempts to dress up utilitarian ideologies like Japanese nationalism in the clothes of the emperor and foist them on us remind me of the Buddhist bonzes in the ancient capital of Nara who would take advantage of the Shinto *mikoshi* in their rituals. Kimura's *The Japanese Nationalist State Religion (Kokkyō-ron)* is wild in the extreme; and even if the nationalists have a few points of interest to make, seeing the distorted utilitarian arguments they use, no one would be tempted to pay them any attention.<sup>31</sup>

A few months after this letter was written, an article appeared in *Rikugō zasshi*, the journal quoted above, showing that Suzuki was not only critical of

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Shinto was to blame for Japan's militaristic past. According to Suzuki, Shinto was a "primitive religion" that "lacked spirituality".

<sup>30</sup> SDZ, 30: 130-131. The article originally appeared as "Tabi no tsurezure" (Random thoughts while traveling) in *Rikugō zasshi*, 210 (June 25, 1898): 70-72. The translation here relies on Kirita, 54.

<sup>31</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 36: 151-152. Cf. Kirita, 54-55. Suzuki is referring to the book *Nihon Shugi Kokkyōron*, a nativist work by Kimura Takatarō (1870-1931).

the ideology and political maneuvering of the rightists but also positively inclined to socialist thought, further distancing him from the nationalist thinkers:

It is said that the government has forbidden the formation of the Social Democratic Party. I deeply regret the Japanese government's irresponsibility and lack of farsightedness, and its inattentiveness to social progress and human happiness.<sup>32</sup>

Suzuki writes on socialism in greater detail in letters he sent in early 1901 to Yamamoto. The subject is mentioned in two interesting letters, also cited by Victoria in a recent article.<sup>33</sup> The first is dated January 6, 1901:

Lately I have had a desire to study socialism, for I am sympathetic to its views on social justice and equality of opportunity. Present-day society (including Japan, of course) must be reformed from the ground up.<sup>34</sup>

No more than a week later on January 14, 1901, Suzuki wrote:

In recent days I have become a socialist sympathizer to an extreme degree. However, my socialism is not based on economics but religion. This said, I am unable to publicly advocate this doctrine to the ordinary people because they are so universally querulous and illiterate and therefore unprepared to listen to what I have to say. However, basing myself on socialism, I intend to gradually incline people to my way of thinking though I also believe I need to study some sociology.<sup>35</sup>

These ideas and outlooks were reflected in some of Suzuki's public writings at this time. For example, the following passage appears in the article "On Social Relief" in 1904:

When we look for the reasons for the plight of the impoverished in today's society, we see that their poverty is due not so much to any fault of their own as to the defects of the social system and the maldistribution of wealth.... One can hardly expect impoverished people in such difficult circumstances to be

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<sup>32</sup> SDZ, 30: 265. The article originally appeared as "Shakai minshu-teki tō no kettō kinshini tsukite (Shakai shugi no shūkyō-teki kiso)" (On the Prohibition of the Formation of the Social Democratic Party: The Religious Foundations of Socialism) in *Rikugō zasshi*, 249 (September 15, 1901): 43-47. This translation appears in Kirita, 56.

<sup>33</sup> "Karma, War and Inequality in Twentieth Century Japan", *Japan Focus*, [http://japanfocus.org/\\_Brian\\_Victoria\\_Karma\\_War\\_and\\_Inequality\\_in\\_Twentieth\\_Century\\_Japan](http://japanfocus.org/_Brian_Victoria_Karma_War_and_Inequality_in_Twentieth_Century_Japan) (accessed January 1, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 36: 204. This translation relies on Victoria, "Karma, War and Inequality in Twentieth Century Japan".

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 36: 206. This translation relies on Victoria, "Karma, War and Inequality in Twentieth Century Japan".

satisfied with spiritual comfort bereft of any material aid.... My earnest desire is that Buddhists do not remain satisfied with personal peace and enlightenment but take it upon themselves to help society.<sup>36</sup>

In a letter to Yamamoto in 1903 (exact date unknown), Suzuki criticizes the nationalist direction taken by the Ministry of Education in words that are surprisingly strong:

What is this unbelievable childishness that is going on, as with that recent affair at Tetsugakkan University?<sup>37</sup> Looking at the situation from where I am now here in the United States, I can only conclude that our Ministry of Education's behavior is sheer lunacy. What is all this about "loyalty"? What is all this about "national polity"? Do these things have any more worth than a baby's rattle? Viewed from this shore, it seems such a farce, both the government officials that brandish these concepts as though they were Masamune swords<sup>38</sup> and the public that attempts to avoid trouble by conveniently ignoring the issues, as in the saying, "Don't provoke the gods and you won't be punished." Of course you, living there in Japan, probably think I'm overstating things. In any event, these government people lack any democratic spirit, and their claims that they represent the emperor, that the emperor himself is a god-man superior to ordinary human beings, and that "loyalty" consists of following his orders or some such thing, are utterly absurd. Fortunately the present Japanese emperor is a man of good sense and does not attempt to interfere in the government. If, when the crown prince accedes to the throne, he tries like the present German emperor to run things and force the people to obey him in the name of "loyalty to the ruler", it isn't difficult to imagine the result.<sup>39</sup>

After the commencement of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan's first armed conflict after the publication of *A New Theory of Religion*, none of the jingoistic spirit that Victoria accuses the young Suzuki of is seen in his correspondence with Yamamoto. In a letter dated October 1, 1904 he laments the sacrifices involved and expresses concerns about the intentions of both sides:

Is this war dragging on? I can hardly bring myself to read the daily newspaper reports of the tragic situation at Port Arthur. Both sides are prepared to fight to

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 30: 339-40. The article originally appeared in the journal *Beikoku Bukkyō*, 5.1: 8-10. This translation relies on Kirita, 56.

<sup>37</sup> The Tetsugakkan affair refers to an incident involving the private university Tetsugakkan (now Tōyō University). In 1902 the Ministry of Education took exception to one of the university's final examination questions, which the Ministry regarded as constituting *lèse majesté* against the emperor. Despite a public outcry against the Ministry for what was regarded as a blatant interference in academic freedom, the university was stripped of its right to license middle school teachers.

<sup>38</sup> The swords made by the smith Okazaki Masamune (circa the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries) are regarded as the finest examples of Japanese sword-making.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 36: 238-239.

the death in battle, and it seems they will not quit till they have all killed each other. I am sad at the loss of so many promising young Japanese soldiers and sympathize with the suffering of the innocent Russian peasantry. Is there not some way to come to a settlement? It is tragic to see that the enemy government, as a totalitarian monarchy, intends to fight till it collapses from exhaustion.<sup>40</sup>

A letter dated December 1, 1904 continues in the same vein with criticism of the Japanese government:

When reporting the progress of the war, the Japanese government exaggerates the victories and either remains silent on the defeats or downplays them as much as possible. They treat the populace like fools. (Protecting) military secrets is one thing, but other news should be handled in an aboveboard fashion that shows trust in the populace. It is deplorable that (the government) has been unable to do this. I mentioned this matter to a Japanese who was staying here for several days, but he stubbornly agreed with the actions of the Japanese government. If such support exists even among educated Japanese, one must conclude that the progress of political thought in Japan is still lagging. What do you think? Japanese politics appears to be exceedingly complex and very annoying in its meddling intrusions. If I had to return to Japan suddenly, I think I might find it terribly confining.<sup>41</sup>

As the war progressed and the Japanese military achieved a string of victories, Suzuki, in a letter dated February 2, 1905, continues to refrain from praise for the war itself while expressing hope that the successes and the valor shown by the Japanese forces would brighten Japan's outlook and offset to some extent the conflict's terrible burdens and losses. Regarding the war itself, his emphasis is on the importance of continued diplomatic initiatives.

Japan's success in the war appears not to have changed Suzuki's critical attitude towards the military itself, however. In 1910, just a year after his return from his ten-year stay abroad and less than five years after the end of the war, Suzuki wrote an essay, "Idle talk in the shade of a tree" ("Ryokuin mango"), published in the journal *New Buddhism (Shin Bukkyō)*, in which he expresses dismay at the rising status of the Japanese armed forces:

The dominance of the military, perhaps as a result of the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars, is something I don't feel entirely comfortable with. In America the closest thing I saw to a military uniform was the outfit worn by hotel bellboys. Crossing the sea to England, I saw a few soldiers around, but nothing really noticeable. Moving on to France and Germany, I first observed great military organizations backed by the entire nation, and I believe the situation is pretty much the same in Russia. However, I have been most struck

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 36: 254-255.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 36: 256.

by this type of thing in Japan, following my return. This is partly because I am more familiar with the situation in my own country, of course, and because of the numerous opportunities I have to notice the military's ascendancy. Nevertheless, the sort of unease I feel about this is something I would have felt anywhere. I don't know what those who have gained prominence by becoming military men may think of the matter, but as for myself I can't help feeling that these military people are receiving far more preferential treatment than they deserve. Even from a purely objective standpoint, I do not think this overindulgence of the military is to be celebrated as far as the future of the country is concerned. If one emphasizes one thing, the tendency is to undervalue another. In other words, if you devote too many resources to the military, you can easily end up depriving education of the resources it needs.<sup>42</sup>

In 1914, following the beginning of World War I in Europe, Suzuki wrote an essay on the subject in which he expresses a clear aversion to the human and cultural sacrifices that war invariably involves and then steers the discussion in a spiritual direction, using war as a symbol for the struggle against one's own inner enemies.

## Zen and War

Suppose someone were to ask, "What is the opinion of a Zen person on the present Great War?" The Zen man would answer: "I have no particular opinion, and in particular I have no opinion as a Zen person." A Zen person is no different from others, having two eyes and two legs and a head just like everyone else; and there is nothing that sets him apart from other human beings. Thus when it gets cold, he feels the cold; when it gets hot, he feels the heat; when he sees the autumn moon, he fully admires the pale moonlight; and when he sees the pink blossoms of springtime, he is moved with emotion. With regard to war, as well as peace, as far as his thoughts go, there is not an iota of difference with how other humans regard it. However combative Zen people may seem because of their shouting and stick-wielding, just show them a mound of corpses or a river of flowing blood and not one of them will celebrate war.

This is precisely the way I feel. The development, advancement, and perfection of our inner capabilities, which may be regarded as the most essential task of our lives, can be effectively accomplished only during times of peace. When peace is lost and people start shooting and slashing at their

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 30: 407-408. A similar distaste for the military is reflected in a later report by a student of Suzuki, who recalls that during World War II, when he called upon Suzuki at his home near Ōtani University dressed in his army officer's uniform with his sword by his side, Suzuki was visibly unhappy. Standing at the entrance, Suzuki said, "Don't come here dressed up like some kind of toy. Come back after you've changed into something else, even if it's just a *nemaki* (a light kimono for sleeping)" (Kitanishi Hiromu, "Kaisō: Suzuki Daisetsu sensei, sono ni", in *Zen Bunka*, 201 (2006): 13-18).

neighbors, the world becomes the realm of the *asuras*<sup>43</sup> and the Demon King prevails. As long as hostilities continue, the flowering of the humanities, the progress of science, the happiness of the individual, and the enjoyment of family life are all like spring blossoms carried off by the wind. War instantly turns heaven into hell and transforms bodhi into delusion. How could a Zen man assent to it? Thus as to the impressions of the Zen man regarding the present tragic situation, they are the same as the impressions of teachers, of those who love the humanities, of those who celebrate progress, of merchants, of farmers, of scientists, and of statesmen. It is misguided to inquire about the impressions of Zen people in particular, as if they formed a separate category.... But if I were to comment on the Great War just as an ordinary person, it seems to me to represent a major blow against, or breakdown and failure of, Occidental Christian civilization. War itself is already irreligious in nature, so once the social order breaks down the restraints that had prevailed till then are quickly lost, and soon we see scenes straight from the age of barbarism. How shameful it is that the naked human heart can be so brutal. . . . Speaking of war, it strikes me that a person's life itself is like an ongoing war. Whenever we're even the slightest bit careless, the enemy uses that gap to attack. Thus every day, in each and every instant, we must persevere in our watchfulness, our cultivation, and our practice, or the foundations of our moral and religious life will be overturned. It is just as in actual combat – if for a while we get the upper hand and let down our guard as a result, the source of our destruction will rush through that opening without a moment's delay. Moreover, the enemy being very secretive about its route of entry, it is exceedingly difficult to spy it out. Thus the moment of carelessness itself equals the enemy's attack. If, relying on the bit of Zen insight you might have gained, you allow yourself to become unaware, that insight will vanish as though dropped from your hand. This applies not only to Zen training. Zen people have no set view with regard to war, or at least I as an individual do not. If there is such an outlook, it applies only to the type of inner battle that I have described. Given the present nature of civilization, given the present nature of the human mind, and given the present nature of international relations, it is only to be expected that wars will occur, so what can one say about such a matter? However, I would ask each and every one of you not to forget that when you fight the enemies in your own mind, you must do so to win.<sup>44</sup>

During the 1930s – when the Japanese militarists were consolidating their power and right-wing thought was ascendant – several of Suzuki's letters to Yamamoto indicate that the interest in socialist principles he first expressed thirty years earlier had continued, along with his dissatisfaction with the direction the government was heading in. In a postscript to a letter dated February 21, 1930, he writes:

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<sup>43</sup> The *asura* is a fighting deity or a titan.

<sup>44</sup> "Zen and War", in SDZ, 30: 480-482.



I cast my vote for Kawakami. I have just got the news that he lost. The ruling party candidates are all no good. In any event, it is beneficial to have a number of candidates from the Proletariat Party running, though not too many.<sup>45</sup>

A letter dated October 16, 1935 indicates that Suzuki's interest was not merely intellectual but concrete enough for him to intervene actively on behalf of people with a leftist outlook:

Is there no one whom you know in the Tokyo Police Department? There is someone I know who has been incarcerated at Yodobashi on the grounds of having leftist tendencies (I hear he has been transferred from place to place after that). I'd like to find out if there is any way to trace his whereabouts, and possibly to gain his quick release. Please let me know if there is some way to do this.<sup>46</sup>

Although this hardly rates as a major act of defiance against the government, it still demonstrates a decidedly non-rightist outlook, in addition to considerable integrity at a time when thousands suspected of leftist sympathies were being arrested and interrogated by the Special Higher Police (commonly known as the "thought police").

The next example of Suzuki's writing that I would like to examine is from an English essay published in Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, third series. It does not directly relate to the subject of war but is of interest for what it says about Victoria's use of the sources. In *Zen at War* Victoria describes the Shin Buddhist missionary efforts on the Asian continent, concluding that the "missionary efforts of the Shin sect . . . actually preceded the Japanese military's advance. This practice emerged as a result of the vision of Meiji-sect leaders such as Ogurusu Kōchō and Okumura Enshin who advocated using Buddhism as the basis for forming an anti-Western alliance between Japan, China, and India." Victoria continues:

D. T. Suzuki also shared this ideology, as demonstrated by an essay on Zen he published in English in 1934, in which he wrote:

If the East is one and there is something that differentiates it from the West, the differentia must be sought in the thought that is embodied in Buddhism. For it is in Buddhist thought and in no other that India, China, and Japan representing the East, could be united as one. . . . When the East as unity is made to confront the West, Buddhism supplies the bond.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 36: 536. Kawakami Hajime (1879–1946) was a member of the Musan Seitō Nihon Rōnō Seitō (Japanese Labor and Farm Proletariat Party).

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 36: 615. Yamamoto was at this time a "high level civil servant" and would have had friends in the middle ranks of government.

<sup>47</sup> *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 3: 378.

Such ideas provided one of the ideological underpinnings for the subsequent development of the “Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere” (Dai Tōa kyōei-ken), Japan’s rationalization for its aggression in Asia.<sup>48</sup>

It is instructive to consider the entire, unexcerpted passage from which Victoria quotes:

If the East is one and there is something that differentiates it from the West, the differentia must be sought in the thought that is embodied in Buddhism. For it is in Buddhist thought and in no other that India, China, and Japan representing the East, could be united as one. Each nationality has its own characteristic modes of adopting the thought to its environmental needs, but when the East as unity is made to confront the West, Buddhism supplies the bond. What are then those central ideas of Buddhism that sweep over Asia and that have been asserting themselves either openly or covertly in Japan? They are the immanent conception of Buddha-nature, the transcendentality of *Prajñā* (intuitive knowledge), the all-embracing compassion, and the eternal vows of the Bodhisattva.<sup>49</sup>

It is quite clear when this passage is read in full (and especially when read in the context of the chapter, a short overview of the development of Japanese Buddhism) that Suzuki is not advocating “using Buddhism as the basis for forming an anti-Western alliance”. He is simply stating that if there is a certain unity to be discerned in the cultures of India, China and Japan as opposed to the major cultures of the West, that unity is provided by Buddhism. This is hardly a problematic statement, given that Buddhism is the only system of thought shared by all three cultures. Nowhere in his writing does Suzuki advocate an anti-Western alliance. Although he believed that there was much of value in the East that was deserving of preservation, he was equally aware of the East’s shortcomings; and he strongly urged – even during World War II, as we shall see later in this article – that Japan should maintain a positive attitude towards what it could gain from the West.<sup>50</sup>

In Suzuki’s writings more directly related to the war, there were in the first years of the 1940s several further letters from Suzuki to Yamamoto showing that his dissatisfaction with the government had deepened and that he had strong reservations about the second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). In a letter dated February 10, 1940, nearly two years before the attack on Pearl Harbor, he writes:

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<sup>48</sup> Victoria, 64-65.

<sup>49</sup> *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, 3: 378.

<sup>50</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this subject, see Shizuteru Ueda, “Outwardly, Be Open; Inwardly, Be Deep: D. T. Suzuki’s “Eastern Outlook””, in *The Eastern Buddhist*, 38.1/2 (2007): 8-40.

They can talk if they like about the national polity, the function of the emperor, and the unity of Shinto and government, but the embodiment of these concepts is nil – utterly without substance. The same is true of the New Order in East Asia, which has come to nothing. The people were just spurred on and sacrificed to the ideology of certain government leaders. We'll be lucky if there's not a civil war. Those of us on the home front – to say nothing of the soldiers on the battlefields – have suffered for this ten-thousand times over. It is the deplorable truth that Japan today hasn't a single statesman. We must start preparing for twenty years in the future; and the responsibility of those in charge of education is great.<sup>51</sup>

Suzuki laments the lack of statesmen once again a year later, in a letter dated February 13, 1941:

Indeed, thinking about it, there is much about Japan's future prospects that chill the heart. The most worrisome thing is that there are no real statesmen. I can't bear seeing the dominance of this boisterous bunch (in government) lacking in any kind of philosophical vision.<sup>52</sup>

Four months prior to Pearl Harbor, in a letter dated August 8, 1941 to a former student, the socialist novelist Iwakura Masaji (1903-2000), Suzuki writes:

It is unfortunate that the authorities will not grant you permission to publish your book. I know how disappointed you must feel. Keep in mind, however, that some years from now publication will become possible, so be patient until such a time comes. This war is certain to take Japan to the brink of destruction – indeed, we can say that we are already there. The leaders of Japan cannot continue this fight forever; in their innermost minds they are working against themselves, and until this is taken care of, there will be no betterment of the country's fortunes. The New Order in East Asia was certain to fail before anything came of it. We must accept the consequences<sup>53</sup> of what we have done as a nation – there is nothing we can do about it now. I must put off telling you my frank opinion of the situation until we meet directly. History attests to the dangers of entrusting the affairs of a nation to people with no religious convictions; and is this not what Japan is dealing with right now?<sup>54</sup>

It is at just around this time that there appeared in Japanese several articles on the subject of Bushido, the Japanese “Way of the Warrior”. Since this subject plays a central part in Victoria's critique of Suzuki, I would like to consider this complex and interesting issue at some length.

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<sup>51</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 37: 2.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 37: 17.

<sup>53</sup> The word Suzuki uses is *gōhō*, which has a nuance of Karmic retribution.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 37: 25-26.

## Bushido

Let us begin by examining Victoria's treatment of an article from 1941 by Suzuki entitled "Zen and Bushido" ("Zen to Bushidō"), an essay appearing in a book entitled *The Essence of Bushido* (*Bushidō no Shinzui*), together with a number of articles written by political and military figures. Although this article was not his earliest treatment of Bushido, having been predated by several English-language essays on the subject in 1938, it is of interest since it touches on several issues related to Victoria's critique.

Victoria characterizes Suzuki as a central figure in the compilation of this publication:

Less than one month before Pearl Harbor, on November 10, 1941, (Suzuki) joined hands with such military leaders as former army minister and imperial navy general Araki Sadao (1877-1966), imperial navy captain Hirose Yutaka, and others to publish a book entitled *The Essence of Bushido*.<sup>55</sup>

Aside from stressing that "the connection of this book to the goals and purposes of the imperial military was unmistakable", Victoria says very little about Suzuki's article, acknowledging that it was simply "a fourteen-page distillation of his earlier thought. It did not cover any new intellectual ground." Instead, Victoria focuses on a statement by the collection's editor, Handa Shin, that "Dr. Suzuki's writings are said to have strongly influenced the military spirit of Nazi Germany" and further insinuates a link between Suzuki and Nazism by quoting a speech mentioning Bushido (but not Suzuki) given by Kurusu Saburō (1886–1954), the Japanese ambassador to Germany, on the occasion of the formation of the Tripartite Pact between Japan, Germany and Italy.

Do the facts that Suzuki wrote on Bushido and that Bushido thought influenced the German military spirit mean that Suzuki was an active supporter of Nazi ideology? No more, I would venture, than the facts that Victoria critiques Zen and that several fundamentalist Christian websites I have seen in the past have utilized those critiques in their attacks on Buddhism mean that he is an active supporter of fundamentalist Christian ideology. Here, too, Victoria's argument is based entirely on guilt by association.

Although Victoria implies that Suzuki actively participated with militarist leaders in the publication of this work, Suzuki was involved only to the extent of permitting publication of his essay "Zen and Bushido", which was not even written for *The Essence of Bushido* but was a reprint of a piece that appeared nine months earlier in the February 1941 issue of the journal *The Modern Age* (*Gendai*). Moreover, the article, as Victoria notes, is simply an essay setting

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<sup>55</sup> Victoria, 110.

forth Suzuki's thought on Bushido in general; and it contains no mention of the ongoing war in Asia or any suggestion that Suzuki supported it. Such silence is hardly what one would expect if its author had been a committed proponent of the conflict since the article would have provided a perfect venue for voicing such support, support that Suzuki would have had nothing to lose and everything to gain by expressing. Popular opinion would have been with him, as would the weight of opinion in the Japanese Buddhist world. And with much of the Zen intelligentsia at the time writing articles backing the nation's wartime policies, a well-known figure such as Suzuki must have faced considerable pressure, both subtle and overt, to conform. Instead, here as elsewhere in his writings on Bushido, he confined his discussion to the subject itself and remained silent on Japan's contemporary military situation.<sup>56</sup>

Insofar as Suzuki's work on Bushido relates to martial issues, it is easy, of course, to link them to Japan's modern wars, and for this very reason it is important to examine them in the context of Suzuki's overall views on war, the military and political ideology. As we have seen from Suzuki's public writings and private letters, two basic positions characterize his thought on these subjects. The first is a recognition of the reality of aggression in human history and of the consequent legitimacy of defensive war under certain conditions. The second is a clear antipathy towards the Japanese military establishment and its activities – a statement, in effect, that Japan's modern military conflicts did not meet the conditions he set for justifiable war. This extends, as we have seen, to the war with China in the 1930s (Victoria presents what he considers to be evidence for support of this war, evidence that we shall consider below). I believe that a full consideration of Suzuki's writings on Bushido shows that they were in accord with these positions.

Although Bushido was obviously a subject of interest to Suzuki, appearing in a number of his writings on Zen, feudal samurai culture and Japanese society, he was not, contrary to Victoria's assertions,<sup>57</sup> a major figure in the development or dissemination of Bushido thought. For one thing, the militarists hardly needed Suzuki to formulate a Bushido ideology for them. Bushido was already central to Japanese military culture from at least the Tokugawa period (1600–1868),<sup>58</sup> by which time it constituted an important aspect of Japanese feudal law. Bushido was thoroughly familiar to the modern Japanese army officer corps from the time of the Meiji Restoration, composed as it was primarily of former members or descendants of the feudal warrior class. More important, Suzuki's

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<sup>56</sup> Suzuki did express the opinion that some of the samurai spirit lived in the modern Japanese soldier (e.g., *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 85), an opinion that surely any of the armies fighting for Japan would have concurred with. What Suzuki's writings show, both prior to and during World War II, is that what he disagreed with was the way in which the military establishment was using that spirit.

<sup>57</sup> See Victoria, pp. 111-112, particularly p. 112.

<sup>58</sup> See Kenneth G. Henshall, *A History of Japan: From Stone Age to Superpower* (London: Macmillan Press, 1999), 56–60.

writings on Bushido comprised a relatively minor portion of his entire body of work, and came quite late in his career as a writer. Although mentions of Bushido are found in several of his early works,<sup>59</sup> his first systematized writings on the subject appeared in *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, a collection of essays that was published in 1938, when Suzuki was nearly seventy years old. As an English-language work the book was, of course, directed towards a Western readership, hardly an audience that Suzuki would have chosen had he been seeking fertile ground for the promotion of ideas useful to Japanese militarism. Nor did Suzuki produce a Japanese edition, although he was the logical person to do so (the translation that appeared in 1940, two years after the work's appearance in English, was done not by Suzuki himself but by a professor of art history named Kitagawa Momo'o (1899-1969)). The article from 1941, "Zen and Bushido", is, as far as I can determine, Suzuki's first full Japanese-language essay specifically on Bushido, and also one of the last.

Thus Suzuki's prewar and wartime writings on Bushido were pretty much confined to the period between 1938 and the early 1940s, by which time the die was long since cast for Japanese militarist ideology and the Japanese military itself was already well on course towards disaster in Asia and the Pacific – a disaster that Suzuki saw coming, judging by his letters in 1940 and 1941 to Yamamoto and Iwakura. Why, at this of all times, would Suzuki have started writing on the subject of Bushido? Although all attempts to answer this question must remain conjecture, I would like to propose a possibility that at least has the merit of consistency with Suzuki's opposition to modern Japanese militarism as expressed in his letters and non-Bushido writings, an essential body of evidence that Victoria excludes from his analysis.

As mentioned above, if one recognizes that invasive wars have occurred throughout human history and therefore that defensive action is occasionally unavoidable, it is essential to consider the conditions under which fighting is justifiable (*jus ad bellum*) and the manner in which fighting must be carried out in order to be justifiable (*jus in bellum*; and if one is a Buddhist, this means considering in particular how to conduct combat in a way that minimizes contravention of the principle of nonviolence). The effort to define these issues inevitably involves an unsatisfactory compromise between realism and idealism, particularly in the case of Buddhism, since violence is always a part of war. Nevertheless, the effort to define a just form of combat should be seen for what it is a real-world attempt to minimize the possibility of even worse alternatives.

I believe that it was with this in mind that Suzuki, with his long-standing misgivings about the modern Japanese military establishment and his awareness of the way that it was mishandling the war,<sup>60</sup> began to write on the ideals of

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, the one-paragraph mention in "The Zen Sect of Buddhism," in *The Journal of the Pāli Text Society* 15 (1906-1907): 34.

<sup>60</sup> In addition in his above-mentioned letters to Yamamoto and Iwakura in 1940 and 1941, it appears that Suzuki was aware of the Nanjing Massacre of December 1937 to January 1938 (see his comments below at SDZ, 33: 7-9). It was not clear at first how he

Bushido at this difficult juncture in Japan's history. Victoria's attack on Suzuki relies principally on Suzuki's main English essays on Bushido: "Zen and the Samurai" and "Zen and Swordsmanship" (Parts 1 and 2), in *Zen and Japanese Culture*.<sup>61</sup> Although these essays, like Suzuki's other writings, contain no expressions of support for Japan's modern wars, Victoria takes selected passages and, through insinuation and juxtaposition, attempts to establish a connection with militarist thought. As Victoria's arguments demonstrate, the essays do indeed contain much material that can be utilized in this way. I would therefore urge anyone seriously interested in this issue to read the entire texts, which are, after all, in English and readily available. I believe a full reading reveals that Suzuki's intention throughout these writings was not to encourage conflict but to stress that avoidance of conflict was at the heart of Bushido.

For example, Suzuki often notes how Bushido, in its stress on "abandoning life and death", parallels the constant enjoinders heard in Zen training to resolve the central problem of *samsāra*. While the Zen monk is motivated to face this issue by an inner, existential question, the more down-to-earth warrior is compelled to do so by the outer realities of his lifestyle, and the dynamic between the two approaches was obviously of interest to Suzuki. For Suzuki, however, the emphasis is always on the inner battle with the fear of death, for both the samurai and the monk. Although *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* discusses in an abstract manner the importance of detachment from death for the samurai seeking to gain victory in battle, Suzuki presents no actual examples of samurai utilizing such detachment to slay opponents. Quite the contrary – all of the historical exemplars of Bushido that Suzuki introduces are figures for whom the mastery of swordsmanship is marked by a certain transcendence, a calm maturity of personality that whenever possible avoids violence and needless fighting. For example, Suzuki relates at some length two stories connected with Tsukahara Bokuden (1489-1571), one of the greatest swordsmen of his time:

As Tsukahara Bokuden was . . . one of those swordsmen who really understood the mission of the sword not as a weapon of murder but as an instrument of spiritual self-discipline, let me cite here the two best-known incidents of his life:

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would have learned of this, considering the strict censorship in effect during the war. His acquaintances in the Japanese or foreign diplomatic services may have informed him. In Suzuki's recently published diaries, the entry of August 24, 1938 shows that he learned of the Nanjing Massacre through a letter from Kate Crane-Gartz (1865-1949), the activist sister of one-time ambassador Charles Crane who encouraged Suzuki to attend the World Conference of Faiths in London in 1936. Suzuki met Gartz on the way home from London in Palm Springs, CA.

<sup>61</sup> *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 61-85, 89-214.

When Bokuden was crossing Lake Biwa on a row-boat with a number of passengers, there was among them a rough-looking samurai, stalwart and arrogant in every possible way. He boasted of his skill in swordsmanship, saying he was the foremost man in the art. The fellow-passengers were eagerly listening to his blatant talk while Bokuden was found dozing as if nothing were going on about him. This irritated the braggart very much. He approached Bokuden and shook him, saying, "You also carry a pair of swords, why not say a word?" Answered Bokuden quietly, "My art is different from yours; and it consists not in defeating others, but in not being defeated." This incensed him immensely.

"What is your school then?"

"Mine is known as the *mutekatsu* school" (which means to defeat the enemy "without hands," that is without using a sword).

"Why do you then carry a sword yourself?"

"This is meant to do away with selfish motives, and not to kill others."

The man's anger now knew no bounds, and he exclaimed in a most impassioned manner, "Do you really mean to fight me with no swords?"

"Why not?" was Bokuden's answer.

The braggart-samurai called out to the boatman to row towards the nearest land. But Bokuden suggested that it would be better to go to the island farther off because the mainland might attract people who were liable to get somehow hurt. The samurai agreed. The boat headed towards the solitary island at some distance. As soon as they were near enough, the man jumped off the boat and, drawing his sword, was all ready for combat. Bokuden leisurely took off his own swords and handed them to the boatman. To all appearances he was about to follow the samurai onto the island when Bokuden suddenly took the oar away from the boatman, and applying it to the land gave a hard back-stroke to the boat. Thereupon the boat took a precipitous departure from the island and plunged itself into the deeper water safely away from the man. Bokuden smilingly remarked, "This is my no-sword school."

Suzuki continues:

Another interesting and instructive anecdote is told of Bokuden, whose mastery of the art really went beyond mere acquiring proficiency in sword-play. He had three sons who were all trained in swordsmanship. He wanted to test their attainments. He placed a little pillow over the curtain at the entrance to his room, and it was so arranged that a slight touch on the curtain, when it was raised upon entering, would make the pillow fall right on one's head.

Bokuden called in the eldest son first. When he approached, he noticed the pillow on the curtain, so he took it down, and after entering, he placed it back in the original position. The second son was now called in. He touched the curtain to raise it, and as soon as he saw the pillow coming down, he caught it in his hands, and then carefully put it back where it had been. It was the third son's turn to touch the curtain. He came in brusquely, and the pillow fell right on his neck. But he cut it in two with his sword even before it came down on the floor.

Bokuden passed his judgment: "Eldest son, you are well qualified for swordsmanship." So saying, he gave him a sword. To the second son he said,



“Train yourself yet assiduously.” But the youngest son Bokuden most severely reproved, for he was pronounced to be a disgrace to his family.<sup>62</sup>

Here Suzuki is quite explicit in his message that the highest mastery of the art of swordsmanship involves a calm transcendence of pride, anger, and violent action. He further emphasized this message when he published *Zen and Japanese Culture*, his revision of *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*.<sup>63</sup> He describes the standpoint of a sword master named Odagiri Ichiun (1630-1706), the chief proponent of the “Sword of No-abiding Mind” school and, in Suzuki’s opinion, one of the most deeply Zen-influenced swordsmen that Japan has produced:

The perfect swordsman avoids quarreling or fighting. Fighting means killing. How can one human being bring himself to kill a fellow being? We are all meant to love one another and not to kill. It is abhorrent that one should be thinking all the time of fighting and coming out victorious. We are moral beings, we are not to lower ourselves to the status of animality. What is the use of becoming a fine swordsman if he loses his human dignity? The best thing is to be a victor without fighting.<sup>64</sup>

In *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, Suzuki also relates several episodes to the great generals Takeda Shingen (1521-1573) and Uesugi Kenshin (1530-1578), who, although rivals during the Warring States period, treated each other with magnanimity and respect both on the battlefield and off. Kenshin, for example, sends Shingen supplies of salt when he learns that the latter’s stores of this precious commodity had run out. Whether these stories are historically true is not as relevant here as the fact that Suzuki chooses these examples to illustrate his position on Bushido: that the warrior ideal lay in avoiding conflict whenever possible and in acting fairly and magnanimously towards others. In short, it appears that far from extolling Bushido to encourage militarism, Suzuki was attempting to reframe it in terms as nonviolent as possible.

Nevertheless, the position of the samurai necessarily entailed the use of the weapons that characterized their status, whether as warriors or law-enforcers. This raises the question of how potentially lethal force fitted into the ideals of

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<sup>62</sup> *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, 51-53.

<sup>63</sup> Although this book, published in 1959, may be regarded as irrelevant to the discussion of Suzuki’s prewar and wartime presentation of Bushido, I have taken my cue from Victoria, who in his attack on Suzuki uses material from it that is not in the 1938 edition of *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture* (e.g., the passage on the sword of life and the sword of death in Victoria, 110).

<sup>64</sup> *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 132. Ichiun’s ideas are set forth in the book *Kenjutsu Fushiki Hen* (The Unknown in the Art of Swordsmanship), by Kimura Kyūho, a short treatise compiled in 1768.

Bushido as presented by Suzuki. This in turn brings up “the sword that kills and the sword that gives life”, a concept that is one of the most important (and controversial) in Suzuki’s Bushido thought. Let us first look at the paragraph, found at the beginning of the chapter “Zen and Swordsmanship”, that introduces the concept:

The sword has thus a double office to perform: the one is to destroy anything that opposes the will of its owner, and the other is to sacrifice all the impulses that arise from the instinct of self-preservation. The former relates itself with the spirit of patriotism or sometimes militarism, while the other has a religious connotation of loyalty and self-sacrifice. In the case of the former, very frequently the sword may mean destruction pure and simple, and then it is the symbol of force, sometimes devilish force. It must, therefore, be controlled and consecrated by the second function. Its conscientious owner has been always mindful of this truth. For then destruction is turned against the evil spirit. The sword comes to be identified with the annihilation of things that lie in the way of peace, justice, progress, and humanity. (*Zen at War*’s citation ends here.) It stands for all that is desirable for the spiritual welfare of the world at large. It is now the embodiment of life and not of death.<sup>65</sup>

Here again I believe that Suzuki is doing his best to address a real-world dilemma: If war is sometimes unavoidable (or if violent lawbreakers must occasionally be stopped), weapons have to be used. If weapons have to be used, how can they be used in a way that minimizes violence to both body and spirit? The passage above reflects Suzuki’s view that the sword itself is value-neutral: its use is unjustified and harmful in some situations, necessary and beneficial in others, depending upon the circumstances and the purpose for which it is employed. Technical skill in its use does not necessarily mean that it will be used correctly, for a warrior skilled in technique but immature in personality may be tempted to utilize his technique with self-aggrandizement as the goal. This is the realm of the sword of death, a realm that Suzuki, significantly, specifically links to patriotism and militarism. Suzuki stresses that this aspect of the sword must always be “controlled and consecrated” by the ethical principle he symbolically identifies as “the sword of life”, so that it is employed only when absolutely necessary and in a manner free of hatred. This much would seem to apply to the use of any weapon. Of course, in the late 1930s and the early 1940s the Japanese military was most clearly not using its weapons in a “controlled and consecrated” way, which, I believe, is one of the reasons why Suzuki, aware of this abuse, chose this period to write about Bushido, emphasizing in particular the internalization of a code of moral behavior:

As something of divinity enters into the making of the sword, its owner and user ought also to respond to the inspiration. He ought to be a spiritual man,

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<sup>65</sup> *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 89. Cited in Victoria, 108-109.

and not an agent of brutality. His mind ought to be in unison with the soul that animates the cold surface of the steel. The great swordsmen have never been tired of instilling this feeling into the minds of their pupils. When the Japanese say that the sword is the soul of the samurai, we must remember all that goes with it as I have tried to set forth above, that is, loyalty, self-sacrifice, reverence, benevolence, and the cultivation of the religious feelings. Here is the true samurai.<sup>66</sup>

Important as the cultivation of these virtues is, there is another, more inner aspect wherein Suzuki saw the meeting point of Bushido and Zen. Suzuki's use of the term "Zen" can be confusing, as he (and many other writers on the subject) tends to give it several different meanings. In Japanese the character for "Zen" can mean either the practice of meditation (more fully expressed using the word "zazen"), the meditative experience itself or the Mahāyāna Buddhist religious tradition known as the Zen school (Zenshū). Zen as Mahāyāna Buddhism has, of course, all of the thought structures associated with that tradition, but it is in the sense of meditation and the meditative experience that he uses the word "Zen" when he writes:

Zen has no special doctrine or philosophy with a set of concepts and intellectual formulas, except that it tries to release one from the bondage of birth and death and this by means of certain intuitive modes of understanding peculiar to itself. It is, therefore, extremely flexible to adapt itself almost to any philosophy and moral doctrine as long as its intuitive teaching is not interfered with. It may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism, or any political or economic dogmatism. It is, however, generally animated with a certain revolutionary spirit, and when things come to a deadlock that is the case when we are overloaded with conventionalism, formalism, and other cognate isms, Zen asserts itself and proves to be a destructive force.<sup>67</sup>

Suzuki often likes to express his point by using language that is a bit on the provocative side, as is the case here. But the underlying point itself is important, I think. The Zen referred to here is the Zen that, with its emphasis on the here-and-now, "asserts itself and proves to be a destructive force" – destructive, that is, of "conventionalism, formalism" and all other isms that would reduce the meditative experience to a system of ideas and beliefs confined to the limits of the human mind. It is thus "destructive" in the sense that all true meditation is destructive. Meditation in this sense is the infinite openness in which there is no self and other; and it is the mind prior to thought and thus prior to the distinction between good and evil. Being prior to the arising of good and evil means also, of course, that it is value-neutral, with all the dangers that accompany this. It can be employed equally for either good or evil: when

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<sup>66</sup> *Zen Buddhism and its Influence on Japanese Culture*, 71-72.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 36-37.

misused, it can enable killing unrestrained by pangs of guilt or conscience, but when used in conjunction with an ethical system that stresses benevolence, magnanimity and compassion, it can provide an important spiritual foundation to that system and help to minimize the ego concerns that form “the root of all quarrels and fightings”.<sup>68</sup> This explains Suzuki’s constant emphasis on the moral aspect of training.

An approach to understanding Suzuki’s position is provided by another passage in *Zen and Japanese Culture* describing Odagiri Ichiun’s notion of the highest attainment in swordsmanship being realization of what Suzuki calls “Heavenly Reason” or “Primary Nature”:

Ichiun mentions the thing of first importance for the swordsman’s personality. He is to give up all desire for name and gain, all egotism and self-glorification, he is to be in accord with Heavenly Reason and observe the Law of Nature as it is reflected in every one of us.... One is not to think of achieving a victory over the opponent. Let the swordsman disregard from the first what may come out of the engagement, let him keep his mind clear of such thoughts. For the first principle of swordsmanship is a thorough insight into Heavenly Reason, which works out according to the chance circumstances; and the rest is of no concern to the swordsman himself.

When Heavenly Reason is present in us it knows how to behave on every occasion: when a man sees fire, his Reason knows at once how to use it; when he finds water, it tells him at once what it is good for; when he meets a friend, it makes him greet him; and when he sees a person in a dangerous situation, it makes him go right out to his rescue. As long as we are one with it, we never err in our proper behavior however variable the situation may be.<sup>69</sup>

The position of Ichiun – and of Suzuki in citing him – is that the person who has transcended all “desire for name and gain, all egotism and self-glorification” is most naturally able to distinguish those occasions when force is justified from those when it is not. The meditative mind is best positioned to perceive the true nature of a situation, free from the distorting influences of self-interest. The same can be said of the application of force, which is most likely to be carried out appropriately when freed from the anger, fear, self-righteousness, fear of death and all the other ego mechanisms that are so often at the root of truly violent acts against others, and against oneself.

Suzuki’s prewar writings clearly show that he was opposed to militarism and right-wing thought and that he had grave misgivings about the war. We shall

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<sup>68</sup> *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 133-134.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 173-174. One particularly interesting aspect of Ichiun’s thought is that of the nonviolent outcome in swordsmanship known as *ai-nuke*. Generally when two swordsmen of equal ability face each other, the final result is *ai-uchi*, in which both masters strike each other simultaneously. With “Sword of No-abiding Mind” masters, however, the result is *ai-nuke*, in which both masters strike simultaneously but the result is a mutual “passing-through” in which neither gets injured.

see below that these misgivings continued throughout World War II. But in the period Suzuki was writing about Bushido, the war was an undeniable fact that had to be dealt with. I believe that Suzuki wrote on Bushido because he saw in its ethics and ideals one of the only ways to influence the military to at least minimize the ongoing violence. Whether this was the optimal approach is another question, of course. Suzuki may have felt that it was his only option during wartime, given the totalitarian nature of the government at the time – a sentiment that Ichikawa Hakugen would surely have understood<sup>70</sup> – but the potential was clearly present for his writings to be abused by a militarist government already employing Bushido to promote its own goals. If Suzuki is to be criticized for anything, it is for being insufficiently aware of the potential for misuse associated with stressing the ideals of a warrior code more suited to the Warring States period (1467-1568) than to the modern age.

One such ideal is *makujiki kōzen*, rushing determinedly forward without looking either backwards or sideways. As Suzuki expressed the concept in his article “Zen and Bushido”, “The spirit of Bushido is truly to abandon this life,

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<sup>70</sup> Although Ichikawa is described by Victoria as “a Rinzaï Zen sect-affiliated priest ... who had gone from staunch supporter to severe critic of Japanese militarism” (Victoria, ix), this description does not accurately describe Ichikawa’s true situation. Far from being a “staunch supporter” of Japanese militarism, Ichikawa had for many years prior to the start of the war been a left-wing critic of the military government. Christopher Ives, for example, writes:

Ichikawa was a shy child, naturally intimidated and repulsed by the education he received under the imperial education system and “terrified” of the state and the supreme commander (emperor) who could order his death. With this disposition he found himself increasingly against war and the rhetoric of the *kokutai* (national polity)... Gradually, a “humanistic anger toward the evils of society and the state” welled up in him, and his lifelong interest in Buddhism, socialism, and anarchism began to crystallize. (C. Ives, “Ethical Pitfalls in Imperial Zen and Nishida Philosophy”, 16-17.)

Ishii Kōsei, a professor at Komazawa University, writes:

Ichikawa Hakugen, who after WWII combined self-criticism with an examination of the Buddhist world’s war responsibility, was a man who by his own admission went through many changes. At first, speaking from his personal political standpoint of Buddhist-Anarchist-Communism, he was a critic of Buddhist cooperation in the war effort. Fearing torture under the Special Higher Police, however, he adopted positions that were progressively more ambivalent, until finally he wrote material supportive of the war (K. Ishii, “Shūkyōsha no sensō sekinin: Ichikawa Hakugen, sono hito no kenshō o tōshite”, in *Bōryoku: Hakai to Chitsujō*) (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2004, 227).

Ichikawa, in other words, was a long-time opponent of the government who was intimidated into cooperation by the authorities. This is not to condemn him – his reaction is quite understandable given the coercive powers of the totalitarian authorities, against whom opposition would have done little except land him in jail. This is an important point to keep in mind when attempting to assess the wartime actions of individuals such as Ichikawa or D. T. Suzuki.

neither bragging of one's achievements, nor complaining when one's talents go unrecognized. It is simply a question of rushing forward toward one's ideal."<sup>71</sup> In the feudal period, when battles were fought between samurai armies and involved few noncombatants, *makujiki kōzen* was not only the most effective way to prevail in combat but also raised fewer ethical questions than in an age when machine guns and other modern weaponry have turned battlefields into slaughter grounds and civilians are seen as legitimate targets of attack. As it was, not long after the publication of his articles on Bushido, seeing perhaps that the paradigm of *makujiki kōzen* was indeed being used to urge "Zen-inspired warrior-soldiers to "rush forward to one's ideal", ignoring everything else including questions of right and wrong",<sup>72</sup> Suzuki felt compelled to publicly express his opposition to attempts to associate *Zen* and *makujiki kōzen* with meaningless death. The following passage appeared in an issue of the Buddhist newspaper *Chūgai nippō* in 1942:

Some people think that to die recklessly is Zen. However, Zen and death are not the same thing. *Makujiki kōzen* does not mean to sit in the grip of the hand of death. It is deplorable to think of Zen as a purification rite. The Zen understanding of human life is based on Mahāyāna Buddhism. Zen without this is not Zen. It isn't anything at all... To regard the foolhardy and senseless sacrifice of one's life as Zen is a mish-mash idea. Zen absolutely never teaches one to throw one's life away.<sup>73</sup>

That he came to realize the difficulties involved in the practical application of this feudal samurai ideal to the realities of modern war is suggested by the need he felt to state that "Zen absolutely never teaches one to throw one's life away." One might draw the same conclusion from the fact that after the early 1940s he wrote no more on Bushido during the wartime years.

## Wartime Statements

Apart from his silence on Bushido after the early 1940s, Suzuki was active as an author during all the war years, submitting to Buddhist journals numerous articles that conspicuously avoided mention of the conflict. Kirita Kiyohide, the Japanese Buddhist scholar perhaps most familiar with the entire body of Suzuki's writing, comments:

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<sup>71</sup> *Bushidō no Shinzui*, 75. This translation appears in Victoria, 111.

<sup>72</sup> Victoria, p. 208, n. 15.

<sup>73</sup> SDZ, 15: 224. The short untitled essay appeared in Suzuki's Zen column in the June 11, 1942 issue of *Chūgai Nippō*. It was later compiled in *Zen Hyakudai*, published in December 1943, where it was given the title "Zen and Dying in Vain" ("Zen to Inujini"). This translation appears in Kirita, 61.

During this period one of the journals Suzuki contributed to frequently, *Daijōzen* (Mahāyāna Zen), fairly bristled with pro-militarist articles. In issues filled with essays proclaiming “Victory in the Holy War!” and bearing such titles as “Death Is the Last Battle,” “Certain Victory for Kamikaze and Torpedoes,” and “The Noble Sacrifice of a Hundred Million,” Suzuki continued with contributions on subjects like “Zen and Culture.”

A further indication of his posture during the war years is his work for the Buddhist newspaper *Chūgai Nippō*. Between 1941 and the end of the war in 1945 Suzuki contributed two regular articles and 191 short installments for a column entitled “Zen.”<sup>74</sup> Virtually none of these pieces contain any reference to the current political and war situation. Instead, they simply introduce the lives and recorded sayings of the masters or explain the outlook of Zen.<sup>75</sup>

In his private correspondence, however, Suzuki continued to express the same standpoint of opposition to the ongoing military developments seen in his earlier letters. A letter dated February 28, 1942, just a few months after the attacks on Pearl Harbor and Singapore that ignited the war against the Western Allies, expresses Suzuki’s anger at the situation in a series of *waka* poems to his friend Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945):

The glint of the sacred sword appears blinding.  
Nevertheless, I love only the soft light of the unclouded sacred jewel.

You, the demon who lives through power, will, and blood!  
Who is it that questions your responsibility?  
(How sad it is that there is none who does so!)

There is someone who acts with absolute power  
but takes no responsibility (for his actions).  
His name is The State.

You who behave as a demon  
under the name of The State –  
I despise you.

You!  
Don’t dance on Singapore Island!  
Destruction is easy, but creation takes much time!<sup>76</sup>

It was also as an opponent to the war that Suzuki was remembered by his colleagues at Ōtani University, where Suzuki was a professor at the time.

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<sup>74</sup> Later compiled in revised form as *Zen hyakudai* (One Hundred Zen Topics), in SDZ, 15: 157-425.

<sup>75</sup> *Rude Awakenings*, 60-61.

<sup>76</sup> SDZ, 37: 36.

As the war continued, student deferments were eventually halted, and many young men from the universities were conscripted and sent to the battlefields. The university held a sending-off gathering for its departing students, with Suzuki chosen to give the address. As he stood at the podium, he was silent for a time, perhaps at a loss for words to say to the young men about to depart for the fields of death. His silence must have impressed a sense of gravity upon the students. Finally, he began to speak, saying, “How tragically unfortunate this is. What possible reason do young Americans and young Japanese have to kill each other? How long will this absurd war go on? But someday it will come to an end. When it does, it will be the job of you young people to create a new world and a new age. So you must not die during this war. You must come back alive, even if that means being taken prisoners of war.”

Suzuki’s address, so different from the war-promoting speeches that were customary at such gatherings, deeply affected not only the newly conscripted students but also everyone else present. His words are still remembered today. Suzuki’s talk as quoted above was recorded by Hino Kenshi, a temple priest whose father, a former Ōtani student present at the gathering, repeated Suzuki’s statement “on numerous occasions”. Many other former students recall Suzuki’s words in almost exactly the same way.<sup>77</sup>

Earlier, when the Pearl Harbor attack was announced at an Ōtani University faculty meeting on December 8, 1941, Suzuki created quite a commotion among the assembled faculty members by stating, “With this, Japan will be destroyed. What will destroy it is Shinto and the militarists.”<sup>78</sup>

This, at least, is not a point that would be disputed by Victoria. In the later sections of *Zen at War* he concedes that the war against the Western Allies was not supported by Suzuki, but he insists that Suzuki was opposed only to this aspect of the war, knowing full well from his years of residence in the West that Japan could not prevail against such mighty industrial powers. Regarding the war on the Asian continent, Victoria says, Suzuki was “quite enthusiastic”:

Nowhere in Suzuki’s writings does one find the least regret, let alone an apology for Japan’s earlier colonial efforts in such places as China, Korea, or Taiwan. In fact, he was quite enthusiastic about Japanese military activities in Asia. In an article addressed specifically to young Japanese Buddhists written in 1943 he stated: “Although it is called the Greater East Asia War, its essence is that of an ideological struggle for the culture of East Asia. Buddhists must join in this struggle and accomplish their essential mission.” One is left with the suspicion that for Suzuki things didn’t really go wrong until Japan decided to attack the United States.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Quoted from Ueda Shizuteru, “Outwardly, Be Open; Inwardly, Be Deep”, in *The Eastern Buddhist*, 38.1-2 (2007): 36.

<sup>78</sup> Kitanishi Hiromu, “Reminiscences: Suzuki Daisetsu Sensei”, Part 2, in *Zen Bunka*, 201 (June 2006): 13.

<sup>79</sup> Victoria, x.



Suzuki was certainly well aware of the futility of going to war with the United States, as indicated by several passages quoted by Victoria.<sup>80</sup> But it is difficult on several levels to agree with Victoria's contention that Suzuki supported the war in China. First, Suzuki's letters of February 10, 1940 and August 8, 1941, quoted above,<sup>81</sup> show that far from being enthusiastic about the conflict, he viewed it as an utter disaster. Moreover, even on a purely semantic level, Victoria's interpretation of Suzuki's words in the passage above is ruled out by the fact that the term "Greater East Asia War" (*Daitōa sensō*) never referred to the war with China alone, even prior to the beginning of hostilities with the West. The name came into existence only on December 10, 1941, two days after the Pearl Harbor attack, when it was applied by decision of the Japanese cabinet to both the war with China and the war with the Western Allies.<sup>82</sup> Thus, when Suzuki wrote these words in June 1943, no reader would have interpreted them as referring solely to the war in China. Most important, it is obvious from the overall context of the quoted sentences that Suzuki was not referring to the actual fighting in China at all.

The essay containing the quoted passage, entitled "The Global Mission of Mahāyāna Buddhism: Addressed to young people",<sup>83</sup> sets forth Suzuki's position on the cultural encounter between East and West and the proper role of Mahāyāna Buddhism in facing the resulting tensions and challenges. I shall quote from it at some length, not only to contextualize the sentence cited by Victoria but also to show something of the broad general lines along which Suzuki was thinking during the wartime years. The article begins with the following paragraphs:

In the almost eighty years that have passed since the Meiji Restoration (1868), great progress has been made in all of the non-Buddhist areas of culture. Contact with the cultures of the West was for the Japanese a terrible shock, but we were able to respond in an appropriate fashion. This is something that anyone who compares our culture now with what it was at the beginning of the Meiji period would readily acknowledge.

Never in history have we experienced such rapid progress in every aspect of our lives, whether in the advance of science and technology, the accumulation of capital, the growth in social complexity, or the momentous transformation of political ideas. In the East, and particularly in Japan, this

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<sup>80</sup> See, for example, Victoria, p. 152 and note 15, p. 208. Suzuki was indeed realistic about Japan's relative weakness with regard to the United States but, as we have seen, his opposition to Japan's wars was much broader.

<sup>81</sup> Correspondence, SDZ, 37: 17, 25-26.

<sup>82</sup> See the *Nihonshi daijiten* (Encyclopedia of Japanese History), 4: 529; s.v. *Daitōa sensō*. It is generally agreed that the name did not apply retroactively to the war prior to December 1941.

<sup>83</sup> SDZ, 32: 420-435. Originally published in the *Ōtani gakuho* (Ōtani Bulletin), June 20, 1943, "Daijō Bukkyō no sekai-teki shimei: wakaki hitobito ni yosu".

“raised the heavens and shook the earth,” and it continues to do so today, although in the nations of the West this type of progress may no longer seem surprising, owing to the qualitative differences between East and West.

Even nowadays we can perceive how flourishing is the intellectual competition between these qualitatively different cultures. I believe that this phenomenon of rivalry, trade-off, confrontation, struggle, or whatever you wish to call it will continue for quite some time. Then, out of these struggles and rivalries will inevitably arise a natural integration of the cultures of East and West. Before then, however, we must undergo many trials and tribulations, particularly with regard to thought and culture.<sup>84</sup>

The article continues throughout in much the same vein, exploring the implications of Western technology and thought for the material and spiritual culture of Japan and discussing the challenges and benefits of Western rationality for traditional Japanese ways of thinking (often in a manner quite critical of the latter). Arguing for the importance of transcending Japan’s cultural limitations in order to encompass the Western outlook, Suzuki sharply criticizes the response of Buddhism to the Western challenge:

What changes has Buddhism made in thought and lifestyle as a result of this jolt from the West to its environment? The fact is, in the eighty years since the Meiji Restoration, Japanese Buddhism has done nothing. Although Buddhism, even should its “body” perish, is certain to sprout anew as long as any life remains in its teachings, those teachings are nevertheless spread by the human beings who represent one aspect of the body of Buddhism. Should that aspect of the body disappear, revival of the Way itself would become a very difficult and time-consuming process, allowing undesirable teachings to run rampant. Thus the protection, growth, and welfare of the truth must be attended to in a conscious, rational, and systematic manner. Japanese Buddhism today is facing an extreme crisis. If at this time we miss the opportunity to turn it around, we will witness the tragic demise of Buddhism’s very life. Indications of this are visible everywhere.

The political upheavals of the Meiji Restoration dealt a severe blow to the feudal Buddhist organizations, depriving them of much of their material support and shaking their ideological foundations. Fortunately, prominent priests at the time were able to contain the crisis, but ever since then the Buddhists – especially the bonzes – have been, in their thought and their spiritual practice, like “the bug in the lion.”<sup>85</sup> Herein we see the root of the problem. Day by day the toxin spreads. The Japanese Buddhist organizations must deal with the fact that they have become little more than funeral-service associations, and there is little they can do about it. The organizations are full of shavepates, but one can only wonder if any of them are devoting thought to the serious and very real problem of the cultural and ideological tension between East and West.

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 32: 420-421.

<sup>85</sup> A Buddhist simile meaning a parasite that drains the life from its host.

Most of the clergy is content to confine itself to understanding, protecting, and maintaining what might be called “Nihon-teki” Bukkyō (“Japanese-style” Buddhism). The Nihon-teki Bukkyō they speak of is nothing but the relics of Buddhism past – relics that, in today’s world situation, should not be adhered to. I’ve heard it said that the best defense is a good offence. What the term *Nihon-teki* should imply in this day and age is the perspicacity to leave the past behind and open up new approaches. Instead of living in rigid conformity with “the past,” we must renounce it and out of this renunciation bring new life into being. If we do not do this, even conforming to the past will become impossible. Recently one hears terms like *tenshin* (a positive change in course) or *hatten-teki kaishō* (the dissolution of an organization to make way for its existence in a different form); and in all of them the operating principle is the logic of negation. Needless to say, this is not negation in the ordinary sense of the word.

Kamakura Buddhism renounced the Buddhism of the Nara and Heian periods in the process of developing a new, more grassroots form of Japanese Buddhism. This opportunity was afforded to Japan by the decline of the courtly culture, the ascendancy of the warrior class, the renewed contact with Chinese literature, the struggle against the Mongol invasions, and other factors. As a result of these stimuli Buddhism during the Kamakura age was able to rid itself of the conceptual, aristocratic, and leisure-oriented character that had typified it during the Nara and Heian eras. The result was a reawakening of Buddhism to its original mission.<sup>86</sup>

Next comes the paragraph from which Victoria draws his citation:

In the course of the ensuing six or seven hundred years, however, Buddhism has bound itself with new fetters. Today we are blessed with the opportunity to cast these fetters aside and advance another step. In response to the incursions of the different culture and thought of the West, Buddhists, as Buddhists, must renounce those things in their way of thinking – those things from their past – that deserve to be renounced, and develop new approaches. We speak of the “Greater East Asia” War, but its essence, ideologically, should be seen as a

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 32: 423-424.

struggle by East Asian culture.<sup>87</sup> Buddhists must join in this struggle and fulfill their original mission as Buddhists.<sup>88</sup>

Suzuki, beginning a new section at this point, explains the nature of this conflict:

In the area of culture and ideology, though one may speak of “struggle,” “conflict,” or “rivalry,” what is involved is not throwing your opponent to the ground and pinning him so that he cannot move. This is especially true when the opponent is not necessarily your inferior intellectually, materially, historically, and otherwise. In such cases not only is it impossible to destroy him, but even if it were it would not be to your benefit to do so. Western culture is qualitatively different from that of the East, but for precisely that reason it should be accepted. And those on the other side need to accept our culture as well. It is important to arouse the frame of mind that seeks to accomplish this. That, truly, is the role with which Buddhism is charged, for it is Buddhist thought that functions at the center of the Eastern way of thinking.<sup>89</sup>

It is obvious that this article has nothing to do with expressing support for the war in China or calling for young Buddhists to join the army and go off to fight on the continent. Rather, Suzuki is appealing for a positive, determined engagement with the culture of the West as a way not only to enrich Japanese culture but also to revive the life of Japanese Buddhism. Far from an expression of enthusiasm for the Asian war, it is indicative of precisely those qualities in Suzuki that caused him to oppose the outlook and actions that led the militarists to invade the continent. It is particularly indicative of Suzuki’s outlook that this article was published in 1943 at the height of the wartime xenophobia, a time when for most Japanese the common epithet for Westerners was *kichiku beiei* (demon-animal Americans and English) and when English itself was forbidden in the schools as the language of the enemy.

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<sup>87</sup> Victoria’s reading, “its essence is that an ideological struggle for East Asian culture”, although possible, is difficult to support either in light of the context of the article or of the original Japanese. It is of interest to note that although it does not change the overall meaning of what Suzuki is saying, it is likely that there was a misprint here in which 東亜 (East Asia) was substituted for 東西 (East-West). In the original text Suzuki places quotation marks around the “Greater East Asian” in the term “Greater East Asian War”, suggesting that he wished to express a contrast between “East Asia” and something else. The fact that the entire article is a discussion of the differences and tensions between Eastern and Western cultures, combined with the fact that the two characters 亜 and 西 can easily be confused when written by hand, suggests that the original manuscript, before being set to type, read “We speak of the “Greater East Asia” War, but its essence, ideologically, should be seen as a struggle between Eastern and Western cultures”.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 32: 423-424.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 32: 424-425.

Later in his essay he renews his call to Japanese Buddhism for a greater universality and sense of international mission:

Japanese Buddhism has never been Mahāyāna Buddhism in the true sense of the term. It has always been too insular and too political – qualities that suited it for existence in its cultural environment, but have rendered it unable at present to transcend its limits. Japanese Buddhists have never had the missionary fervor to depart for foreign lands and live out their lives in the wild – in this regard we lag far behind the Christians, particularly the Catholics, with their indomitable spirit. It may be acceptable here in our own country to resign oneself to irrelevance, but Japanese Buddhism has failed to produce so much as a single individual willing to go abroad to dwell amongst foreign peoples, not knowing whether he will live or die, and sacrifice himself for the Way he believes in. This failure is a natural outcome, given the nature of “Japanese” Buddhism.<sup>90</sup> ... Mahāyāna Buddhists must not only recognize that their faith is universal in nature, but also proclaim that universality via a universal logic on a global scale. This will probably require that tradition and history be set aside for a time. It is now required of us that we make a radical, 180-degree turn with regard to the world. The opportunity for this may be provided by a chance occurrence. Or it may be provided by an act of resistance against suppression by a certain group. In any event, regardless of what the direct catalyst might be, today, in this eighteenth year of the Shōwa era (1943), what the world asks of us is complete revolution in our culture and thought. It would seem to me that this call would be heard, deep in the heart, by some Mahāyāna Buddhist – no, more than that, I believe that it is heard by everyone! The problem is simply that we’re not yet fully prepared to act. Look at the way in which Shinran Shōnin went against tradition when he felt the spirit of the times calling from the very depths of the earth.<sup>91</sup>

There is one final point I would like to make with regard to this article. Towards the end Suzuki makes what is, in those days of government censorship, about as close as possible to a direct appeal to his young readers to wake up to what was going on around them and not to follow the lead of those who claim the spiritual superiority of the Japanese:

We must open our eyes and see how culture is being influenced in all of its aspects by modern thought – especially scientific thought. We cannot afford the shallow narcissism implicit in the attitude that “we (Japanese) are spiritual, those (Westerners) are materialistic.” The people who call themselves spiritual or claim a monopoly on morality are actually the most materialistic and immoral of all. What these people are up to is, in fact, obvious to any Buddhist with even the slightest capacity to observe within and watch without, though not to those who cover their eyes and ears and do as they’re told, turning right

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 32: 430.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 32: 432.

and turning left when ordered to; and while I won't say these people have been deceived, the truth is that they are not fully utilizing their senses.<sup>92</sup>

Although Victoria and others may wish that Suzuki had criticized Japanese militarism more directly, his failure to acknowledge that Suzuki did publish such indirect criticisms sadly distorts the historical record. Especially for a citizen whose personal circumstances – a long residence in the United States, an American spouse and past criticism of the military – made him vulnerable to charges of sympathizing with the enemy, Suzuki's words, mild as they may seem in hindsight, were actually quite courageous under a totalitarian regime.<sup>93</sup> Victoria, in his attempts to find other evidence that Suzuki favored Japan's military actions in China, quotes the following passage from the chapter "Zen and the Samurai" in *Zen and Japanese Culture*:

There is a document that was very much talked about in connection with the Japanese military operations in China in the 1930s. It is known as the *Hagakure*, which literally means "Hidden under the Leaves," for it is one of the virtues of the samurai not to display himself, not to blow his horn, but to keep himself away from the public eye and be doing good for his fellow beings.<sup>94</sup>

The first line of this passage – the only mention of China in the entire chapter it appears in – is no more than a statement of fact. Indeed, if the Japanese military had acted in accordance with the words of this passage – not displaying itself and doing good for its fellow beings – its problems in China would never have occurred in the first place.

## Postwar Writings

This brings us to a consideration of Suzuki's postwar writings, writings that are strongly critical of Japan's wartime actions and the behavior of the Zen leadership. Let us begin with an article that appeared in the September 1, 1945 issue of the journal *Teiyū rinri*. The date, a mere two weeks after the defeat and virtually simultaneous to Japan's formal surrender on September 2, suggests that the thoughts expressed by Suzuki were already well-formed, and perhaps already set to paper, by the war's concluding months. Here are a few representative passages:

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 32: 434-435.

<sup>93</sup> See his critical statement on Zen and *makujiki kōzen* in *Chūgai nippō* (June 11, 1942), cited earlier. The essay appears in SDZ, 15: 222.

<sup>94</sup> Victoria, 107. The original passage is found in D T Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books), 70.

This war lacked any just moral cause or argument, or any credible ideological background. The war that was started in Manchuria was an act of pure exploitation and imperialism....

After the army had finished its work in Manchuria, it marched into northern China, saying that it was necessary to do so in order to secure Japan's economic survival. Things went well for it there, and this was attributed to the "august powers of the emperor." I am sure this was the most unwelcome nuisance imaginable as far as the emperor himself was concerned. "August powers" are like the sword of life of Mañjuśri or the demon-suppressing sword of Ācala (Fudō Myōō). Was it necessary for the Japanese army to wield such arms in either Manchuria or northern China? The Chinese had done us no harm.... It was nothing other than a confirmation that this was invasive, militaristic imperialism....

As the so-called "Holy War" expanded from northern China to central China and on to southern China, the Japanese populace was kept completely in the dark. It seemed like the militarists and industrialists, swept up in their own momentum, could think only of advancing farther south. Then that inhuman atrocity committed in Nanjing – that unprecedented atrocity, news of which was concealed from the Japanese people but which was clearly reported abroad. People could not fathom of how such a thing could happen in a "Holy War," and why the "Army of the Emperor" had to engage in such acts. The "Holy War" in central and southern China was a violation by us of the rights and interests of another nation. That other nation was not always an exemplar of charity and humanitarianism, of course, but it is only to be expected that when one side uses force, the other side will resist by using force also. That is the nature of war. Basically, there is nothing "holy" about any war. "Holiness" manifests itself only in that which transcends force. Yet the militarists insisted upon referring to their "Imperial" Army and their "Holy" War....

Why did Japan deliberately press on with this recklessness? In this is revealed the thoughtlessness of the militarists. Unable to manage the "Holy War" in China, they extended it to all of East Asia under a new name. It was a vivid demonstration of the militarists' and industrialists' intellectual poverty. There was little that the ordinary populace could do, silenced as it was by gag laws and censorship, but it is incomprehensible to us why figures like senior officials and parliament members were unable to pressure the militarists and industrialists to stop their rash behavior. At the start of the conflict the military experienced some stunning successes, but although that may have been enough to mislead the people, among those who understood such matters it was recognized as extremely dangerous. In spite of this – or actually because of this – the authorities increasingly turned to deception and intimidation in their dealings with the people. The actions of the majority of the population were guided by mass psychology. Only a small number of intellectuals foresaw what was coming, but they were deprived in every sense of their freedom of action and expression, and could only look on helplessly from the sidelines. And, finally, the war ended in the situation we have today.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> SDZ, 33: 7-9.

The sentiments expressed in these passages gave rise to a series of contemplations by Suzuki of the weaknesses of Japan that had led to its disastrous course and of the possibilities for the distinctly Japanese spiritual renewal that he saw as essential to the full recovery of the nation. First expressed in his wartime article “The Global Mission of Mahāyāna Buddhism”, his ideas were developed primarily in a series of four books, all centered on the concept of “Japanese spirituality”: *Nihon-teki reisei* (Japanese Spirituality) (1944; revised edition, 1946), *Nihon-teki reisei-teki jikaku* (Japanese Spirituality Awakening) (1946), *Reisei-teki Nihon no kensetsu* (The Construction of a Spiritual Japan) (1946), and *Nihon no reiseika* (The Spiritualization of Japan) (1947).

Suzuki regarded “Japanese spirituality” – in his view, the type of spirituality seen primarily in Japanese Pure Land figures like Hōnen and Shinran – as the religious ideal most suited to the religious culture of the nation and the best alternative to the failed State Shintoist ideology. His views on the subject were already developing during the war years. In June 1945, two months before the Japanese surrender, Suzuki explained what he intended by the term “Japanese spirituality” in a lecture prepared for delivery at Higashi Hongan-ji’s Kyōgaku Kenkyūsho (Center for Shin Buddhist Studies):

I would like to say a word about the way in which I will use the word “Japan.” I intend it to refer only to the place and the people, and not to imply anything else. Thus, when I speak of “Japanese spiritual awakening,” I mean a spiritual awakening experienced by the people or populace that inhabit the land of Japan, a place that occupies a spatial location in a corner of East Asia. The concept of spirituality is, needless to say, a universal one, but the awakening to spirituality occurs only on an individual basis. And those individuals live in a certain land and belong to a certain people. This is why I feel it is possible to precede the term “spiritual awakening” with the word “Japanese.” ....

To help prevent misunderstanding, let me stress that the term “Japanese” as I use it has absolutely no political implications... Politics is always about power, and involves force, dominance, and suppression. Spirituality has nothing of this sort about it. Spirituality seeks the happiness of others; it strives to ease their suffering, it aspires to transcendence, and it is infinitely compassionate. These are the sources of its strength. Unless strength arises from such sources, it invariably turns to repression, exclusion, and arrogance, and embraces imperialism, aggression, annexation, and all the other distortions of power. Nothing is more malign than “the sword that takes life” when it is uncontrolled by “the sword that gives life.” Spiritual awakening can never arise from politics. It is politics that must originate in spiritual awakening; and the converse is fraudulent, and will inevitably lead to breakdown and confusion. We need not search far for examples – just look at Germany.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 9: 164-166.



I shall not devote too much space to an analysis of Suzuki's postwar writings. Although *Zen at War* regards Suzuki's thought in these works as the product of a hypocritical ideological conversion undergone only after the collapse of Japan's war effort,<sup>97</sup> it should be obvious from our overview of Suzuki's writings that all the main themes seen in his critical postwar writings – the doubts about State Shinto, the mistrust of the military establishment, the encouragement of a greater rationality for the Japanese, the recognition of a need for Buddhist reform – are in fact logically consistent with his positions dating back to the late nineteenth century.

One example will suffice, I think, as a response to Victoria's attacks. In several places Victoria takes Suzuki to task for stating positions in his postwar writings that all historians recognize as simple fact. Victoria writes, for example:

Even in the midst of Japan's utter defeat, Suzuki remained determined to find something praiseworthy in Japan's war efforts. He described the positive side of the war as follows:

Through the great sacrifice of the Japanese people and nation, it can be said the various peoples of the countries of the Orient had the opportunity to awaken both economically and politically. . . . This was just the beginning, and I believe that after ten, twenty, or more years the various peoples of the Orient may well have formed independent countries and contributed to the improvement of the world's culture in tandem with the various peoples of Europe and America.

Here, in an echo of his wartime writings, Suzuki continued to praise the "great sacrifice" the Japanese people allegedly made to "awaken the peoples of Asia."<sup>98</sup>

There is actually nothing controversial about Suzuki's position: historians are in agreement that the Japanese military actions in Southeast Asia and the Pacific provided an important impetus to the nationalist movements in the colonized nations of those regions, although the dynamics were complex and involved both pro- and anti-Japanese sentiments. And Suzuki was unquestionably correct in his prediction that several decades after the war, the East Asian and Southeast Asian nations were likely to attain independence.

Most important, however, Victoria's citation from Suzuki is quite selective. The full passage reads:

The great losses<sup>99</sup> suffered by the Japanese people and nation can be said to have provided the various peoples of the countries of the East with the

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<sup>97</sup> Victoria, 147-152.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 150-151.

opportunity to awaken both economically and politically. Needless to say, embarking on the “Greater East Asia War” was a highly unreasonable course, the result of the Japanese militarists at the time instigating reckless campaigns that were supported by Japan’s “politicians.” But it would be a fine thing, I believe, if with this as a beginning the various peoples of the East are able in a few decades to form nations that are independent in every way, and are contributing to the improvement of the world’s culture in tandem with the various peoples of Europe and America. Asians originally learned of things like imperialism and colonialism from Europe, but at the same time it was also from Europe that we learned of concepts like independence, freedom and equality, peaceful economics, and equal opportunity. Therefore I believe that we owe great respect to the people of Europe and America, who are the origin of these ideas that were planted in Asia. . . . With regard to this past war, Japan must bear its full share of moral and political responsibility. What is fortunate, however, is that Japan has renounced engagement in war and is venturing out, naked, among the nations of the world.<sup>100</sup>

I shall leave it to the reader to assess how fairly Suzuki’s position was represented in *Zen at War*, and I would hope that the reader keeps in mind Victoria’s treatment of this straightforward and benign passage when evaluating his use of Suzuki’s writings on war and Bushido.

Several other issues brought up in *Zen at War*’s chapter on Suzuki’s postwar writings, such as his supposed enthusiasm for the war in China, have already been dealt with above and will not be considered further here.

There is one particular point raised by Suzuki in his postwar writings and cited in *Zen at War* that it is regrettable Victoria did not pursue more objectively:

With *Satori* (Enlightenment) alone, it is impossible (for *Zen* priests) to shoulder their responsibilities as leaders of society. Not only is it impossible, but it is conceited of them to imagine they could do so. . . . In *Satori* there is a world of *Satori*. However, by itself *Satori* is unable to judge the right and wrong of war. With regard to disputes in the ordinary world, it is necessary to employ intellectual discrimination. . . . For example, *Satori* has no relation to economics. There may be no problem with economics as it was in the old days, but if one is dealing with the complexities of economic theory or international relations today, one has to have an adequate level of technical knowledge or one cannot even begin to form an opinion. *Satori* by itself is inadequate to determine whether communist economics is good or bad.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> The original Japanese term, *daigisei*, can be translated as “great sacrifice”, as Victoria did, but in the context of the entire passage, where Suzuki is discussing the damage inflicted by the Japanese military on its own nation and people, I believe that “great losses” is more accurate.

<sup>100</sup> SDZ, 8: 237.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 28: 413. The portion before the second ellipsis appears in Victoria, 148-149.

Victoria, using this as simply more material with which to discredit Suzuki, misses what I believe is a sincere attempt on Suzuki's part to address the most perplexing question raised by the material in *Zen at War*: Why did Zen masters, supposedly enlightened, cooperate in the war effort? Suzuki's opinion on this matter as expressed in these comments relates back to the point made above about the value-neutral nature of the nondual meditative experience: such experience may be extremely helpful when it comes to discerning the true nature of the self and the suchness of the present moment, but alone it is of little use in reaching an accurate assessment of, say, the complex issues behind a war. A discussion of the entire issue of Enlightenment and its relation to social ethics is beyond the scope of this paper, of course. I simply wish to express my disappointment that Victoria was unwilling to engage with even straightforward attempts by Suzuki to address the failings and weaknesses of his own spiritual tradition.

## Conclusion

In the course of this article I have been very critical of Victoria's presentation of Suzuki's work and of Suzuki the man, so I would like to reiterate what I said at the beginning. Overall I think that his work has been of value – Japanese Buddhism, and particularly the Zen school, did unquestionably cooperate in the militarist war effort, and it is important for the future development of Japanese Zen Buddhism that this fact be known and that the Zen institutions explore the reasons for and consequences of this cooperation. I encourage Victoria in his continuing efforts to remind us of this chapter in Japanese Zen's history. Painful as this may be to many followers of the Zen tradition, it can in the long run have only the beneficial effect of motivating a reassessment of what practice and Enlightenment are and of what role conscious ethical choice needs to play in the spiritual life of Zen, and indeed of all traditions that aim for the attainment of meditative insight.

I do not believe, however, that Victoria has presented a valid case against D T Suzuki as a proponent of Japan's war in Asia and the Pacific. We have seen that Suzuki was not averse to expressing his opinions on political issues in both his private correspondence and, when he felt free to do so, in his public writings. If, as Victoria claims, Suzuki had advocated Japanese militarism, one would expect to see explicit support for militarist positions not only in his prewar and wartime personal letters but also, and especially, in his public statements, given that such support would have been fully in line with the political and intellectual trends of the time. Instead one sees precisely the opposite. In cases where Suzuki directly expresses his position on the contemporary political situation – whether in his articles, public talks or letters to friends (in which he would have had no reason to misrepresent his views) – he is clear and explicit in his distrust of and opposition to State Shinto, right-wing thoughts and the other forces that were pushing Japan towards militarism and war, even as he expressed interest in

decidedly non-rightist ideologies such as socialism. In this Suzuki's standpoint was consistent, from the late nineteenth century to the postwar years. These materials reveal in Suzuki an intellectual independence, a healthy skepticism about political ideology and government propaganda and a sound appreciation of human rights.

By contrast, those writings cited by Victoria as militarist in nature are almost conspicuous in their refusal to explicitly comment upon, much less support, contemporary political and military developments and when read in their full context, they are seen to contain much material that is plainly not supportive of the Japanese military agenda. Suzuki clearly believed in the legitimacy of defensive war, but when it came to the actual wars embarked upon by the Japanese military, his writings show that he recognized none of them as justified. Similarly, Suzuki was impressed by the martial ethics and ideals of Bushido, but saw its highest expression in the skillful defusing of confrontation without resort to violence. He respected the samurai detachment towards life and death and the average Japanese soldier's retention of that detachment.<sup>102</sup> Yet when it came to the reality of Japan's young men being uselessly slaughtered on the battlefield at the order of government officials "with no religious convictions", he did not hesitate to declare, in a published article during the height of the war, that 'to regard the foolhardy and senseless sacrifice of one's life as Zen is a mish-mash idea. Zen absolutely never teaches one to throw one's life away.'<sup>103</sup>

If there are valid reasons for criticizing Suzuki's actions during the war or at another time, certainly those reasons must be brought to light and thoroughly discussed. But I would hope that the discussion would accord equal weight to all of the available evidence, fully put it in its social and historical context and examine all possible interpretations. The issues involved are too important to deserve anything less.

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<sup>102</sup> See *Zen and Japanese Culture*, 85.

<sup>103</sup> SDZ, 15: 222, cited above. As cited by Kirita, 61.



# **TRAINING MINDS FOR PEACE: THE USE OF BUDDHIST MEDITATION IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION TRAINING**

**Nathaniel C. Michon**

## **Introduction**

“*Bhāvanā*,” one of many words translated as meditation, literally means cultivation. This aspect of training is implied through many words and meditation practices throughout the Buddhist traditions. Meditation is very literally a way of training the mind. It is a mental exercise, because it is just that – an *exercise*. Awareness, empathy, effort, and compassion are not just traits that some people have and others lack. Our mind has to be worked out in many different areas, just like body builders strengthen their muscles.

Such mind training can be applied to a wide range of fields, but can be particularly useful in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Johan Galtung (b. 1930), the founder of modern “peace studies” has advocated transcending differences caused by conflicts throughout his work. Rather than looking for what is best between options A and B, he encourages people to creatively seek “both-and” solutions. However, sometimes in the fields of peace and social justice work there is a lack of people caring for their own minds while trying to benefit others. People tend to work hard and experience significant stress while striving to take care of others seriously in need, leading to numerous cases of burnout. This is well intentioned and far better than acting only for one’s own benefit, but lacks the both-and approach between selfishness and selflessness. Consciously practicing joy in service to others is one way of training ourselves to do good in the world while maintaining the energy to continue doing it on a long-term basis. This is not something that comes natural to everyone. We have to build our mental capacities for both strength and endurance if we are to

ensure that our values hold strong in even the most stressful conditions and over long periods of time.

Although it is often said that before bringing peace to others, we have to bring peace to ourselves, this is often not how the training of peace workers is structured. There is a growing body of evidence to suggest that some types of meditation may be helpful in not only lessening the stress of workers, but also developing some other qualities they need to be successful in their work. After introducing conflict transformation in further detail and displaying some of the needs that have been outlined within the training of its workers, this paper will show that due to emerging biological and psychological understandings of stress, and the varying roles meditation plays in its reduction, such practices should be more widely applied and explored. Furthermore, they should be studied more concretely to show more specific ways in which meditation can fit the various needs in conflict transformation training.

### **What is Conflict Transformation?**

This section will look at how conflict itself is defined, before showing what conflict transformation is and how it is conceptually distinguished from conflict resolution. Academic studies on conflict transformation often fall in the realm of “peace studies.” Peace studies is relatively new as a “field” in academics and practice. Johan Galtung laid much of the groundwork for Peace studies and defines peace essentially as an absence or reduction of violence.<sup>1</sup> Galtung’s paradigm separates such violence into three primary categories: direct, structural, and cultural. Direct violence is the harm done directly from one person or group to another, whether physical or verbal. Structural violence refers to those societal structures that create poverty, oppression, exploitation, and other systematic causes of misery. Cultural violence lies even behind these other forms of violence within our paradigmatic assumptions of the world, produced through symbols we accrue through ideologies, languages, art, literature, media, law, education, and other facets of our accumulated unconscious archetypes.

Although conflict may often cause violence and violence inevitably produces further conflict, the two terms should not be confused. Conflict occurs on all levels of interaction from large-scale wars to deciding which color of socks to buy in the store. Conflicts are not necessarily negative, but as Galtung points out, in “conflict there is, somewhere, a contradiction. And in a contradiction there is, somewhere dynamism. The Daoist idea of yin/yang, one

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<sup>1</sup> Galtung actually displays a Buddhist influence quite plainly as well in part of his effort to define peace. He uses the notions of suffering and suggests action for peace is an effort to bring situations to the greatest amount of happiness possible. Johan Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Ltd, 1996), 2.

waxing, one waning, in search of a harmony point is, as is said about causality, not a law, but the form of a law.”<sup>2</sup> What results from this dynamism is opportunity for guiding transformation through the conflict and ideally, of course, this would be a positive transformation.

One may begin to see that despite the prevalence of the term “conflict resolution,” it has several problems. Because conflicts are not necessarily negative, “resolving” them is not always desirable. Two teams in the final of a World Cup match might be considered to be in conflict with one other, but if the referee simply decided to end the game after the first half, no one would leave the stadium happy. It is not the conflict itself, but the violence that is the problem. Even if it happens to be a violent conflict, “resolution” has sometimes implied covering up the real problems. In Central America, for example, people objected to conflict resolution practitioners, saying they tried to bring immediate ends to the violence while ignoring the underlying social issues that caused the violence in the first place. Although hidden for some time, those issues are left to fester and break out again at a later time.<sup>3</sup> For these reasons, the term “conflict transformation” is growing in preference. To “resolve” suggests to simply end something, whereas “transformation” carries broader implications of skillfully using the powerful energies of a conflict to help create positive changes in a situation. Conflict transformation is also not concerned so much with signed treaties and legal documentation to “resolve” a conflict as it is with the holistic varied and numerous ground level issues that stem from violence. John Paul Lederach defines “conflict transformation” in a comprehensive way in saying it is “to envision and respond to the ebb and flow of social conflict as life-giving opportunities for creating constructive change processes that (a) reduce violence, (b) increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and (c) respond to real-life problems in human relationships.”<sup>4</sup>

## Peace Training and its Needs

Peace training is a type of education focused on building professional competencies for peace work.<sup>5</sup> A growing number of agencies and institutes are emerging which focus on this aspect through public and private seminars, university classes, travel to remote locations where elaborate simulations are set

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul Lederach, *The Little Book of Conflict Transformation* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2003), 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>5</sup> Peace work is literally the work towards transcending conflicts to reduce violence by peaceful means. Some of the various forms of peace work include peacekeeping (controlling the actors so that they at least stop destroying things, others, and themselves), peace-making (embedding the actors in a new formation and transform attitudes and assumptions), and peace-building (overcoming the contradiction at the root of the conflict formation).



up, and many more methods. There is a great multiplicity of subject matter for these trainings, and several studies have emerged evaluating the efficacy of their work in helping peace workers attain the necessary skills. Peace workers in conflict transformation require a wide skill set with training in areas such as meditation, facilitation, project management, intercultural communication, conflict theory, community development, and knowledge specific to working areas. However, people also require the development of various personal qualities. Some of the main personal qualities needed and commonly agreed upon for people working in conflict zones in particular include diplomacy, sensitivity, creativity, flexibility, positive attitude, and composure under pressure. All of these currently have at least some place in trainings today. However, it has been identified as a greater need. The Alliance for Conflict Transformation, in a report identifying many types of skills needed for workers, made the following comments regarding “personal skills”:

One theme that emerged from the respondents was the need for individuals to be open minded and flexible due to the challenging nature of the work. Since much of international conflict work can take place under stressful and ever-changing conditions, this was often cited as a very important skill area. As one conflict advisor for a non-profit explained, people need a “high level of creativity, innovation, and ability to think outside the box.” One individual commented that more important than training is the ability to be able to live under stressful situations. One independent conflict consultant stressed that people need: “...flexibility, ability to think on your feet are really important” as circumstances can rapidly change.<sup>6</sup>

Some other skills that were mentioned under this section were patience, humility, a good sense of humor, an eagerness to learn, and a “passion for their work.”<sup>7</sup> In a survey of European organizations involved with conflict transformation, it asked respondents, about the “*most necessary skills* needed for people working in peace building and conflict transformation in areas of conflict.” “Personal soft skills” and “Behavioral competencies” both outweighed “professional competencies.”<sup>8</sup> Under the section of the report suggesting

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<sup>6</sup> Craig Zelzier and Linda Johnson, *Skills, Networks and Knowledge: Developing a Career in International Peace and Conflict Resolution* (Alexandria, VA: Alliance for Conflict Transformation, Inc., 2005), 30.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>8</sup> One problem with assessing the report on this part of the survey was that the categories were not specifically defined to survey respondents. The respondents themselves were asked to list their interpretations. Thus, the statistics from that particular set of responses could be called into question. However, it still indicates that workers in the field have a strong value for the personal and behavioral skills that arose in the survey. The categories mentioned were given the following interpretations: soft skills include curiosity to learn more, flexibility, openness, clarity about the own interests, intercultural communication competencies, sensitivity, empathy with local populations, respect, ability

improvements for future trainings, it stated, “Many respondents stressed the importance of own personal development in peace work: they felt there should be more emphasis on self-experience and reflection with one’s own role as a trained peace worker, working with empathy to transform hostile images” and “trainings should accommodate the need for a process of inner growth and dealing with inner conflicts.”<sup>9</sup>

Other recent writings indicate further need to integrate peoples’ knowledge and skills into their personal qualities. This is achieved particularly through setting aside time for reflection to gain deeper insight into one’s surrounding events. Although knowledge of a situation is helpful, people need time to reflect on their situations to build valuable intuition that allows them to flow naturally through the dynamics of constantly-shifting scenarios. In the *Berghof Handbook*, Dirk Sprenger emphasizes the process aspect of conflict training, showing that, due to the emotions involved, it is a long-term practice rather than something that can be resolved at a short day or week long training session.<sup>10</sup> Training requires plenty of reflection and integration for its seeds to engender fruit. Robert Rivers further states, “space should be provided in peace trainings to develop knowledge regarding the specifics of peace work *and* the ability to empty out this knowledge in order to cultivate intuition. In understanding and training for the interchange between both, integrative knowledge is developed.”<sup>11</sup>

In his studies on dialogue, David Bohm adds that suspending and observing one’s thought patterns while engaging in dialogue helps to develop a deeper sense of common thought and interconnection with those whom they are

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to experience different perspectives, trustworthiness, the ability to reserve snap-judgments, and a sense of humor. Some Behavioral competencies taken into consideration included the creation of empathic connections, honest expression, the ability to think and act strategically in a team setting, facilitation, stress management, and the ability to listen and to analyze. Professional skills included understanding of the roles and situations and mutuality between insiders and outsiders, understanding content and local knowledge, having a Bachelor degree in social science, and knowledge of the real basic causes of conflicts. See Arajarvi Outi, “Peace Building and Conflict Transformation in Europe: Current State and Needs of Training and Education,” ed. Denisa Brand-Jacobsen (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Associations and Resources for Conflict Management Skills, April 2007), 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>10</sup> Dirk Sprenger, “The Training Process: Achieving Social Impact by Training Individuals?: How to Make Sure That Training for Conflict Transformation Has an Impact on Conflict Transformation,” in *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation* (Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2005), [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/sprenger\\_handbook.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/sprenger_handbook.pdf) (accessed July 1, 2012).

<sup>11</sup> Robert Rivers and Scotto Giannis, *Peace Training: Preparing Adults for Peace work and Nonviolent Conflicts* (Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Association and Resources for Conflict Management Skills, 2007), 44.

engaging.<sup>12</sup> Ouyporn Khuankaew of International Woman's Partnership for Peace and Justice supplements this discussion by saying reflection is what really connects people to their work in the field. She states, "(W)hatever we do in the field is about us: i.e., how we deal with our own fear; how we deal with our own conflicts; and how we apply wisdom and compassion. Violent conflict is suffering. If we do not have the wisdom and compassion to transform our own suffering, we have few ways of influencing anything in the field. Therefore, it is crucial to see our own personal conflicts and the conflicts we work in and on."<sup>13</sup> Robert Rivers and John Paul Lederach agree and add that leaving the spiritual side of peace workers' deepest values only for metaphysical mental meanderings would take the heart out of people's work. Maintaining a strong connection with one's own deepest sense of who they are and why they do what they do is also critical in order to keep peace workers connected to the people with whom they work.<sup>14</sup> Engaging our deepest questions and values is important to provide a foundation for the motivation to continue going through what is often a challenging line of work:

Peace workers toil in extremely strenuous conditions and are often misunderstood by their societies. Creating a forum for people to connect with their own vocation and that of each other through deep listening and dialogue can facilitate incredibly healing experiences. The ability to be present to the voice that "stirs inside calling out to be heard, calling out to be followed" forms the core of what it means to be a peace worker (Lederach 2005, pp. 175-176). The knowledge and the skills necessary for peace work are of vital importance, but they are extremities. It is the vocation, that when stirred, stirs the rest.<sup>15</sup>

Marc Gopin, the James H. Laue Professor of World Religions, Diplomacy, and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University, works both in the scholarly theoretical side of conflict analysis and also contributes many efforts on the ground in dealing with conflicts in the Middle East. After reflecting on the many troubled situations and the relieving reconciliations that he witnessed during his career, Gopin wrote:

The deepest causes of most conflicts, I've discovered, are feelings like dishonor and humiliation. Likewise, the deepest causes of healing involve the opposite: feeling honored, feeling valued, finding meaning in community. Frankly, I have been astonished on numerous occasions to discover how easy it is for the use of basic positive emotions, such as concern for family, respect for dead, and above

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<sup>12</sup> David Bohm, *On Dialogue* (London: Routledge Press, 1995), 38–39.

<sup>13</sup> Rivers and Giannis, 47.

<sup>14</sup> For further discussion, see *Ibid.*, 43-50; and John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, Reprint (NY: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>15</sup> Rivers, "Peace Training: Preparing Adults for Peace work and Nonviolent Intervention in Conflicts," 48.

all, honor, to quickly transform a relationship between two sworn enemies. I have come to realize that the only path toward a lasting solution for destructive conflict lies in the process of self-examination and spiritual growth.<sup>16</sup>

Gopin adds that, “What happens *between* people cannot be separated from what is going on *within* people.”<sup>17</sup>

We have seen a number of necessary traits peace workers must continue to exercise and build: the ability to think creatively to transcend apparently different goals and find solutions amenable to all parties, sensitivity and ability to empathize with the varying emotions of many different actors, flexibility and spontaneity in the moment to adapt to situations, maintaining positive attitudes and composure while under stressful circumstances, and, at the more foundational level, an ability to maintain and even strengthen the connection to one’s own deepest values and motivations at the heart of their being. The minds of peace workers must be well-rounded and sturdy enough to take the constant and heavy emotional and wearisome burdens faced in many situations. Accordingly, it is valuable to consider knowledge we have of the mind, in terms of how both desired and undesired personal traits develop, and the control we as individuals have over that process. The past couple decades in particular have shown many related studies and even new fields emerging which contribute to such knowledge.

### **Stress and its Ceasing: The Power of the Mind**

A key to understanding conflict between people is rooted in our own biological constitution. A calm mind is incredibly important for people involved in trying to solve conflicts – whether they are part of the conflict or a member of a third party. Severe tension in our bodies naturally call on our “fight or flight” stimulus throughout the cells in our bodies. Nearly all of our survival mechanisms can be categorized into two responses: growth and protection. As human beings developed, it was natural to devote all of our bodies’ energy to protection responses (i.e., the fight or flight mechanisms) when danger was imminent. Having to flee or stave off a hungry tiger would be of more immediate importance than philosophizing or even fighting internal disease. Significant stress and fear sets off a chain reaction inside the body that leads to the release of adrenal hormones. This gives people the immediate strength they might need in their musculature, but has numerous interesting side effects: the extra blood that flowed into the arms and legs comes at the expense of much of the blood flow to the internal organs. Digestion and absorption processes are

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<sup>16</sup> Marc Gopin, *Healing the Heart of Conflict: 8 Crucial Steps to Making Peace with Yourself and Others* (Emmaus, PA: Rodale Books, 2004), xv.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

interrupted, halting the body's production of energy reserves, the immune system nearly shuts down, and blood flow and hormones in the head are directed to the back of the brain rather than to the front.<sup>18</sup>

Why is this particularly important in terms of resolving conflict situations? The blood has been diverted from the slower, methodical logic and reasoning sections of the forebrain, to the instinctive hindbrain, which controls quick reflexes. The stress and fear literally reduces people's intelligence, reasoning, and conscious awareness.<sup>19</sup> Blood flow in the forebrain and the objective reasoning necessary to work through conflicts go hand in hand. Moreover, when those working in conflict transformation can maintain their own calmness of mind, they can also attempt to help others do the same. Unfocused stress, however, can easily lead to losing control of a situation.

Another factor important to the minds of conflict transformation practitioners is the development of personal traits. Some related long-held scientific views have undergone vast changes over the past couple decades. The common view in the scientific community used to be that neural patterns in the brain were relatively fixed by a young age and that they could not change thereafter. Numerous studies since then have demolished that theory. Scientists have since developed the concept of neuroplasticity, essentially the ability of the brain to change its own hardwiring. Different areas of the brain can grow and connections that were once solid can change. The overarching theme of these revolutions is that conscious thought and attention can change even our long-time mental patterns. If we learn to become more aware of those emotions and how we respond in different situations, we can gain more control over them.

The paths from our brains to the rest of the cells in our bodies are run by many little chemical elements called neuropeptides, nicknamed the "molecules of emotion" by Candace Pert, the Georgetown Medical School professor who helped discover them.<sup>20</sup> According to Pert, our bodies are addicted to emotions. Emotions are not just psychological; and they are made up of innumerable biochemical reactions. Our hypothalamus produces an onslaught of neuropeptides every time we experience emotion. These peptides are assembled according to each emotion and sent racing throughout the body. They latch onto

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<sup>18</sup> Bruce H. Lipton, Klaus G. Bensch, and Marvin A. Karasek, "Histamine-Modulated Transdifferentiation of Dermal Microvascular Endothelial Cells," in *Experimental Cell Research* 199.2 (April 1992): 279-291.

<sup>19</sup> Amy F.T. Arnsten and Patricia S. Goldman-Rakic, "Noise Stress Impairs Prefrontal Cortical Cognitive Function in Monkeys: Evidence for a Hyperdopaminergic Mechanism," in *Archives of General Psychiatry* 55.4 (1998): 362-368; Lee E. Goldstein et al., "Role of the Amygdala in the Coordination of Behavioral, Neuroendocrine, and Prefrontal Cortical Monoamine Responses to Psychological Stress in the Rat," in *The Journal of Neuroscience* 16.15 (August 1, 1996): 4787-4798; and Hiroyuki Takamatsu et al., "A PET Study Following Treatment with a Pharmacological Stressor, FG7142, in Conscious Rhesus Monkeys," in *Brain Research* 980.2 (August 8, 2003): 275-280.

<sup>20</sup> Candace B. Pert, *Molecules Of Emotion: The Science Behind Mind-Body Medicine* (NY: Scribner, 2003), 133-145.

cells which each contains thousands of receptors for peptides. When the peptides lock into each cell, they send signals into it that ultimately creates the physical sensations we feel with each emotion.

A critical juncture comes when those cells then divide, because the new cells then have more receptors designed to receive peptides from those emotions. Nutrients and drugs such as heroin use these same receptors. The extent of the addiction may differ, but the fact is that the cells of our bodies help us crave those chemicals that contain more receptors of our cells. Although we might consider depression and anger to be negative experiences, they also provide the emotional rush that ultimately leads to more of those emotions. Awareness of our emotions however can help ebb the tide, and conscious effort towards desirable emotions can help us develop productive patterns.<sup>21</sup>

Recent findings even show the power that conscious thought has over our entire genetic structure. Genes are not activated without environmental stimuli. As H. F. Nijhout stated, "When a gene is needed, a signal from its environment, not an emergent property of the gene itself, activates expressions of that gene."<sup>22</sup> The genes of our chromosomes are covered by proteins. When the proteins receive external signals, they change shape and allow the genetic sequence they were covering to be activated. No matter what genes one might have received from their parents, conscious attention to thoughts and feelings, as well as other factors like nutrition, can help control which of those genes are actually activated.<sup>23</sup>

When dealing with any conflict, both trainers and trainees can benefit from an ability to write and rewrite their own reaction and response styles, the way they feel in particular circumstances, and the manner in which they deal with emotions they encounter. Candace Pert compares this effort to changing direction while controlling a sailboat. When people shift the sail to another side, they might not change directions instantly. People may have to wait for the wind to pick up and catch the sail, but if they keep the sail held firm in the new direction long enough, they will soon be sailing smoothly on a new course. In just this way, drawing conscious attention to constructive attributes and modes of thinking, and consistently practicing them can develop habits that eventually are held with ease.

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<sup>21</sup> Candace Pert et al., "Neuropeptides and Their Receptors: A Psychosomatic Network," in *Journal of Immunology* 135.2 (August 1985): 820-826; and Candace Pert, "The Wisdom of Receptors: Neuropeptides, the Emotions, and Body-mind," *Advances* 3.3 (Summer 1986): 8-16.

<sup>22</sup> H.F. Nijhout, "Metaphors and the Roles of Genes in Development," in *Bioessays* 12.9 (1990): 441-446.

<sup>23</sup> See M. Azim Surani, "Reprogramming of Genome Function Through Epigenetic Inheritance," in *Nature* 414.6859 (November 1, 2001): 122-128; and Wolf Reik and Jorn Walter, "Genomic Imprinting: Parental Influence on the Genome," in *Nature Reviews: Genetics* 2 (2001): 21-32.

## Psychotherapeutic Mindfulness Practice and Mental Effects

Strategies and techniques inspired by Buddhist meditation traditions that help instill constructive conscious attention patterns have been increasingly studied in psychology and the cognitive sciences. Formal attention training is now regularly identified among a growing number of psychologists, therapists, and neurologists by the term, “mindfulness.” Mindfulness acts as a meta-consciousness, a consciousness that observes the other processes of the mind and body. While mindfulness is defined with numerous related yet different attributes, a study of five independently collected questionnaires looking into how researchers conceptualize mindfulness, found five dimensions to the definition: (1) no reactivity to inner experience; (2) observing/noticing/attending to sensations/perceptions/thoughts/ feelings; (3) acting with awareness/(non) autonomic pilot/ concentration/no distraction; (4) describing/labeling with words; and (5) non-judging of experience.<sup>24</sup>

Of particular relevance for this study though, the director of the Laboratory of Affective Neuroscience, Richard Davidson, has stated, this “attention training can be thought of as the gateway to plasticity.”<sup>25</sup> Mindfulness helps to disengage the top-down mental processes that form throughout our lives. These processes are useful for categorizing the immense loads of information our senses take in from the world. Without such built-in conceptual categories, or memes, an individual would have to discern anew that a new shape with four legs and a platform above them could function as a table. Life would be incredibly inefficient without top-down processing. However, top-down processing is also appended to such negative products as prejudice and discrimination, and other forms of quick or even unconscious judgment that may have little bearing on present circumstances. According to UCLA neuroscientist Daniel Siegel, top-down processes in the brain are as follows:

(C)arry out a takeover mission in the brain called enslavement in which they shape the “lower” perceptual processes in the moment. This shaping is automatic and persistent in our day-to-day life. But with mindful awareness we can propose that something quite profound happens.... The reflective combination of receptivity, observation, and reflexivity can be proposed to massively alter the nature of large scale assemblies of neurons involved in consciousness. Giving us access to ipseity, such shifts can enable us to not grasp onto judgments. It is this alteration that dissolves the automatic processes, making them available as visible rather than transparent mental activities that

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<sup>24</sup> Ruth A. Baer et al., “Using Self-Report Assessment Methods to Report Facets of Mindfulness,” in *Assessment* 13.1 (2006): 27-45.

<sup>25</sup> Sharon Begley, *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain: How a New Science Reveals Our Extraordinary Potential to Transform Ourselves* (NY: Ballantine Books, 2007), 160.

then can be observed, noted, and allowed to disengage from their enslaving influences.<sup>26</sup>

By taking the brain through a bottom-up process, mindfulness helps us to “see things as they are.” This process helps to unwind the previous patterns of discrimination or prejudice and other perceptual errors caused by quick and patterned judgments. When we can notice our own previous perceptual miscues, it is ultimately far more effective than having someone else tell us that we are wrong.

Conversely, mindfulness practice provides greater integration of the left and right hemispheres of the brain, which appears directly related to the capacity to think more clearly and creatively as well as increase adaptive capabilities.<sup>27</sup> In the case of long-term practitioners,<sup>28</sup> continued meditation practice even brings gamma waves to record highs. These waves are activated in the brain any time a person has an “aha” moment of discovery. In most people, they are usually very brief (a couple hundred milliseconds), but advanced mindfulness practitioners displayed EEG results lasting as long as five minutes.<sup>29</sup> Although not every person may reach those heights, most people can see improvements within a week of regular practice. Additionally, studies have shown that the results of mindfulness meditation practice go beyond just the period of meditation; and increases in clear thinking, creativity, happiness, and empathy have sustained results - important qualities for any worker in conflict situations, not to mention people who are involved in conflicts themselves.<sup>30</sup>

Another important factor created through bottom-up processing with mindfulness practice is the sense of “safety.” Social psychologists have shown that the higher a person’s sense of security, the more likely they are to be empathetic and compassionate towards others, including those from outsider groups. They are also less likely to be dogmatic and judgmental.<sup>31</sup> Mindfulness

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<sup>26</sup> Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being*, 1st ed. (NY: W. W. Norton and Company, 2007), 157–158.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>28</sup> A “long-term practitioner,” here, refers to Buddhists who “underwent training in the same Tibetan Nyingmapa and Kagyupa traditions for 10,000 to 50,000 hours over time period ranging from 15 to 40 years.” Antoine Lutz et al., “Long-term Meditators Self-Induce High-Amplitude Gamma Synchrony During Mental Practice,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 101.46 (November 16, 2004): 16371.

<sup>29</sup> Antoine Lutz et al., “Long-Term Meditators Self-Induce High-Amplitude Gamma Synchrony During Mental Practice,” in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science* 101.46 (November 2004): 16369-16393.

<sup>30</sup> Begley, 220–239.

<sup>31</sup> M. Mikulincer, T. Dolev, and R. Shaver, “Attachment Related Strategies During Thought Suppression: Ironic Rebounds and Vulnerable Self-Representations,” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 87 (December 2004): 940-956; M. Mikulincer et al., “Attachment Theory and Reactions to Others’ Needs: Evidence That Activation of the



helps to activate sections of the brain that generate feelings of security and safety, and even temporary activation of a sense of security can generate more open-mindedness.<sup>32</sup>

While short-term practice can still have benefits, deeper states of concentration developed with long-term practice, can have even greater benefits. When the brain dips into a state of meditation for at least the mildly adept practitioner, brain activity in most areas settles to a minimum, while the prefrontal cortex remains active. EEGs show that alpha and theta waves increase significantly, leading to a greater sense of calm and ease. Increased blood flow nourishes the brain and/organs, new neurons are created, and, as regions of the brain which define self and other become quieted, there is more openness to analytic processes. Furthermore, when monks engage in compassion-focused meditation, test results have shown that the brain becomes more attuned to suffering, there is an increase in circulation to the “planned activity” part of the brain, and there is also a marked increase in the monks’ own happiness areas of the brain in the left frontal lobe.<sup>33</sup> One other note of interest is that evidence suggests long-term practice of compassion meditation actually increases the size of the parts of the brain that produce compassion. This actually occurs for any long-term thought patterns. The more energy you devote to certain parts of the brain, the larger those areas will grow. As Daniel Siegel states, “With the dissolution of autonomic patterns, the mind seems to be freed to acquire new levels of self-regulation.”<sup>34</sup> The brain and the mind are like muscles in that you have to work them out if you want to them to improve. Just as athletes focus on certain muscle groups in their work-outs, any individual can slowly increase their empathy, compassion, or focus with dedicated practice.

## **Application to Conflict Transformation**

This practice of training the mind has many applications in the field of conflict transformation. Mind training is useful both for people who have been living in conflict situations and those professionals who are there to help them. People have the ability to train themselves for the personal traits peace work professionals have deemed applicable to their work in the field.

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Sense of Attachment Security Promotes Empathic Responses,” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81 (2001): 1205-1224; and M. Mikulincer et al., “Attachment, Caregiving, and Altruism: Boosting Attachment Security Increases Compassion and Helping,” in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 89 (November 2005): 817-839.

<sup>32</sup> Siegel, *The Mindful Brain*; and Mikulincer, Dolev, and Shaver, “Attachment Related Strategies During Thought Suppression: Ironic Rebounds and Vulnerable Self-Representations.”

<sup>33</sup> Begley, 233-238.

<sup>34</sup> Siegel, 110.

There are useful instances of mindfulness demonstrated at peace trainings. Samiyeh Sharqawi is a Palestinian Israeli citizen who participated in a mindfulness training session at Thich Nhat Hanh's Plum Village Monastery in France with a mixed group of Palestinians and Jews. Although it was a difficult experience for her, she reports that the training began to resonate more and more as she returned home. She reports:

She can clearly remember that first experience, after which I might have stopped, somehow gave me the ability to extricate myself from the vicious circle in which I was caught.... I began to see better, to hear better and to listen deeply. I began to digest everything that I had resisted when I was at Plum Village. It was as if I was in a condition of withdrawal, both from cigarettes and from the anger that occupied my soul. I began to compile a new lexicon, breathing with awareness, living with awareness, reflecting, slowing down, and enjoying a little. I began to enjoy all the little things about which I was not previously aware. I hadn't had time for them. My eyes were unable to see them, my heart was unable to feel softness and kindness without fear.... When I discovered, touched and made friends with these aspects of my life, I felt enchanted and calm.<sup>35</sup>

After this experience, Samiyeh worked with a couple of others to run a series of mindfulness-based training sessions to help numerous groups of women who were suffering from abuse to work with stress. Samiyeh and her partners taught the women how to free themselves from their emotions and how to sit and get the rest of their bodies and spirits desperately needed. Some of the social workers who witnessed their work were so impressed that regular visits were soon scheduled at numerous places and their schedules are now filling up with demands for more work.<sup>36</sup>

In another case, an American professional mediator, Daniel Bowling, completed a 10-day mindfulness training and began applying it to his practice. He contends:

Practicing the art of meditation affords a meditator the opportunity to *be*, to create a healing connection with the client, to bring peace into the room, and to bring deeper fulfillment into one's own practice.... When one can be present to one's own anger, hurt, abuse, fear, one can be present to another's deepest suffering. When one can be present during one's own conflicts, one can be present during another's conflicts. Whenever we are mediating and our mind takes us away, wandering off into the imagined past or the future, we are actually resisting the conflict that is in the room. We cannot bring peace into

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<sup>35</sup> Samiyeh Sharqawi, "Awakening the Peace Within," in Le Manh That and Thich Nhat Tu, eds., Howard Shippin, trans., *War, Conflict, and Healing: A Buddhist Perspective* (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam: Vietnam Buddhist University, 2008), 135.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-139.

the room, when we are resisting whatever is in the room, even on a subtle level. Through mindfulness practice, we learn to be present with all conflict.<sup>37</sup>

Mindfulness has also been applied to helping with reconciliation circles, aiding trauma victims, and even inspiring lawyers who deal with social justice issues.<sup>38</sup> There is now a Mindful Awareness Research Center at UCLA at which they have successfully helped patients with OCD and chronic depression and numerous other counseling centers are employing the techniques. It has become the basis of numerous regularly used therapies with documented success across the United States: Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR), Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), and Mindfulness-Based Relationship Enhancement (MBRE).<sup>39</sup>

The research has shown how effective mindfulness practice can be at decreasing various stressors and developing qualities such as empathy, compassion, composure, open-mindedness, and creativity. However, although studies in mindfulness practice as defined by psychology is often inspired by Buddhist practices, or even makes use of ordained Buddhist monks in studies, the use of the terms mindfulness and meditation in other fields is not necessarily equivalent with the use of such terms within Buddhist studies or Buddhist traditions themselves.<sup>40</sup> This does not completely invalidate the inclusion of psychological evidence, but one must approach it critically in forming any conclusions. As the beginning of this section showed, psychologists are still coming to terms with what they themselves specifically mean when they speak of mindfulness. In many ways these studies are still in an infancy period, just beginning to get more specific and self-reflective in more minute details of what mindfulness entails. However, the vast amount of evidence accumulated thus far

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel Bowling, "Mindfulness Meditation and Mediation: Where the Transcendent Meets the Familiar," *Bringing Peace into the Room: How the Personal Qualities of the Mediator Impact the Process of Conflict Resolution* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 269-270.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, David Around, "Being Peace to Do Peace," in Le Manh That and Thich Nhat Tu, eds., 95-99; Robert Brian Wall, "Healing from War and Trauma - How Southeast Asians in the US Survive Trauma and Rgain Whole Lives: A Buddhist Perspective and the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma," in Le Manh That and Thich Nhat Tu, eds., 109-120; and Daniel Bowling and David Homan, eds., *Bringing Peace Into the Room: How the Personal Qualities of the Mediator Impact the Process of Conflict Resolution*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003).

<sup>39</sup> Ruth A. Baer, *Mindfulness-Based Treatment Approaches: Clinician's Guide to Evidence Base and Applications*, 1st ed. (San Diego: Academic Press, 2006). Baer's edited volume contains examples of articles and case studies on the efficacy of each of these techniques.

<sup>40</sup> B. Alan Wallace, *Meditations of a Buddhist Skeptic: A Manifesto for the Mind Sciences and Contemplative Practice* (NY: Columbia University Press, 2011), 204-206.

suggests much promise for various meditative practices as they are studied in more depth.

## Buddhist Contributions

As David J. Selsky stated in regards to conflict transformation, “Meditation is the key to realizing the nature of the mind, and furthermore produces a greater sense of calm in the practitioner, obviously something in short supply during a conflict.”<sup>41</sup> As may already be clear, Buddhist meditation has the potential to play a large role in training conflict transformation practitioners.

Buddhist meditation is actually a wide and diverse topic due the many words with different meanings and connotations that are translated into “meditation” within the Buddhist context. *Sati, samādhi, sampajañña, jhāna, vipassanā, samatha, yoga, chan (ch’an), zen, sōn (seon), dzogchen, mahāmudrā,* and many other words can all share the English term, “meditation.” This is partly due to the complex systems of mind training developed both by the Buddha and by the different cultures and teachers that adapted his teachings. Buddhism has many different manifestations in many different cultures and countries, each with varying linguistic backgrounds that shape and shift the definitional categories. The rich and diverse vocabulary and the various mental training systems are far too complex to describe in one short paper. Though such diversity and complexity could actually act as a positive factor for conflict transformation training because of the plethora of resources available. This section will simply sample the way some of these exercises can be applied to conflict training before showing that much work is yet to be done by Buddhists themselves before all the resources can be readily accessible.

The studies mentioned in the previous section above on meditation are almost exclusively studying practitioners trained with Buddhist-influenced techniques and studied by scientists who were trained in Buddhist meditation methods.<sup>42</sup> However, although modern scientific studies have contributed much to the understanding of meditation and most of the studies are done by people primarily trained or influenced by Buddhism, the terminology used in those studies does not necessarily match Buddhist definitions, so care must be taken. The “nonjudgmental” quality ascribed to “mindfulness” in most psychological studies, for example, can actually more closely resemble an equanimity practice

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<sup>41</sup> David J. Selsky, “Languages for Peace: Intersection of Thought in Buddhism and Conflict Transformation,” in Chanju Mun, ed., *Mediators and Meditators: Buddhism and Peacemaking* (Honolulu, HI: Blue Pine, 2007), 247-248.

<sup>42</sup> Most of the major studies coming out are conducted at or sponsored by research centers like UCLA’s Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC), Stanford’s Center for Compassion and Altruism Research and Education (CCARE), Wisconsin’s Laboratory of Affective Neuroscience, and UMass’s Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Health Care, and Society were all started by those trained to different degrees in Buddhist meditation.

in some Buddhist traditions and within Buddhist traditions themselves, mindfulness is also defined in different ways.

When Buddhists describe mindfulness, it is often a reference to the term, *sati* (Skt., *smṛti*). *Sati* literally means remembrance and refers to the act of keeping something in mind. However, “right mindfulness” is done in combination with ardency (*sampajañña*) and alertness (*attapa*) to create appropriate attention (*yoniso manasikāra*). Under the Buddha’s Pāli Canon teachings, such appropriate attention involves not just bare observation, but observation of the causes and effects, so that one can understand how they are related to suffering. With such observations in mind, one can then skillfully choose to create causes that produce more desirable effects.

Mindfulness in this sense is applied to many areas of Buddhist practice. For example, it is supposed to be used in concert with “right speech.”<sup>43</sup> The Buddha instructed contemplations for reflecting not just on the speech itself, but before and after its use. He told his son Rāhula that one should reflect before, during, and after speaking anything on whether that speech caused affliction or pain to oneself or any others, and to make constant adjustments accordingly.<sup>44</sup>

There is, therefore, a whole other layer of mindfulness that can be very useful in the training of conflict practitioners as well. Mindfulness is applied both in silent reflection periods and during action and speech throughout the day. The more mindful one is in the act of speaking, the greater one’s ability to recall the act later and reflect upon the skillfulness of that act, thus providing the grounds not just for making more wise choices in the moment, but for better recalling and improving on those acts in daily life. The full range of mindfulness is almost impossible to test in scientific studies because of the high amount of variables, but the studies can at least indicate the great potential in applying such techniques to many other arenas and to looking into further meditations techniques.

There are many other meditation techniques that could have useful import in conflict transformation training. Mindfulness of feelings – identifying the pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral nature of feelings as they arise – helps train oneself for not just more quickly identifying personal reactions, but also in identifying the feelings of others and social situations. It helps to train the quick intuitive responses that form during social interactions.<sup>45</sup> Contemplation of “loss and gain” involves in-depth contemplation of the interconnectivity of all things so that nothing is seen as truly in the possession of anyone. This Tiantai technique helps to break attachment to things and circumstances and develop

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<sup>43</sup> "One tries to abandon wrong speech and to enter into right speech: This is one's right effort. One is mindful to abandon wrong speech and to enter and remain in right speech: This is one's right mindfulness. Thus these three qualities – right view, right effort, and right mindfulness – run and circle around right speech." M. I, 117.

<sup>44</sup> M. I, 61.

<sup>45</sup> Anālayo, *Satipaṭṭhāna: The Direct Path to Realization*, Reprint (Cambridge: Windhorse, 2008), 157.

equanimity when faced with various circumstances. When pooling various Buddhist traditions together, there are hundreds of techniques formulated to develop characteristics of compassion and loving-kindness. This has been an integral part of Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna trainings, and each has within its numerous sub-traditions developed numerous training methods.<sup>46</sup> Other methods build upon these to connect them connect different trainings together. For instance, contemplating the fortitude of the mind to be free of resentment like the Earth is said to strengthen cultivation of compassion and loving-kindness. Just as the Earth can receive many rocks thrown at it without reacting, one holds such an image and feels no adverse reaction to any insults, slurs, or accusations. This allows for the development of uninterrupted flow of compassion and loving-kindness regardless of the circumstances.<sup>47</sup> One can begin to see there are plentiful resources within the Buddhist tradition that can be applicable to conflict training programs, though the categorization of such meditations and their appropriate applications is far from complete.

## Conclusions

Buddhist-influenced meditation practices are beginning to be applied to training programs in conflict transformation. Nan Waller Burnett facilitates the “Rocky Mountain Retreat” which teaches various meditative practices to conflict practitioners. Diane Musho Hamilton uses Zen-inspired meditations in her conflict trainings as well. However, such levels of training are still not very common. When considering what those in conflict transformation have said about their own needs, the scientific evidence which shows how meditation can work to support those needs, and the views of some professionals who have put it into practice, it seems apparent that far more potential lies untapped in greater facilitation of meditation techniques in conflict transformation training. Buddhists and Buddhist scholars themselves can contribute to this process by looking further into the various types of mental training found within Buddhist traditions and beginning to provide more concrete and cross-traditional categorizations of meditation traditions based on their various applications.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Some can be viewed on the website, <http://www.buddhanet.net/metta.htm> (accessed July 1, 2012). Others can be found described in books such as Sharon Salzberg, *Lovingkindness: The Revolutionary Art of Happiness*, Revised. (Boston: Shambhala, 2002); and Chagdud Tulku, *Change of Heart: The Bodhisattva Peace Training of Chagdud Tulku* (Junction City, CA: Padma Publishing, 2003). Some traditions like Japanese Shingon and Dhammakaya use light-based visualizations for cultivating loving kindness and compassion as well.

<sup>47</sup> A. IV, 134.

<sup>48</sup> This is not to say that no such categorizations exist. Buddhist commentaries provide may provide numerous categorizations (i.e., *abhidharma*, *panjiao* systems, and various Tibetan commentaries in the *Bka’-gyur*), but these are usually restricted to the perspectives of specific traditions and include further doctrinal elaborations and other

It should be also noted that Buddhist meditation practices are not the only ones that can serve the needs of conflict transformation practitioners. Other religious, contemplative, and spiritual traditions have many practices to offer, some of which are very similar to certain Buddhist practices. Buddhism, however, has a very developed system and a wide range of practices itself and at this point, the vast majority of scientific evidence examines Buddhist-influenced practices or even Buddhist monks. Therefore, at this point, it is pragmatic to couch the terms from a primarily Buddhist perspective as well.

No matter what meditation practices are used though, besides just having more meditation in conflict transformation training, one further need is the study of best practices in such trainings. Which meditation practices are appropriate for developing which types of personal skills? What teaching styles best facilitate acquiring each of those skills? How long should such trainings be and what are the most appropriate structures for different types of conflict practitioners? These are all important questions that need to be explored as meditation becomes further integrated into conflict transformation training. So far though, this mind training shows promising results and there is potential for extensive development in the future.

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information that would be quite extraneous to dig through for a specific cause such as secular conflict training. Modern Buddhist studies scholarship has also generally refrained from studies on meditative practices. Due to the difficulties in evaluating mental states as opposed to things which can be directly observed and independently verified like textual statements and ritual practices. Thus few efforts have been made to classify meditative disciplines across different Buddhist traditions.

# **BUDDHISM AND PEACE – THE CREATION OF A SAṄGHA IN LONDON**

**Compiled by the Shōgyō-ji Archives  
Committee**

## **Introduction**

From local community to world community, there is no one who does not wish to see the realization of peace. On September, 24, 2009, the United Nations Security Council, under its chairman President Barack Obama of the United States, received unanimous support for its resolution to achieve nuclear nonproliferation. With this decision the whole could at long last breathe a sigh of relief, as faith in humanity was restored once again. In the modern age, we are accustomed to looking upon the development of science and technology as the consummate glory of mankind, to the extent that people have come to acquire an almost religious belief in science and technology. Although sixty-five years have passed since the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the rationale for this ill-conceived decision is still the subject of continued debate, for it was a blatant contradiction of human reason and only plunged us deeper into despair.

The adoption of the present UN resolution thus has given us hope like a beacon of light shining forth into the future.

As you may know, the phrase “*All dharmas are without self*” is a fundamental axiom of Buddhism. Nothing exists independently of all other existences; and all things are interdependent and mutually support one another. Accordingly, for the realization of peace in the context of Buddhism, there is no need for us to turn to an external set of laws or principles to guide us. Everything that we need is already here within ourselves; and it only requires our careful attention to nurture it. Indeed, the seed of peace lies in each and every individual. When we look at the world around us, the problem of how to



achieve peace may seem to be complex and insurmountable. But it is only through looking into ourselves that we can discover the seed of peace.

Peace in family life is realized through their wholehearted patient love. Within local communities we find peace through establishing a “Place” for genuine encounter in an ever deepening dimension in the process of solving the problems between self and others.

In order for such a Place to come into existence, our attitude towards deep listening is far more important than our desire to teach. It is through listening attentively to what is taught that we naturally become more motivated and a deep sense of gratitude towards others is awakened. It is here in this harmonious fusion of individuals that our foundation as a religious community is laid. Buddhism as a religious body has thus been called a Saṅgha from the very outset.

With regard to the original religious community of primitive Buddhism, the late Professor Hajime Nakamura (1912-1999) wrote,

“It was people attracted to Śākyamuni’s personality who got together in small communities in various areas, but these religious communities were never known by any special name.

“The gatherings of hermits or groups of monastics merely referred to their own communities as gatherings, groups or assemblies.

“As a result, the word *Saṅgha*, which was widely used for gatherings, and was seen as a suitable enough term to refer to the early Buddhist community, came to be adopted in Buddhism.”<sup>1</sup>

Within those early Buddhist communities, the Buddha’s cordial dialogue with his followers was the essence of all his teachings. His existing discourses, which could best be described as one to one dialogues, are in fact a compilation of stories about his true encounters with others.

It was while talking to a royal patron that the Buddha made the important statement to his disciple Ānanda that, “Having good friends is everything when one is in pursuit of purity”.

On that particular day the King had been so impressed by the Buddha’s sermon to his disciples that he wished to confirm the meaning of the Buddha’s pure message to them. The King then asked the Buddha whether the wonderful dialogue with his disciples meant that the Buddha was surrounded by good friends, good companions and good people, to which the Buddha replied quite simply, “Yes.”

Following this exchange, Ānanda, a disciple constantly in attendance on the Buddha, made the comment, “Then that is a part of the pursuit of purity”, to which the Buddha, speaking frankly, said, “No. It is everything.”

Scenarios such as this may well have taken place within the Saṅgha, where the Buddha would engage in many remarkable discussions. But there are also dialogues that show the Buddha interacting with other religious communities, as well as dealing with other Kingdoms that existed in ancient times.

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<sup>1</sup> Nakamura Hajime, *Nakamura Hajime Selected Works* (Tokyo: Shunjū-sha, 1969), 12: 238.

The following is one such account.

One day, when the Buddha was at Vulture Peak, Ajatasatru, King of Magadha, sent his minister, Vassakara, to him as an emissary. King Ajatasatru, greatly fearing the expansion of the kingdom of Vajji on his northern border, was considering making a preemptive attack. Before doing so, however, he wished to consult the Buddha on the soundness of such an idea.

The Buddha advised him that, as long as the kingdom of Vajji upheld the Seven Rules of *Aparihāna*, they would remain invincible, which made Ajatasatru back down on his plans to wage war.

The Buddha then instructed Ānanda to assemble all of the monks in the kingdom of Rājagṛha on Vulture's Peak so that he could deliver a talk to them on the Seven Rules of *Aparihāna*.

Here is one version of the Seven Rules of *Aparihāna* in brief outline:

1. Monks shall hold constant meetings and, as long as they continue to do so, there shall be no debilitation and death.
2. Monks shall act as members of the Saṅgha and, as long as they conduct themselves in harmony and unity, there shall be no debilitation and death.
3. Monks shall not prescribe new rules on what has not been prescribed and, as long as they do not abandon the old prescriptions, there shall be no debilitation and death.
4. Monks shall respect their elders or those monks who have long been in the Saṅgha and, as long as they make offerings to them, there shall be no debilitation and death.
5. Even if monks think about their future, as long as they are not controlled by those thoughts, there shall be no debilitation and death.
6. Monks shall seek dwellings in places distant from people and towns and, as long as they enjoy doing so, there shall be no debilitation and death.
7. Monks will receive guests who are conducting themselves in a pure way, and as long as they welcome those guests and let them stay peacefully, there shall be no debilitation and death.

As can be inferred from these Seven Rules of *Aparihāna*, when we act in the fundamental spirit of Selflessness and do not act from our own self-centered consciousness, it is possible for us to experience genuine encounter with one another. Once we have an insight into this way of true encounter, we try to nurture it in the Saṅgha so that we are able to live there with others in a truly harmonious unity. Once people have an understanding of their role and responsibility within the Saṅgha, this realization becomes the foundation for encountering other religious bodies.

When one awakens the heart of true faith, the oneness of self and other is realized. What this means is, both spatially and temporally, everyone who has attained this oneness find themselves in a sphere of co-existence that encircles us all. As will be discussed in more detail below, this truth of the oneness of all existence is transmitted within the Saṅgha, which exists not only for the sake of

the monks but for ordinary laypersons as well, as the natural result of our own awakening of faith in Amida Buddha.

D. T. Suzuki once said, “It is possible to see both Hōnen Shōnin and Shinran Shōnin as one person.”<sup>2</sup>

This assertion is evident in the life of Shinran Shōnin, as can be seen in this passage from his biography where Hōnen Shōnin is heard to say:

“The faith that I have and the faith that Zenshin-bo (Shinran Shōnin’s name at the time) are not in the least bit different, and are simply one and the same. It is not because we are wise that we entrust ourselves to Amida Buddha.”<sup>3</sup> What Hōnen Shōnin means by this statement is that, when a master and his disciple live one and the same faith, they are one because of this same faith.

Shinran Shōnin is heir to Hōnen Shōnin’s refusal to accept as legitimate practice the performance of good deeds and the accumulation of virtues for one’s own individual salvation. Etched deep in his mind is the view that Other-power faith is “a faith (nembutsu) that requires no virtue-transference on our part”.

We were much moved by the following words of instruction by His Eminence Venerable Jungwoo, Head Monk of Tongdo-sa temple, Korea, with whom we have enjoyed over ten years of cordial exchanges.

“The essence of donation lies in sharing. When asked what donation is, however, most Buddhists would answer as follows: When the giver has no pride in his act of giving and the receiver has no thought of debt in receiving the gift, the giver, the receiver and the gift are all pure – that is what it means to donate.

One who gives such an answer is still in the dark as to the real meaning of donation.

Well, then, what does to donate truly mean in Buddhism. In a word, to donate is sharing.”

Donation does not stop at the act of giving, but must proceed to the act of sharing. In this understanding donation as sharing lies the world of gratitude in which everything is found as “already given” to us all.

The feeling of gratitude is the ultimate experience of “the faith that requires no virtue-transference on our part” and emerges as the nembutsu practice of expressing our gratitude for all that has been done for us.

The Buddha’s Great Compassion continues to work through the true faith that is free of self-power attachment and this faith experience takes root in our everyday life and turns it into a life of gratitude.

If inner peace emerges through Selflessness, what is the way for priests and lay people to become selfless? If Selflessness is achieved when a Saṅgha is established or when a person awakens to its significance at an individual level, we could well say that Mahāyāna Buddhism has truly come to find its expression within our lives.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from *Nihon-teki reisei*, 1944, later compiled in the eighth volume of the *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshū* (The Collected Works of D. T. Suzuki) (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1999-2003).

<sup>3</sup> Kakunyo, comp., *Godensho* (Life of Shinran), 1349.

In Buddhism, which began with the creation of the Three Treasures, of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, this result of embodying the Three Treasures would mark the emergence of a true Buddhism.

The Saṅgha is also known as the Saṅgha, or Gathering, of Perfect Harmony. The present age is the perfect time for us to reaffirm the meaning of this notion of a Saṅgha of Perfect Harmony as the essence of Peace.

### **The Emergence of a Saṅgha of Perfect Harmony**

We would now like to relate the history of our newly-established Saṅgha of Perfect Harmony in Europe.

The birthplace of our Buddhist Saṅgha is the United Kingdom, a basically Christian country, and for our Saṅgha to take root there it had to transcend the differences of race, nationality and religion. The purpose of the present article is to introduce the background to our Saṅgha.

Let us begin our story at Shōgyō-ji, our home temple in Fukuoka, Japan, with an episode involving a college student whose daily routine included keeping clean the large stone basin in the temple precincts.

### **Memories of Mr. Kenji Toda's Temple Life**

Kenji Toda lost both his parents whilst still a baby and was tormented by loneliness. The seven year period between entering high school and graduating from university he spent living the temple life of Shōgyō-ji.

The Toda ancestral home was located next to Shōgyō-ji and in its long history the family had been watched over by the temple. One of the most important features of Kenji Toda's life at Shōgyō-ji was the lessons in traditional Gagaku music. Aside from this he took it upon himself to attend the menial task of tidying up everyday one corner of the temple precincts.

Shōgyō-ji always employs Gagaku music in its Buddhist services, and when an important Dharma event is being held, one will always hear the strains of Gagaku music in the precincts of the temple. For Kenji Toda the practice of Gagaku music was a daily affair. As a child Kenji Toda was brought up hearing Gagaku music in both prewar and postwar periods when Japan's sense of values was subject to major upheavals. He thus grew up with the wonderful experience of hearing Gagaku music being performed around him by senior colleagues as they sought for peace in the depths of their hearts.

Within the temple grounds there is a stone basin in which visitors customarily wash their hands as a sign of respect before entering the Buddha Hall. Without regular cleaning the basin would soon become covered in moss. When he was still a young frail student, Kenji Toda took upon himself the onerous task of cleaning the basin everyday without fail.

At that time the Shōgyō-ji was most fortunate to have someone to watch over the young students in the person of a dedicated Dharma mother named

Ekai-sama, who moved into the temple after the death of the former head priest, the great Dharma teacher Daigyōin (1876-1951), who had been her spiritual mentor.

Our young student would go about his tasks under her constant loving care and it was knowing that she was watching over him that made his youthful years precious and invaluable. From his early years at Shōgyō-ji, Kenji Toda was able to gain a valuable life experience that made him realize the importance of listening to the Buddha-Dharma and enabled him to become a person who could integrate this spiritual practice into his daily life.

## **Going Abroad**

After graduating from university in 1969, Mr. Kenji Toda began working for a pharmaceutical company. Leaving behind the lovely temple gardens, he took his place among the ranks of company workers where he had to struggle to cope with the adversities of life.

As a company employee he wondered what he should devote himself to. Whenever he found himself confronting problems involving human relations or company affairs, he would ask himself how Dharma mother Ekai-sama would have dealt with the situation. Ideas about what she would have thought, how she would have acted, flitted consciously or unconsciously through his mind.

At the same time he became aware of his inner life and saw his own ignorance as something very serious. This awareness of ignorance made him very careful about how he should act in daily life and he would keep a tight watch on himself even whilst out walking on his own.

In 1988, at the age of forty-one, leaving his family behind in Japan he was sent to Britain as the youngest person ever to be appointed president of Eisai Europe Ltd. This was the first step in the company's globalization plan.

## **Gagaku Music - Harmony within Diversity**

The first task Kenji Toda set out to accomplish was to establish a new pharmaceutical research and development center. What he had especially noted was the British talent for discovery and invention, long attested to in their history. This skill he wanted to combine with the outstanding ability of the Japanese to take inventions and turn them into useful products for society. The idea of the center was to create an environment where such a scheme could properly be carried out.

Two gentlemen at University College, London, who would have a big impact on subsequent events were the Provost Sir Derek Roberts and the Vice-Provost Professor John White. They played important roles not only on the future of the company, but also on that of Shōgyō-ji.

It was in 1989 that Kenji Toda met the Provost and the Vice-Provost. In that year the Berlin Wall fell, heralding an era of unprecedented change in Europe.

Japan had also entered such an era of great change with the passing away of Emperor Hirohito (1901-1989).

In his new center at UCL, Mr. Kenji Toda sensed the urgency of the crisis taking place in the world around him. The new age ushered in a new sense of values, and it was important to him that he understood what these were and how he should implement them effectively.

When he met Provost Roberts, the first thing he was asked by him was, “What is truth for you?” This was a question that Kenji Toda had constantly asked himself while living the temple life at Shōgyō-ji and he continued to ask himself this question in his life as a business man.

The question was somewhat unexpected at this first meeting, however, but Kenji Toda answered, “As for truth, there is none that I can find within myself. However, when I was a student, I was raised in a temple called Shōgyō-ji, and I was made to realize that there is a truth, and this was demonstrated to me by my teacher by the way in which she lived. Now in my life I am guided by that truth and constantly walk with it hand in hand”. He then related the details of his life at the temple under the loving care of his teacher, how he practiced Gagaku music everyday, and how he came to be who he was.

The Provost then asked him, “What kind of music is Gagaku?”

Mr. Kenji Toda was reminded of the highest form of philosophy found in the Gagaku music and explained to the Provost the meaning of the words, “When the first two notes (of the five notes of the Gagaku music) are in perfect harmony, the entire symphony naturally arises of itself” and concluded, “What is meant by those words is Harmony within Diversity”. The Provost and the Vice-Provost were moved by the idea and commented that “Harmony within diversity is one of the goals of our university and we are now aspiring towards this new ideal”.

Even today the idea of harmony is very important to Mr. Kenji Toda as can be gathered from the themes that still dwell on his mind such as: “The harmony of history and the future”, “The harmony of religion and society”, “The harmony of science, human life and nature”, and “The harmony of Eastern thought and Western thought”.

### **The Gagaku Music Performance at the UCL Memorial Unveiling Ceremony**

By an interesting coincidence, University College, London, was the school where enterprising Japanese youths from Choshu and Satsuma, who traveled to London at the risk of their lives in 1863 and 1865, were accepted as foreign students. In fact, the first prime minister of modern Japan, Hirobumi Itō (1841-1909), who guided the opening of the country and laid the foundation for the modern state, was among the twenty or so foreign students who were enrolled at UCL.

The Provost and the Vice-Provost struck upon an idea to invite the Gagaku music group from Japan to symbolize the idea of bringing diverse elements into harmony and to use the event in connection with the unveiling ceremony of the monument to commemorate the Japanese foreign students, who left their home country illegally to study in Britain towards the end of the Bakufu government.

Mr. Kenji Toda told them that he thought it was a remarkable idea and that they should consult Venerable Chimyō Takehara (b. 1939), his teacher at Shōgyō-ji, about this plan. They agreed with him immediately.

What happened next was a number of encounters between Provost Derek Roberts and Vice-Provost John White of UCL and Venerable Chimyō Takehara and his followers, both ordained and lay, of Shōgyō-ji Temple. A series of wonderful events then unfolded far beyond Kenji Toda's expectations.

As the encounter between the UCL administration and Shōgyō-ji developed, the monument to commemorate the Japanese foreign students was brought to completion, and the eighty members of Shōgyō-ji Temple, the Gagaku music group and their support team, visited UCL to join the unveiling ceremony.

At that time Kenji Toda was a bit concerned and found himself wondering about what would happen when these eighty people who were raised in a purely Japanese Buddhist environment for long, were suddenly thrust into contact with these learned individuals of Western society. As it turned out, however, there was no need for him to worry.

In an interesting episode, one of the main supporting members of the Shōgyō-ji Gagaku music group was Mrs. Kayoko Hosokawa. Three days before the London event her husband had been become Prime Minister of Japan. Under most circumstances this would have meant it was impossible for her to accompany the group as a representative member. However, overcoming the various difficulties, she joined the tour that was booked to fly economy class.

The Japanese press flooded the tour group, curious to find out why the First Lady was about to embark on a tour headed to a London university. Even the President of the Japan Airlines was rather concerned that the First Lady was seated in economy class and came personally to ask her not once but three times whether indeed this was what she wished. However, Mrs. Kayoko Hosokawa is a woman who knows her own mind and refused to give up her economy class seat, saying that she would be much happier here with everyone else.

The Gagaku music that mediated the encounter of the two countries turned out to be superb, and there was absolutely no need for Kenji Toda's worries about what "might" happen in the encounter between these two diverse worlds.

There is another interesting episode that happened at Shōgyō-ji during World War II. During this period, metal needed to make weapons was scarce, and the military government went around to the different temples to demand their temple bells, large and small. Shōgyō-ji refused to cooperate for as long as they could possibly hold out, on the grounds that their temple bell was to save people, whereas munitions were to kill.

Dharma mother Ekai-sama was the one who stood at the head of the resistance movement with absolute sincerity, and it was only because her mentor

Dharma master Daigyōin sensed that her life might be in danger that he stepped in and reluctantly made the arrangements for the temple bell to be turned over to the authorities.

Soon after that incident, Dharma master Daigyōin had his members go to Nagoya to pick up a shipment of Gagaku musical instruments that he had ordered, and accompany them back via rail. This was a time when American planes were frequently conducting air-raid attacks over Japan. Daigyōin, however, was adamant about getting the instruments, insisting that Gagaku music was indispensable for the Buddhist services to the Three Treasures, of Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha.

For this reason, Gagaku music has a special meaning for Shōgyō-ji as a prayer for Peace. When one listens to the Gagaku music of Shōgyō-ji, one can sense its mysterious power to transport us beyond the walls of race, religion, and language to where all such distinctions are brought into harmony.

The memorial stone at UCL is engraved with the inscription,

*When distant minds  
come together  
cherries blossom.*

The verse in Japanese is based on a poem composed by Vice-Provost White.

The poem beautifully expresses the deep encounter experienced by the courageous young people who studied in Britain toward the end of the Edo period, most of whom were around twenty years old. In the midst of the radical shifts taking place in the economics and culture of this postwar era, through the historical unfolding of events leading to the encounter of the Shōgyō-ji with the UCL, this memorial inscription stands as a pertinent monument to the future of Britain and Japan.

## **The Beginning of the London Eza**

Shortly after the unveiling ceremony of the UCL monument accompanied by Gagaku music was concluded, a number of professors approached Vice-Provost John White with a request to have a seminar on Japanese religion and culture.

Just around that time, on December 8, 1993, Professor Taira Satō, whose Buddhist name is Kemmyō, left Japan for Britain at the request of his master, Venerable Chimyō Takehara, Head Priest of Shōgyō-ji Temple. The University, aware of his skillful participation as a competent translator of the letters exchanged between UCL and Shōgyō-ji, extended him an invitation to be a Visiting Professor.

Thus the plans for a London Eza, a religious meeting to listen to the Buddha-Dharma (*eza*), began to gather momentum. In April of 1994, Reverend Keimei Takehara, the son of the Head Priest of Shōgyō-ji, was scheduled to be



in the U. K. as a foreign student. Mr. Kenji Toda's idea was to time the start of the Eza meetings with his arrival here. Invitations to the London Eza of April 30 were sent out, the theme of which was to bring the differences of East-West culture and philosophy into harmony. This invitation expresses Shōgyō-ji's deep appreciation to the UCL Provost and faculty members for their cooperation and support.

For the occasion of the Eza, the Head Priest Venerable Takehara sent a scroll of the Buddha-name (*myōgō*) inscribed by him, and on this and subsequent occasions sent a message to be read out to the participants. For Mr. Kenji Toda who was raised in a Buddhist setting, he never imagined in his wildest dreams that he would grow up to be stationed at a strategic point in the international business world. As he recalled the time when this Eza was being planned, even thinking of how to present the special Buddhist terms in English translation to any participants attending the Eza was enough to make him break out in a sweat.

At any event the seminars were successful thanks to the patience and earnest efforts of the professors attending. Up until the time Kenji Toda was reassigned to the Tokyo main office of his company in 1994, the seminars continued. There were four in all held at the Toda residence in London. From around this time the present Director of Three Wheels, Reverend Kemmyō Satō, obtained the honorary status of Professorial Research Associate of the Religion section of SOAS (School of Oriental and Asian Studies), one of the colleges of the University of London.

Professor Satō's knowledge and his ability to express that knowledge in English was enhanced by the cooperation of his British colleagues and students who helped to check his English translations carefully. As a result the London Eza meetings deepened further, and provided an ongoing opportunity for the hearts of British people to come into contact with the Buddhist culture of Japan.

### **The Incident of the Tree**

Around the same period as the monument was erected in 1991, Eisai completed the construction of its six-story basic research laboratory, for research into drugs to treat Alzheimer and related diseases, in the middle of medical school and pharmaceutical school section of the UCL campus.

As a result, one big difference with the University's thinking emerged.

The University's plans for the grounds on which the research center would be established included felling a large plane tree that was there and building the research laboratory on that spot.

Mr. Kenji Toda had heard that the large shady tree was an old one that had survived the Blitz of World War II when Britain was under attack from Germany. Having been raised in Shōgyō-ji, he recalled how the weaker trees in the compound that were susceptible to the cold were always caringly wrapped in straw coats before the arrival of winter to protect them from frost and snow.

To Mr. Kenji Toda's mind, these trees were important and were to be looked upon and looked after as if they were one's own children or a gathering of devotees. Thus, within the grounds of Shōgyō-ji, there was a beautiful harmony between nature and human life, and within that sheer beauty he found comfort to be bathed in their presence in his younger years.

As a result of this experience, he resisted the idea of felling a tree simply because it was inconvenient to human plans to erect a building. After all, it was a tree that had survived the great fires of a war caused by man.

Mr. Kenji Toda took his earnest protest to Provost Roberts who convened a meeting that very evening and had the building site for the research center moved to another part of the campus. The large tree is still on the campus grounds where its leisurely form greets the eye unchanged.

The Incident of the Tree was the talk of the campus, and the story has even been passed down among the young people at Shōgyō-ji. Mr. Kenji Toda has now become celebrated as the "Man of the Plane Tree".

In 2007, a new building was built near the site of the tree and sensitive to the presence of the tree, one side of the building was skillfully made to accommodate it.

### **The Establishment of Three Wheels**

In 1994, Mr. Kenji Toda received an order to return to the main office of his company in Japan in order to assist the president who had taken the helm of the company that was undergoing rapid globalization. The internationalization of Japanese companies that have only recently gone abroad is no easy matter.

Since then, Mr. Kenji Toda has remained true to the ideal of realizing "harmony within diversity". Whilst working for his company Eizai as the Senior Vice President, he is also practicing the Buddha-dharma living at the Tokyo branch of Shōgyō-ji where many young people come to gather.

Up until the time of his return to Tokyo, four of the London Eza meetings were held at the Toda family residence in London. Since he was scheduled to return, that meant that there would be no location for the Eza.

When through the rich spiritual exchange and fresh encounters of the participants of the Eza, comprising Japanese and British, students and professors, young people and adults, the London Eza itself had just begun to show signs of development, this was a major setback for the London Eza meetings. At the advice of Shōgyō-ji Head Priest Venerable Chimyō Takehara and UCL Vice-Provost John White, a place where the Eza could be conducted was set up at a residence at 55 Carbery Avenue in the suburbs of London.

It was named Three Wheels, and the fifth London Eza was the first such gathering held at this Shin Buddhist center.

On December 11, 1994, the most senior member of Shōgyō-ji Temple, Reverend Onro Uenosono, came from Japan in order to conduct the *nyubutsu-shiki*, the "Buddha Entrance Ceremony" in which the Buddha-shrine at Three

Wheels was formally consecrated. In June 2003, in a gradual but steady development of the Dharma movement that helped to open up Eza participants to international encounter and spiritual exchange, Professor Satō, who had received a preliminary ordination when still a child, was formally ordained by the Supreme Primate of the Higashi Hongan-ji Temple and was given the Buddhist name, “Shaku Kemmyō”. Now having him as the Director of Three Wheels, this has made Three Wheels an even more suitable place where British and Japanese people can come to listen to the Buddhist teachings.

### **The Creation of the Zen Garden**

Immediately after the purchase of a residential house at 55 Carbery Avenue, the back garden of Three Wheels was a somewhat overgrown English garden surrounded with a number of large trees. One day Professor Satō was looking at this rather unkempt English garden with Professor John White, and when he remarked, “I would like to change the garden a little bit”, Professor White unexpectedly responded, “Taira, how about making a Zen garden?”

Professor Satō was rather surprised and could not give his approval to such a big project on the spot, but promised to ask the Head Priest. That night he called Shōgyō-ji with great trepidation.

The Head Priest Venerable Takehara’s response took him by surprise when he heard him say, “That is a splendid idea! It is a good way for you and Professor White to develop mutual understanding.” It was in this way that the Three Wheels Zen garden project got underway, with the theme of “harmony within diversity”.

Countless events took place in the process of making the Zen garden, designed by Professor John White, as cannot be pared down to fit in this small essay on Buddhism and peace.

Professor White was an authority on the history of Western art. On a trip to Kyoto he visited the Zen gardens, and once he entered a Zen garden, he would spend four or five hours, quietly meditating there, and at the same time critically observing the garden with the eye of an art historian. And then he would compose some poetry. It was through this way of experiencing the Zen garden that he captured the principles of the Zen garden design. This is what led him to make the suggestion to create a Zen garden.

Among all the principles of the Zen garden, that of “Harmony within diversity” was one that got more emphasis because it was one that particularly caught Professor White’s eye and was continually discussed from the time of the first encounter between UCL and Shōgyō-ji.

The harmonization of diverse elements does not merely express the mutual relationship between different stones in the beautiful Zen garden. It is also an expression of the harmony between those involved in the creation of the garden, including many who came from Japan for the same purpose.

When there are diverse elements, this is often a source of contradiction, collision, and even conflict. This is a reality that we cannot deny. It is important that we have a clear awareness of this aspect and make an effort to deal with it positively. It requires that we hold one another in mutual respect, and explain to the other what is on our mind, as well as turn a patient ear to what is on their mind. When we err by insisting on our way and injure the other person's feelings, we must be courageous enough to honestly apologize; and that is most crucial to remember. It is also important to be grateful to others for accommodating your selfish requests.

At the very bedrock of the harmonization of diverse elements is nothing other than the Buddhist notion of Selflessness, as touched upon in the Introduction to this essay. It is solely through Selflessness that it is possible to actualize the inner peace and harmony within diversity in real life. Harmony in diversity has not simply taken the form of a beautiful garden. Harmony in diversity was realized in the true encounter of diverse people who were involved in the actual work of making the garden. This is clearly none other than the working of the great Compassion of Amida Buddha.

The Zen garden of Three Wheels was a project initiated in 1995 and the work of garden making involved a great many people working daily. There were another eighty or so people who came from Japan one group after another to participate. The inaugural ceremony was held two years later on June 29, 1997, and was a great event attended by Shōgyō-ji Head Priest, Venerable Chimyō Takehara.

### **Professor Alexander William Williamson**

About seven months after Reverend Kemmyō Satō's arrival in London, the day before Reverend Satō and his friends held the third London Eza at Mr. Toda's house in Ealing in July 1994, Professor John White took them to the graves of four Japanese foreign students at Brookwood Cemetery.

Although on that first visit back in 1994 the area was rank with weeds, it was clear that some one hundred and thirty years earlier these Japanese students who had died on foreign soil had received a proper burial in Britain. So moved was Reverend Kemmyō Satō by the site, he found himself at a loss for words. The thought occurred to him, "Ah, one day this too shall be my fate!" This memory was to remain forever etched in his mind.

When the news of this site was reported to Shōgyō-ji, the Head Priest Venerable Chimyō Takehara observed that the existence of the graves of the Japanese students who had died on foreign soil is an important event that underscores the Japanese-British relations throughout the three times of past, present, and future.

Ever since that time, all Buddhist seekers from Shōgyō-ji who came to Britain have made a pilgrimage to the graves of the foreign students to pay their respects. We have already touched on the UCL memorial stone for Japanese

foreign students. We would now like to introduce a bit more information about the Japanese students who came to study in Britain during the 1860s.

Toward the end of the Edo period and just before the Meiji Reformation of 1868, some knowledgeable people in Japan realized it was time to shrug off the xenophobia and insularity that had sequestered Japan from the rest of the world. In 1863, they arranged for five young people to be smuggled out of Japan in order to study Western science and civilization. Later on these five youths from the Choshu clan would be called the Choshu Five. They comprised a small band of young foreign students from Choshu.

The university where these five young people went to study was University College London. Among them would be modern Japan's first Prime Minister Hirobumi Itō, then 22, and his lifelong friend and Minister of Foreign Affairs Kaoru Itō, then 28.

The reason UCL was chosen was that, since its founding in 1827, in Britain at the time it was a university that was open to all students regardless of religion, race, or nationality.

Two years later another band of nineteen foreign students from the Satsuma province would join them at UCL. From this stock would derive some of the axial leaders of Japan's modernization.

It is interesting to note that in the early years when these foreign students from Choshu and Satsuma were in London, there was a strong xenophobic movement underfoot in Japan in resistance to the Western efforts at colonization, that led to naval engagements between British-allied warships and these very clans during the years 1863 and 1864.

Once Japan had seen for themselves the military might of the Western countries, and had experienced actual military engagements with them, Japan must have realized that, in order for the country to maintain its autonomy, it had to learn more about the secrets of the Western powers' strength that lay in scientific technology, especially in military and industrial technology.

The person who welcomed the five foreign students from Japan was Professor Alexander William Williamson (1824-1904). Professor of Analytical and Practical Chemistry at UCL, Professor Williamson was an acclaimed scholar and was appointed a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1855. Around the time he welcomed the foreign students, he had just given a lecture on what would become a well-received paper titled "On the Atomic Theory" in *J Chem Soc* 22 (1869): 328-365. Although what he spoke about is common sense today, basically, that the atoms are not fixed but move freely among the molecules, his lecture caused much discussion among the members of the Chemical Society.

Professor Williamson not only welcomed the students with open arms, he also accepted four of them as his students in his chemistry laboratory.

It must have been a big decision on the part of Professor Williamson to cordially receive these foreign students who could not even speak his own language. We can detect in him a magnanimous human spirit of loving kindness that transcends all differences of race, culture, and religion.

In addition to the nineteen foreign students from Satsuma who arrived in 1865, another three students from Choshu also came to London. These three students were boarded with Yozo Yamao (1837-1917) at the 103 Gower Street home of the painter Alexander Davis Cooper and his wife.

Shinsaku Takasugi (1839-1867) of Choshu, a hero of the Reformation movement who died in his late twenties, went to Shanghai to reconnoissance the Western forces there. The power of the Western troops left an indelible impression on him. The traditional army structure which looked down on lower class samurai, peasants, and merchants as possible fighting forces, and he realized that such a class-conscious structure would surely work to Japan's disadvantage should Japan ever engage the Western military. He would contribute to the Reformation movement in Japan by developing a new form of locally-based militia. Shinsaku Takasugi expressed a desire to become a foreign student in London

However, he was caught up in the political affairs towards the end of the Bakufu government and had to be content to remain in Japan. In his place the Choshu clan sent Kosaburo Yamazaki, the captain of the Choshu warship *Kigai*.

Unfortunately, Kosaburo Yamazaki fell ill in London and died in March of the following year, 1866, at age twenty-two. His grave can be found in the Brookwood cemetery in the outskirts of London, along with those of three other foreign students. The graves were found on the edge of a plot of land purchased by the Serbian Society in London, who contacted the Japan Embassy on the matter in December 1983.

The graves of the three other young foreign students who died of illness in London around the Reformation are those of Kuhei Fukuro of the Saga, Morito Fukuoka of the Tosa, and Jiro Arifuku of the Tokuyama clan. Judging from the impressive records logged by the foreign students who returned to Japan to become dominant leaders in their respective fields, these young people buried here passed away without fulfilling their cause.

The situation of Kosaburo Yamazaki that led to his death is related in the letters from Hirobumi Itō to Kaoru Inoue.

In one of them he writes, "I went to Kosaburo Yamazaki and his company (Teisuke) Minami and have found both of them arrived in Britain without any funds and are living in dire poverty, and are struggling day and night to get enough to wear and eat. Day and night they have no clothes to change into, and where they live they have to get through the winter without a fireplace – that is how poor they are". As a result of these dire circumstances, he writes that "Kosaburo Yamazaki has gotten sick from exhaustion, an illness that is particularly difficult to treat". In the next letter, the illness-stricken Kosaburo Yamazaki is on the verge of death, and Hirobumi Itō writes, "Since then, he has been moved to the residence of Dr. Williamson where he and his wife are looking after him". This is Professor Alexander William Williamson and his wife whom we have mentioned above.

Despite the care given him by the Williamsons, Kosaburo Yamazaki did not respond. In the end he breathed his last in a hospital on March 3, 1866.

Since this was just before the Meiji Reformation, it may well have been the local government of their homeland, Choshu, was in no position to remit the funds he needed. Thus Kosaburo Yamazaki was stricken with an intractable disease due to hunger and cold. His only salvation may have been his encountering the warm nursing and loving care of the Williamsons.

### **The Erection of the Stūpa of Namu-Amida-butsu**

One day, on May 12, 2005, a Zen monk named Reverend Zenko Croysdale, who had been ordained by the Sōtō-shū in Japan and had trained five years in the Zen center(s), suddenly knocked on the door of Three Wheels. He wanted to know about the establishment of Three Wheels and also about the Zen teacher D. T. Suzuki and spent two hours or so amiably discussing these matters with Reverend Kemmyō Satō, after which he asked him, “Would you do my funeral?” Reverend Kemmyō Satō responded by saying, “Most certainly, provided I myself am still alive”.

It was a most joyous encounter that Reverend Zenko had with Reverend Kemmyō Satō and he expressed the desire to leave a bequest to Three Wheels in his will. Reverend Kemmyō Satō thought about what to do with such a donation, and on the next time he returned to Japan he consulted the Head Priest Venerable Chimyō Takehara who instantly came up with a plan: let us make a Buddhist stūpa inscribed with the *myōgō*, Namu-Amida-butsu, and erect it near the graves of the foreign students in Brookwood cemetery.

On October 7., 2007, out of a wish to protect the graves of the four foreign students in some way, and for the sake of Japanese residents in Britain and British Buddhists everywhere, the Buddhist Stūpa of Namu-Amida-butsu was erected in Brookwood cemetery. On that occasion, Head Priest Venerable C. Takehara, who flew from Japan to attend the inaugural ceremony of the stūpa, astutely observed, “A grave is not simply a place where one’s ashes are buried. It is a place where we come to pay our respects. The reason is, this is a place where we come into contact with the heart of great Compassion”.

What was on Head Priest Venerable Takehara’s mind when he said these words was the selfless love of Dr. Alexander William Williamson that was shown to Kosaburo Yamazaki who knew he was beyond hope.

Professor Williamson was a person who made sure that this unknown foreign youth would have a proper burial. We can assume that the other three graves in the same location were put there at Professor Williamson’s recommendation and with his cooperation.

August 2008 marked the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Amity and Commerce. The original treaty was an unfair one, but it marked the opening of international relations between the two countries. The development it has undergone is seen today in the good relationship enjoyed by both countries.

In the ensuing years Anglo-Japanese relations have taken many forms: cultural, economic, and political. It is moving to discover in the depths of this

relationship the existence of an exchange of pure human love, of selfless loving kindness, that passed between Dr. Williamson and the Japanese foreign student. Although the episode has long stood in the shadows of history this profound encounter is one that should not be forgotten. This story is one that should be told to posterity.

It is only in the pure faith that gratefully receives such unconditional love that each person can internalize the Inner Peace that lies at the source of world peace, the selfless harmonization of diverse elements.

Regarding this special chapter, here is an excerpt from the journal of Reverend Kemmyō Satō relating his experience of paying his respects to the grave of Professor Williamson himself.

“In October 2007, just before the inaugural ceremony of the Three Wheels’ Buddhist Stūpa, I went out in search of Dr. Williamson’s grave. It was now some one hundred and fifty years since the time that this great educator welcomed the Japanese foreign students with loving kindness. When I found his grave, which was not far from those of the four students, quite unconscious of myself I threw myself down prostrate before it and remained there for some time, unable to raise my head.

“Then, when I finally recovered my composure and raised myself up from my prone position before Dr. Williamson, there before me was my good friend of long years, Professor John White, greeting me with a great smile on his face.

“It was some fifteen years ago that I arrived in London. The year after that, we established Three Wheels, our modest Buddhist temple in Acton Town, and another two years after that we began the construction of the Zen garden there. Throughout all these events and rare experiences that occupied each and every day, there was the constant loving kindness of Professor White who accepted me for what I was. I am sure that Professor Williamson was exactly the same kind of person, and as far as I am concerned, Professor White is of a single body with the Buddha’s heart of great Compassion, and it is with nothing less than the expression of unconditional love that is being shown to us.

“I can only express my deep gratitude to the British people around me for opening up an opportunity like this whereby I could have a direct insight into a deeper dimension where it is as if I were meeting Dr. Williamson in an encounter transcending space and time”.

### **The Reconciliation Ceremony between Japanese and British War Veterans**

It was in late spring of the year that we held the inaugural ceremony of the Zen garden at Three Wheels that we had a visit from Mr. Masao Hirakubo and Mr. Philip Malins. Mr. Masao Hirakubo was the Founder and the Vice-President of the Burma Campaign Friendship Group that sought reconciliation among the Japanese and British war veterans who had participated in the Burma Campaign during the last world war. Mr. Philip Malins was also a Vice-President of the



same group and he was the one who asked, “As a Buddhist is there not something that you can do to support our efforts at reconciliation?”

Reverend Kemmyō Satō’s response was, “This is a most important matter and after consulting the main people involved, I would like to propose that we use the bimonthly London Eza in August to convene a prayer for world peace and the Anglo-Japanese war veterans’ reconciliation gathering”.

This year will be the 13<sup>th</sup> time this gathering will be held. It is impossible to adequately set down in words the peaceful ambience of this event where the war veterans from Japan and Britain shake hands and embrace in joyful reconciliation.

One Japanese veteran who fought in the Burma Campaign, Mr. Satoru Yanagi, came all the way from Japan for eight consecutive years in order to attend the event.

Sad to say Mr. Masao Hirakubo, Founding President of the Burma Campaign Society, that is a renewed body of the Burma Campaign Friendship Group mentioned above, passed away in the spring of 2008. Three Wheels continues his legacy and, along with conducting a Buddhist memorial service for those who died during and after the war, has decided to hold the August ceremony to pray for world peace.

Although it might seem to be a minor movement to illumine just one small corner of this world, without each individual honestly seeking inner peace for themselves, there would be no means by which we could find an answer to humankind’s perennial problem of world peace. At this year’s August meeting there were no Japanese veterans in attendance, but there are still several British soldiers who are planning to come. From now onwards it is important for the younger generation to continue the work of the war veterans’ earnest wish for world peace.

### **Three Wheels’ Activities and the Completion of the *Tannishō* Commentary**

One of the main activities of Three Wheels is a bimonthly meeting known as the London Eza, in which there is a traditional Shin Buddhist service, a Dharma talk, a time for discussion. In addition to the bi-monthly London Eza series, there are meetings to read Buddhist texts such as the *Tannishō*, *Shōshinge*, and *Ofumi*. There is also a monthly gathering for children where Japanese and British children can gather before the Buddha image with their parents. For Japanese teenagers who visit Britain, there is a Spring School program at Three Wheels where they can seek the spiritual path through reading *The Sūtra of Parental Love*. There are also spring and autumn Shokai retreats where the Japanese and British Dharma friends can come to see themselves in the light of the Buddha’s teaching. The Center’s program of activities is a diverse one.

The heart of this program is, above all, to help individuals seek after the truth of life in their own inner journey. It is the opening up of the awakening of

faith that desires the perfect fulfillment of benefiting oneself and benefiting others. In this sense, whatever point one starts from, it never departs from our basic prayer for peace.

There are a number of Buddhist projects that the Three Wheels has given birth to along the way, too many really to relate here, but we would like to give a brief overview of one of those events.

As a natural result of a series of meetings to read the *Tannishō*, one of the most famous Shin Buddhist texts, that he held for a number of years at the University of London, the Buddhist Society of London, and Three Wheels, Reverend Kemmyō Satō has compiled his talks on the *Tannishō* into a single volume, containing a new translation along with commentaries on each chapter of the work.

This volume is the outcome of Reverend Kemmyō Taira Satō's encounter with numerous British friends including Professor John White, Mrs. Dilly Suzuma, Andrew Webb, and Andrew Barritt. Thus for Reverend Kemmyō Satō this is a work of special meaning, for it is a book that has come into being through the loving kindness and unstinting efforts of those around him.

The book, titled *Great Living: In the Pure Encounter between Master and Disciple*, was published with the American Buddhist Study Center Press, New York, in 2010.

Reverend Kemmyō Satō also conducted another series of meetings to read the *Shōshinge*. Over the course of twenty meetings, he commented on the verses of the work line by line. Yet he led another series of discussions on Rennyo Shōnin's (1415-1499) *Letters* through which Rennyo Shōnin transmitted the essentials of Shin Buddhism to his followers. To date Reverend Satō has translated and commented on each of the eighty letters in *The Letters* by Rennyo Shōnin.

Reflecting on these meetings to read and discuss Buddhist texts he took on, Reverend Kemmyō Satō comments, "There were times when I was unsure of my ability to do these courses. However, as long as some of my Dharma friends attended these meetings, even if only one of them, it was always a great encouragement to me". The content of his Dharma talks is a spontaneous outcome of his encounter with Dharma friends in Britain. From now on we wish to see the content of his talks continues to be transmitted to Dharma friends in our English-speaking Saṅgha.

## Conclusion

By way of closing this short essay, we would like to introduce the Shokai retreat that Three Wheels held for the first time in 2008.

In the religious world a retreat is a time to withdraw from the hustle and bustle of everyday life and to enjoy the quiet of monastic life. In the case of a Buddhist retreat, while meditation is central, there is time set aside for Dharma

talks, which gives us a chance to look deeply at ourselves. However, such a retreat is not simply an escape from the world.

It might well be that, while doing services, sitting in meditation, and listening to talks, we might forget about the sufferings of the world for the time being, but this does not mean there is nothing left of them when we return to ordinary life.

The person who restored the spiritual life of Shōgyō-ji, Venerable Daigyōin Reion Takehara, clarified this point toward the end of World War II. He described this as a retreat to the realm of Buddha Dharma, which he named “Shokai retreat”.

During the wartime when the cities were the targets of air raids, there were many people who beat a hasty retreat to the countryside.

On January 18, 1944 Venerable Daigyōin handed out an *Ichimai hōgo* (One-Sheet Dharma words) essay that read, “Recently we hear shrill voices shouting *sokai sokai!* (meaning *Evacuate, evacuate!*). However, as far as our temple is concerned, the true *sokai* 疎開 means to realize we are caught up in this Saha world and must retreat to the Pure Land. This is what meant by the word *shokai* 疏開. If you have yet to make a genuine retreat to the Pure Land, you must not waste a moment's time, hurry, hurry!”(Adapted)

A few months later Reverend Daigyōin’s *Ichimai hōgo* essay of May 15, 1944 touched on the Shokai retreat to the Pure Land, saying, “First, we must retreat from the Saha world, next we must retreat from our companions, and finally we must retreat to ourselves and train under the light of the Three Treasures”.

Retreat does not mean merely to run away from the sufferings of the world or slipping out from our worldly bonds. During the retreat we have to have time to confront ourselves in the light of the Buddha-Dharma and become aware of ourselves in ever deeper dimensions. Mere escape brings no resolution.

When we are awakened to the reality of our karmic existence as the very cause of all our problems and entrust our whole being to the Buddha, for the first time the waters of Dharma begin to flow. The two characters in the term “Shokai” mean respectively “letting flow” (*sho*) and “opening” (*kai*). The Japanese words *so* 疎 and *sho* 疏 are virtually synonymous, both meaning retreat. The only big difference between them is that the word *sho* has the imagery of water flowing. Here, the verb *sho* conveys the sense of the flowing of the waters of Dharma. Once the light of Amida Buddha illumines me to what I am, Amida’s waters of Dharma begin to flow within me for the first time.

As our Dharma friends in Britain came to understand this crucial point, Three Wheels began its Shokai retreat in 2008. The retreat featured sūtra reading, Dharma listening, garden work, meditation, and so on, and through those group activities each participant would become aware of the problems that they had and the reality of their karmic existence.

In this context mutual encounter is important. Whether talking to Dharma friends or in an individual interview, it is through dialogue that we are able to

awaken to ourselves and to the great compassion of the Buddha. Then we become grateful to everything and everyone, all the conditions surrounding us that lead to our awakening.

In short, this is the Dharma movement in which all our friends come to live the nembutsu of gratitude. Thus we see the birth of a living Shin Buddhist Saṅgha.

In Western society where there is a strong sense of individuality, through the pure faith of entrusting ourselves to Other Power, there emerges a Saṅgha of mutual gratitude in which people are aware of the vital importance of individual independence and at the same time of mutual interdependence.

Finally, to bring our essay to a close, I would like to introduce one more concrete example that would suggest a direction for resolving various religious problems.

One of our Dharma friends was a young British man who was imbued with deep spirituality. He was brought up in a family with devout Christian parents. At a young age, however, he became interested in Buddhism, and through his experience of doing zazen practice, he encountered the teaching of Shin Buddhism and called upon Reverend Kemmyō Satō at Three Wheels.

Taking refuge in the teachings of Shinran Shōnin, and with joy in Other Power faith, he started to tread the path to the Pure Land. However, this young man started to sense a gap between his own faith and that of his Christian parents.

Reverend Kemmyō Satō having noticed that the deep spirituality of this young man was something that he had received from his parents realized that it was important for him to talk to his parents to arrive at a solution to this problem, and so he encouraged him to engage them in dialogue.

The young man sensed that it would be terribly difficult to merely talk to his parents about matters of faith in an ordinary conversation, and so he began to correspond with them by letter, in a patient exchange that lasted several years.

It must have been difficult for his father, who is a devout Christian, to come to visit a Buddhist temple, but readily accepting his request he paid a call on Reverend Kemmyō Satō at Three Wheels to attend the evening service with his son.

On that occasion, as the son sat before the Buddhist altar at Three Wheels, he apologized for having taken for granted the physical and spiritual support that his parents had given to him, and with tears in his eyes he expressed his gratitude to them for raising him up until this very day.

As he listened to his son's words, the father's eyes also welled up with tears, and he grasped his son's hand firmly, in an emotional re-encounter between father and son.

Christianity and Buddhism walk two different paths, and while father and son each take their own respective ways, this scenario where father and son pledge to always accompany one another on their spiritual journey is one that is impossible to describe in words.

The harmony within diversity that emerged between father and son, the sincere interfaith dialogue that took place in the peaceful re-encounter of those two after their long struggle, the inner peace that lies at the source of World Peace realized in this father-son relationship – all those at Three Wheels who witnessed this highly spiritual re-encounter are said to have been swept up in a whirl of emotion, as they quietly chanted the nembutsu in gratitude and joy.

Taking into consideration the fact that parent and child dialogue shows signs of dying out in East and West alike, in a world where the need for Interfaith Dialogue is ever increasing, it is no exaggeration to say that this harmony within diversity realized between father and son indicates a concrete way to achieving world peace.

# **WHY DID AMBEDKAR CHOOSE BUDDHISM TO LIBERATE HIS DEPRESSED CLASSES? WAS HIS FAILURE IN POLITICS LEADING HIM TO BUDDHISM?**

**Trung Huynh**

In order to solve these questions, in this paper I am going to write about B. R. Ambedkar's (1891-1956) early life and social and political activities, including his childhood and education, reasons of his fight for equal rights, his involvement in politics, his advocacy for the right of the untouchable people, his idea of democracy, his view of Communism, and his frustration in politics. Afterwards, I will discuss about how he looked for the religious solution to help the untouchable people through his definition of religion, his thoughts about the problem of inequality in religion, and his view of contemporary religions in India, including: his view of Hinduism; his view of Christianity; his view of Islam; and his view of Sikhism. Next, I will discuss his path to Buddhism, including his proposal for true religion, his encounter with Buddhism, and his view of the tradition. After a long period of filtering all of the political and religious choices, he came to consider two options, Buddhism and Marxism. Finally, after several years of careful consideration, he chose Buddhism due to its virtues in equality, its advocacy for women's rights, its indigenous religion of India, its rejection of both God and soul, and his passion with the Buddha's personal image. Certainly, I will discuss which form of Buddhism he followed, his controversial perspective through the reconstruction of Buddhist philosophies of Karma, Four Noble Truths, morality, and so forth. I will discuss others' critics on his neo-Buddhist approach. Next, I will talk about his Buddhist influence and transformation on the untouchable people. Lastly, after a thorough analysis, I will conclude that he converted to Buddhism because of his failure and frustration with politics in finding a way to uplift the life of the untouchable

people.

### **Early life and social and political activities**

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, known as Babasaheb, was the fourteenth child in the family, which belonged to the untouchable caste of *mahārs* of Maharashtra, who traditionally worked as village menials. His father was headmaster of an army normal school in Mhow (now Mahu), India. While in his early life he suffered various prejudices in school and society, he was supported by many social reformers who stood up for the rights of the untouchable people. For instance, through the recognition of Ambedkar's outstanding personal capabilities, K. A. Keluskar, a Hindu reformer for the cause of the Depressed Class, aided Ambedkar's education when his family moved to Bombay and provided the first insight into Buddha's thought by giving a book on the life of the Buddha in Marathi language. Besides, the Gaikwad of Baroda and Shahu Chatrapati of Kolhapur, non-brahmanical princes, helped him to finance his education, which eventually allowed him to finish a Ph.D. degree at Columbia University in New York, a D.Sc. degree at the University of London, and the title of barrister at Grey's Inn in London.<sup>1</sup>

Since he belonged to the Depressed Classes, he encountered several prejudicial incidents during his youth. Personally, he was mistreated seriously by other caste people where later on, he stood up to fight for the cause of the untouchable people. At school at Satara, he was made to sit outside the class room on a piece of gunny mat, which he had to carry the school. He had to go without water, not because there was no water, but because he was an untouchable, who had no right to drink from a public source. Second, at Satara again some teachers would not touch his note-books for fear of being polluted. Third, "Touch me not" was a common theme for him outside of the school. Fourth, even when people recognized him as a man of learning and high official in the Baroda State in 1917, he was treated in inhuman ways; no drinking water was available in his office; his subordinates kept a distance from him; and low-paid workers threw files and papers on his desk from a distance due to the fear of being polluted. Fifth, at Baroda, he was thrown out from a public hotel. Hence, he had to resign in frustration and returned to Bombay. Sixth, even when he taught at the college level as a professor, he was treated as a Pariah by the Hindu professors and was not allowed to drink water from the pot kept in the professors' common room. Seventh, while he practiced as a barrister in a High Court of Bombay, the solicitors would not condescend to have any business with him on the ground of untouchability. Even a humble canteen boy would not

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<sup>1</sup> Eleanor Zelliot, "B. R. Ambedkar," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 1: 285-287.

serve him tea.<sup>2</sup>

Having these personal painful experiences, he stood up for the rights of the untouchable people. In the midst of his education abroad, he returned to India in 1917 for a three-year period to participate in two conferences for the Depressed Classes to testify to the Government Franchise Commission on the political and social rights of untouchables, and to initiate a newspaper entitled *Mūknayāk* (The Voice of the Mute), which became the foundational hallmarks of his lifelong political and social reformation.<sup>3</sup> After he returned to live permanently in India in 1923, he devoted his energies to advocate for the political and social rights for the untouchables through involvement in various governmental functions, while he taught and practiced law.<sup>4</sup> Through his testimonies at various parliamentary commissions for the cause of Indian democratization, he was selected as a representative to the Round Table conferences in London in 1930 and 1931. He also demanded the separate electorate for the untouchables as same as that of the Muslim, Sikhs, and other minorities.<sup>5</sup> In opposition to the Indian National Congress, he founded the Independent Labor Party during the British governmental reforms of the mid-1930s. In 1937, there were eleven Scheduled Castes in the Bombay Legislative Assembly.<sup>6</sup> In spite of his efforts to create two political parties, the Scheduled Castes Federation in 1942 and the Republican Party in 1956, there was only little progress in obtaining the number of seats.<sup>7</sup> Later on, as a Minister of Law (1947-1951) in India's first Independent ministry, he effectively secured the guaranteed rights for the untouchables and was appointed a position of Labor member in the viceroy's executive council (1942-1946). As a chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution (1947-1948), considered as "modern Manu," he and Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) provided the provisional outlawing of the practice of untouchability.<sup>8</sup>

To advocate the rights of the Depressed Classes effectively, Ambedkar published several newspapers such as the *Bahishkrit Bhārat* (Excluded India), the *Janata* (People), and the *Prabuddha Bhārat* (Awakened India), which succeeded *Mūknayāk*. These newspapers were widely circulated in spite of an

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<sup>2</sup> D. C. Ahir, "Dr. Ambedkar's Pilgrimage to Buddhism," in A. K. Narain and D. C. Ahir, eds., *Dr. Ambedkar, Buddhism and Social Change* (Delhi, India: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 1994), 1-2.

<sup>3</sup> Zelliot, 287.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 287. According to his perspective, democracy and its development should be rested in three spheres of human life: political, social, and economic. Especially, social democracy is a way of life that recognizes liberty, equality, and fraternity. See Eugenia Yurlova, "Social Equality and Democracy in Ambedkar's Understanding of Buddhism," in Surendra Jondhale and Johannes Beltz, eds., *Reconstructing the World: B.R. Ambedkar and Buddhism in India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 89.

<sup>6</sup> Zelliot, 286. The government placed untouchable castes on a schedule to receive representation in parliamentary bodies and government employment.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



extremely low literacy rate among the Untouchables. To uplift the literacy levels of the untouchable people and their children, he found the People's Education Society that established the Siddharth College in Bombay in 1946 and Milind College in Aurangabad in 1951. After his death in 1956, this society founded Ambedkar College in Poona in 1982 and currently runs two dozen institutions. At the same time, the Dalit Sahitya movement became an important force in the Marathi language and has influenced similar schools of literature in other languages.<sup>9</sup>

Although he got deeply involved into politics, he was frustrated within the political systems. For instance, a compromise of the Poona Pact of 1932 included an exchange of separate electorates for more reserved seats for the Depressed Classes after Gandhi's fasting against the disparities in Indian society. Nonetheless, he expressed his frustration and doubt about its real intention of uplifting the untouchables through the book *What Congress and Gandhi Have Done to the Untouchables*, which accused the Gandhian form of paternalism in 1945.<sup>10</sup>

While getting involved in politics, he paid more attention to communism. Although he appreciated some aspects of Marxism, he did not accept some of its basic principles such as violence and the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, he posed a big question concerning Marxism's violent approach: "They can get quick results by using force. What will happen when dictatorship disappears?"<sup>12</sup> Although he initially collaborated with the communists to form a united front against the capitalist Congress of India, who exploited the lower classes, later on he openly opposed communism due to its violent and terroristic nature.<sup>13</sup> Only through violence can the existing system be sufficiently broken up; and only through the dictatorship of the proletariat can the new system reconstruct and continue.<sup>14</sup> In short, he could not utilize communism as a means to solve social injustice for his untouchable people.

### Search for a religious solution

As his frustration in politics grew, he began searching for an alternated solution for solving social inequality through religions. He emphasized that "Between man and animal, there is the difference of developing sentient mind," as man needs both material and spiritual life.<sup>15</sup> His view is quite different from that of the communist philosophy of "fatten the pigs," as though men are no

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 286. Dalit Sahitya means the literature of the oppressed.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>11</sup> Yurlova, 91. Ambedkar listed out four important residues of Marxism.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 85.

<sup>14</sup> C. D. Naik, *Ambedkar's Perspective on Buddhism and Other Religion* (Delhi, India: Kalpaz Publication, 2009), 275.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 283.

better than pigs.<sup>16</sup> It would not make him irreligious even if he had labored very hard with excessive sufferings (of being discriminated).<sup>17</sup> According to his definition of religion, it is the propounding of an ideal scheme of divine governance, the aim and object of which is to make the social order in which men live a moral order.<sup>18</sup>

Moreover, in his search for social equality through religions, he recognized the problems of religious inequality. Namely, the ultimate divergences and inequality of religions exist obviously because each individual has different subjective religious attitudes, both in non-essential and essential features, different personal life-style, different temperaments, different religious instincts, and different religious experiences.<sup>19</sup> The inequality of religion may be complicated through various concepts and contents of religion, which are individualistic, social, ritual, mystical, belief, experience, ethical, divine content, cognitive and non-cognitive in its statement, theological, eschatological, and other-worldly.<sup>20</sup>

For instance, while he researched on contemporary religions in India, he found the underpinning of inequality in Hinduism through the Laws of Manu. In the scheme of Manu, the Brahmin is placed at the first in rank. Below him is the Kshatriya. Below Kshatriya is the Vaishva. Below Vaishva is the Shudra, and below Shudra is the Ati-Shudra (the Untouchables). Untouchables, also called Dalit, officially Scheduled Caste, formerly Harijan, in traditional Indian society, is the former name for any member of a wide range of low-caste Hindu groups and any person outside the caste system.<sup>21</sup> He postulated that the Untouchables emerged in the seven century CE.<sup>22</sup>

In addition, he presented his thoughts about the problem of inequality in

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 277. Carle called political economy as a pig philosophy. Marxism viewed religion as an opium, and others follow the maxim of “eat, drink, and be merry.” See Lella Karunyakara, *Modernization of Buddhism: Contributions of Ambedkar and Dalai Lama XIV* (New Delhi, India: Gyan Publishing House, 2002), 246-247.

<sup>17</sup> Karunyakara, 246-247.

<sup>18</sup> Naik, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 125. For example, each individual has four religious instincts of curiosity, self-abasement, flight, and parental instinct. In addition, five factors may determine personal religious experience: organic or bodily needs; mental capacity; psychogenic desires, interest, and spiritual values; pursuit of rational explanation or meaning; and culture and conformity of individual surrounding.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>21</sup> Dalit, considered condescending and offensive of the social disabilities associated with it, was declared illegal in India in 1949 and in Pakistan in 1953. Mahatma Gandhi called untouchables Harijans (“Children of the God Hari Vishnu”). Instead of using the term Dalit, the official designation Scheduled Caste is the most common term. See *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*, s.v. “untouchable,” <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/618508/untouchable> (accessed March 21, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> B. R. Ambedkar, *The Untouchables* (U.P, India: National Herald Press, 1969), 199.

Hinduism as follows. Prior to the advent of the Buddha, India was unaware of the ethics of equality and universal brotherhood. The Vedic society was based on the principle of graded inequality.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, by following the scheme of Manu, Hinduism does not recognize equality of men because it follows a ranking system and order of gradation: first rank, Brahman; second rank, Kshatriya; third rank, Vaishya; fourth rank, Shudra; and fifth rank, the Ati-Shudra (untouchables).<sup>24</sup> This graded inequality is more treacherous than that of the inequality. Namely, inequality contains the potential of self-destruction, because under the pure and simple inequality of its short life, inequality creates general discontent that forms the seed of revolution, and it provides the opportunity of the sufferings to rise against the common foe and on the common grievance. Graded inequality excludes the above factors, because it prevents the rise of general discontent and revolution against inequality, and the impossibility of the combined forces from all classes to overthrow the inequality since each class may have advantage and disadvantage within that inequality system. For instance, regarding the Manu's governance of marriage, the Brahman has the right to take a woman from the three lower classes, but not to give a Brahmin class's woman to them. Although the Kshatriya may have resentment toward the Brahman, he will not stand up against the Brahman with other lower classes on the basis that he also has the right to take a woman from the two lower classes. In addition, if he fights against this inequality system, and even if he could be able to have the same right as the Brahman, the other lower castes (Vishay's and Shudra) may rise to the same level as his (Kshatriya).<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, inequality persists when it is consecrated by religion, and it perishes if it is not so consecrated. For instance, Hinduism still persists with its official doctrine of inequality because this principle has been given by divine origin and religious connection. Besides, in spite of being consecrated and sacred by divine forces, the primitive and modern religions do not have a particular form of social structure, which defines the concrete role and relationship between man and man. Again, being consecrated by religion and made sacred, eternal and inviolate, Hinduism probably is the only religious system in the world that establishes the concrete social order of the relation of man to man, the economic order of the relation of workman to workman, and the political order of people to people.<sup>26</sup>

To refute the Hindu religious system, Ambedkar provided the classification of social and religious types which included preservation of life as common characteristics of religion in any society; savage societies or pre-state societies of hunting and gathering tribes; primitive religions having neither the idea of God nor linked morality to religion; civilized societies or positive religion including the concept of God or Gods, and morality sanctified by religion; and

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<sup>23</sup> Ahir, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Naik, 121.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 122-123.

civilized societies which sprang out of religion founded on kinship between God and worshippers, “fatherhood of God,” in physical sense. Each god, among many gods, is linked to a community, religion, and national identification. Morality is based on utility that each individual was subordinated to society; through second religious revolution, “modern society” exists in which god was eliminated from the physical composition of society. God served as a universal god of all, and God served as abstract and absolute good. Nationality is disassociated from religion. Morality based on justice to serve individual as an end.<sup>27</sup> While many of his contemporaries considered Hinduism a primitive religion, he regarded it as a positive religion that emerged at a particular time in history with its own scheme of divine governing the religious, ritualistic, and social life of people. Namely, Hinduism, a revived form of Brahmanism, emerged after the defeat of Buddhism. It has its written constitution of *Manusmṛiti*, which was founded by Manu, to establish the non-egalitarian order, as it justified the *varṇa* and the caste system as a divine scheme of social order. Since Brahmanism was ritualistic and advocated violence, Hinduism also has the characteristics of violence, anti-equality, and ritual. After a close examination of principles of justice for liberty, equality, and fraternity, he concluded that Hinduism is devoid of any set of principles that would guide the moral conscience of the individual.<sup>28</sup>

He further analyzed Hinduism through several perspectives. First, the cultural unity of India is formed through the Brahmanical cultures of its ideas, values, customs, and religions (not in terms of race and invasion), which placed the leading role of Brahmin as intellectual class and the imitation of it by the rest of the society.<sup>29</sup> Second, there is a caste system of many different castes.<sup>30</sup> Third, authority and power may have religious bases. Namely, the Brahmin, as the intellectual class, has the religious authority to assign status to different sections of society, to define hierarchy of dignities, and to offer a specific organization of society.<sup>31</sup> Fourth, the religious foundation of the Hindu social order is the Puruṣasukta, which actually gives “a divine injunction prescribing a particular form of the constitution of society” and that form is not imposed by force, but is accepted, and internalized by all because they all share the belief in the sacredness of the books whose knowledge is the monopoly of the Brahmins.<sup>32</sup> He

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<sup>27</sup> Gail Omvedt, “Confronting Brahmic Hinduism: Dr. Ambedkar’s Sociology of Religion and Indian Society,” in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 54-61.

<sup>28</sup> Sumant, 71-72.

<sup>29</sup> Olivier Herrenschmidt, “Ambedkar and the Hindu Social Order,” in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 39.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 39. Philosophically, the Manu writer believed that the past karma determined the innate quality of the four castes, goodness belonging to the Brahmin, activity belonging to the kshatriya, and darkness belonging to the Vaisya and Sudra. See Ketkar, 114-115.

<sup>31</sup> Herrenschmidt, 40.

<sup>32</sup> The earliest speculation regarding the origin of the four *varṇas* is to be found in the mythical story of the creation embodied in the Puruṣasukta (Hymn of Man) of the Rg

recognized clearly that the Brahmins have been able “to idealize the real, and to realize the ideal” through the slogan, “Caste is divine, and caste is sacred.” As a result, the practice of untouchability just follows that ideal scheme of the fixed and permanent warrants through the principle of graded inequality among the four classes with an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt.<sup>33</sup> Fifth, he also recognized the basis of the Hindu social order placing on the graded inequality, which in his view is very dangerous because it is a kind of built-in mechanism that guarantees the perpetuation of the social system and “prevents the rise of general discontent against inequality.” Namely, Hinduism has survived for millennia because it gives everyone social advantages, expresses its difference from the others, and creates its identity and its uniqueness.<sup>34</sup>

Ambedkar also strongly pointed out the wrong notion of untouchability: “Untouchability is an aspect of social psychology: it is a sort of nausea of one group against another group. Caste is a notion, and it is a state of mind, but it is also “a disease of the mind.”<sup>35</sup> He mentioned the difference between men and beasts. While beasts need nothing to save their daily food for existence, men should develop a healthy body and pure and enthusiastic mind. He referred to the saying of Ramdas, a Maharashtrian Saint, that if a man lacks enthusiasm, either his mind or body is in a diseased condition, or life would become a drudgery, a mere burden to be dragged and an individual loses hope to get an opportunity to elevate oneself. When one breathes in an atmosphere where one is sure of getting a legitimate reward for one’s labors, only then one feels enriched by enthusiasm and inspiration. For inspiration and enthusiasm, one must have a healthy and sound mind. So long as the untouchables continue to slave under the yoke of Hinduism, a diabolical creed, they can have no hope, no inspiration, and no enthusiasm for a better life. The Scheduled Castes can never feel enthusiastic about and derive inspiration from Hinduism.<sup>36</sup>

To determine the original problem of the untouchable people, he postulated convincingly the untouchable people as the Broken Men and as the former Buddhists. Although many scholars disagree with his theory, most accept his date when Untouchables were formed around the fourth century CE.<sup>37</sup> In this theory, he put forward a hypothesis that the Broken Men or the Untouchables were Buddhists, even though he acknowledged no evidence in his hypothesis. He pointed out that the Broken Men did not employ the Brahmin as their priests

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Veda. See Ram Sharan Shama, *Sudras in Ancient India* (Delhi, India: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1990), 32. See Brian K. Smith, *Classifying the Universe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27-28.

<sup>33</sup> Herrenschmidt, 40-42.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 43-45.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>36</sup> Karunyakara, 246-247.

<sup>37</sup> Eleanor Zelliot, “B.R. Ambedkar and the Search for a Meaningful Buddhism,” in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 27, 28.

and regarded them as impure. In the meantime, the Brahmin disliked the Broken Men because they were Buddhists and preached against them with hatred. As a result, the Broken Men came to be regarded as Untouchables. In short, according to his hypothesis, the Broken Men hated the Brahmins because the Brahmins were the enemies of Buddhism, and the Brahmins imposed untouchability upon the Broken Men because they would not leave Buddhism.<sup>38</sup> Actually, Buddhist culture is the unbroken earliest Recluse Tradition of the Sindhu Non-Aryans interrupted by the comparatively inferior aggressive Vedic Aryas.<sup>39</sup>

Having the recognition of the social injustice within the Hindu system, at a conference for the Depressed Classes in Mahad of Bombay, he actively and symbolically burned some portions of the classic Hindu law book, the *Manusmṛti*, which discriminated against low castes.<sup>40</sup> After the final failure of guaranteeing the untouchables' rights of participation in public festivals, temple entry, Vedic wedding rituals, and the wearing of the sacred thread, in 1935 he declared that although he was born a Hindu he would not die a Hindu. He finally concluded that the untouchables could achieve freedom only outside the Hindu religion.<sup>41</sup> Again, on the night of December 25, 1927, he and his followers publicly and ceremonially burned one of the most celebrated of all such scriptures, the notorious *Manusmṛti*, which had governed the life of the Hindu community for fifteen hundred years and which "decried the Shudras, stunted their growth, impaired their self-respect, and perpetuated their social, economic, religious and political slavery." It was one of the great iconoclastic acts of history, and the greatest blow to orthodox Hinduism that suppressed the Shudras who had suffered for more than a thousand years.<sup>42</sup>

After the failure to secure the basic rights and equal status for the Depressed Classes within the Hindu society during the Kalaram Temple entry movement in 1930, on the eve of the Yeola Conference that was convened by the leaders of the Depressed Classes and attended by about ten thousand untouchables of all representatives, he announced that "Although I was born as a Hindu, I solemnly

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<sup>38</sup> Ambedkar, *The Untouchables*, 96-99.

<sup>39</sup> Naik, 126.

<sup>40</sup> The *Law of Manu* (100 BCE-100 CE), *Manusmṛti* (in Sanskrit) means the laws or treatise of the wise human race. It is the centerpiece of Hinduism's *varṇasram-dharma*, the social and religious responsibilities of social class and stage of life, which include the family life, psychology, concepts of the body, sex, human relationship, caste, politics, money, law, purification and pollution, ritual, social practice and ideal, karma, redemption, and worldly and transcendental goals. See Doniger, xvii-xviii. It was compiled by priestly and householder Brahmins for them and for their paradigmatic human and spiritual authoritarian throughout many centuries. See Doniger, xxiii. Its themes focus on the karma and rebirth, the purification and restoration, and good and bad people. See Doniger, l-li.

<sup>41</sup> Zelliott, "B.R. Ambedkar," 287.

<sup>42</sup> Saṅgharashita, *Ambedkar and Buddhism* (Glasgow, UK: Windhorse Publications, 1986), 55-56.

assure you that I will not die a Hindu.”<sup>43</sup> His declaration can be seen from very different sociological, historical, juridical, and political perspectives. All of them represent and address various aspects of his complex personality and his program of social reform.<sup>44</sup>

Obviously, the significance of his rejection of Hinduism and the proposing from the other traditions to him, and the reactions from this announcement were immediate and far-reaching. Some untouchable people took it as a hint to convert into Christianity, or Islam, or Sikhism, which was not Ambedkar’s intention at all. A Muslim leader, Nizam of Hyderabad known as “the Richest Man in the World,” offered Ambedkar the sum of forty or fifty million rupees if he would undertake to convert the whole untouchable community to Islam. Bishop Badley of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Bombay welcomed Ambedkar’s statement to bring the untouchables for a better life.<sup>45</sup> However, Ambedkar scoffed at these tempting offers and rejected the same without any hesitation.<sup>46</sup> After rejecting Hinduism, he looked into other religious traditions to see whether they could uplift his untouchable people’s social status or not.

According to him, the Christian ideal of equality embraces a number of features borrowed from Hebrew, Greek, and Roman sources. Christianity has always accepted the principle of hierarchy in both church and society, while at the same time holding the doctrine of equality to be relevant “only in terms of eschatological promise.”<sup>47</sup> False doctrine also aggravates the intensity of inequality in religion. Regarding Christ and his church, Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) contends that of all the abuses that constitute the kingdom of darkness, the greatest arises from the false doctrine that “presents church now militant on earth is the Kingdom of God. The papacy is no other than the ghost of the deceased Roman Empire. M. Couchoud affirms that “Jesus is misclassified when placed in the series of great religious reformers Zoroaster, Confucius, Mani, Mahomet, and Luther.”<sup>48</sup>

Next, according to his view of Islam, its social inequality and the obedience of women are values sanctioned by Islam, enforced by the patriarchal gender structure, and encouraged violence toward women.<sup>49</sup> As a result, neither Christianity nor Islam could be attractive to him because of two reasons. First, he was in favor of an indigenous Indian religion. Second, he found certainly that

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<sup>43</sup> Dhananjay Keer, *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission* (Bombay, India: Popular Prakashan Private Limited, 1990), 59. Johannes Beltz, “Introduction,” in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 252-253.

<sup>44</sup> Beltz, 1.

<sup>45</sup> Sangharashita, 61-62.

<sup>46</sup> Narain, 4.

<sup>47</sup> Francis M. Wilhoit, *The Quest for Equality in Freedom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, Inc., 1979), 16.

<sup>48</sup> Naik, 124, 125.

<sup>49</sup> David Ghanim, *Gender and Violence in the Middle East* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2009), 55.

neither Islam nor Christianity has been able to get rid of the evil caste system.<sup>50</sup>

In relation to Sikhism, being frightening by the threat of the untouchables swelling the ranks of the non-Hindus, some Hindu leaders pressured Ambedkar to give a try to the Sikh religion on the plea that Sikhism was a part of Bharatiya culture. Accordingly, the Sikhs established the Khalsa College for the Depressed Classes and honored Ambedkar as the chairman of the College Committee. However, within a year Ambedkar was frustrated with Sikhism. His association with the Sikh mission came to an abrupt end, because according to his assessment, the Sikhs were no better than the Hindus so far as caste distinctions were concerned.<sup>51</sup>

### Conversion to Buddhism

After a thorough examination of most of the contemporary religions in India, he came to the conclusion that these traditions could not effectively uplift the social status of his untouchable people. As a result, he proposed a true religion for him and his untouchable people. First, he wanted to transcend the limits of nineteenth-century theistic discourse. Second, he departed from Mahatma Pule's deism and Ranade's neo-bhagvat Dharma, while he anchored his position in the Buddhist tradition. Third, he offered a modernist understanding of Eastern and Western religions. Fourth, he defined sociability in terms of morality. Fifth, his doctrine of Dharma has also helped elevate secularist discourse in India above the antagonism between tradition and modernity and between reason and faith. Sixth, by blending the Buddha's project of *dukkhamukti* (freedom from misery) with Marx's project of freedom from exploitation, he showed the way to fight caste and class inequalities.<sup>52</sup> He emphasized the Buddha's message of religion: "The center of religion lay in the relation between man and man, not between man and God. The purpose of religion is to teach man how he should behave towards other men so that all may be happy."<sup>53</sup> Hence, according to him, religion is to explain the origin of the world.<sup>54</sup> In the article "Buddha and the Future of His Religion," Ambedkar's perspective of a true religion consists of four characteristics: (1) it must remain the governing principle in every society in the sense of morality; (2) it must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science if it is to function; (3) its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and (4) it must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Narain, 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>52</sup> Yashwant Sumant, "Situating Religion in Ambedkar's Political Discourse," in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 76-77.

<sup>53</sup> Yurlova, 81.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>55</sup> Ahir, 8.



In fact, in the search for a faith to mobilize and liberate the Untouchables Ambedkar's lifelong reading of scholarly works on the history and teachings of Buddhism included more than twenty thousand volumes of rich collections throughout his school years and subsequent visits to New York, London, and Bonn.<sup>56</sup> His frequent exposure to living Buddhist traditions in Burma, Sri Lanka, and others, and his appreciation of Buddhist art in various places such as the Ellora and Ajanta caves might have influenced his religious endeavor too.<sup>57</sup>

According to his view of Buddhism, only the conversion of a man and his changing in moral disposition can break up the existing system sufficiently; and only the voluntary adherence to the path leading to the cessation of exploitation and misery can reconstruct and continue the new system.<sup>58</sup> In the article "Buddha and the Future of His Religion," his perspective of a true religion consists of four characteristics: it must remain the governing principle in every society in the sense of morality; it must be in accord with reason which is merely another name for science if it is to function; its moral code must recognize the fundamental tenets of liberty, equality, and fraternity; and it must not sanctify or ennoble poverty.<sup>59</sup> He said further that only Buddhism can satisfy all these tests, and it is the only religion the world can have.<sup>60</sup> Buddhism is essentially rationalist and humanist in its approach to life.<sup>61</sup>

To Ambedkar, Buddhist principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity were not modern concepts taken from the French Revolution, but they were taught by the Buddha for more than twenty-five hundred years ago. Buddhist rationalism and humanism had no place for coercion and exploitation. As Edwin Arnold (1832-1904) said "Buddhism is the grandest manifestation of freedom ever proclaimed," because its goal targets the liberation of mankind from all chains and fetters. That is liberty. Buddha pronounced the doctrine of equality in the dialogue of the Buddha and Assalayana, after freeing man from belief in God, from the domination of the Vedas, and from the power of Varnashram and caste. That is equality. The Buddha established the universal brotherhood within the saṅgha that transcends the limits of caste, creed, color, and gender. That is fraternity. As the father of Indian Constitution, Ambedkar placed these principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity greatly in the Preamble to Constitution.<sup>62</sup>

Ambedkar also fully believed that Buddhism is Saddhamma, which

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 24, 25.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 26, 27.

<sup>58</sup> Naik, 275.

<sup>59</sup> Ahir, 8.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> K.N. Kadam, "Dr. Ambedkar and Buddhism as an Instrument of Social Change," in Narain and Ahir, eds., 42.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 45.

functions to promote equality between people.<sup>63</sup> He said that “I have derived my philosophy from religion of the Buddha in liberty, equality, and fraternity, not from political science.”<sup>64</sup> Women’s positions in Buddhism were also a source of his inspiration to embrace Buddhism such as that of Mahaprajapati Gotami, the first Buddhist nun, and Visaka, the Buddha’s chief female supporter.<sup>65</sup> Ambedkar preferred Buddhism over other religions not only because it is indigenous and preaches egalitarianism but also because “There is no place for God and soul in the Buddhist religion.”<sup>66</sup> Also, the Buddha’s physical image, his compassionate and colorful figure, his stories, the way in which he dealt with life, and the way he is represented by artists throughout times made Buddhism an appealing and satisfying religion.<sup>67</sup>

Having a profound understanding of Buddhism, he still liked to compare this tradition to a contemporary political system, communism, to sort out the best solution for the sake of his untouchable people. In the comparison between Buddhism and Marxism, Ambedkar pointed out some similarity between Marxism and Buddhism in the contexts of exploitation of the class and sufferings of sentient beings. Namely, he found some close affinity between Marxism’s rejection of exploitation and that of the Buddha’s attitude towards property.<sup>68</sup> However, although the end is common to both, their means are different.<sup>69</sup> By the comparison between the creeds of the Buddha and that of Marxism, he concluded that both systems deal with the problems of the conflict of interest between class and class; the private ownership of property creating power to one class and sorrow to another through exploitation; and sorrow being removed through the abolition of private ownership for the good of society. Naik adds one more element of philosophy emphasizing the reconstruction of the world and not to waste time in explaining the origin of the world.<sup>70</sup>

Although both Buddhism and Marxism have a similar goal of elimination of the suffering, or misery, or exploitation, each has different means to achieve that goal.<sup>71</sup> In opposition to Marxism’s violence and dictatorship as a means of achieving aims, he considered Buddhist nonviolence and democracy as a surest, a safest, and a soundest way, and he claimed that its moral and humanitarian aspects appealed to Indian people and suited them best of all.<sup>72</sup> Violence,

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<sup>63</sup> Saddhamma is the true dhamma, the best religion, the good practice, or the doctrine of the good. See Thomas William Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pāli-English dictionary* (New Delhi, India: Asian Educational Services, 1905), 675.

<sup>64</sup> Naik, 283.

<sup>65</sup> Zelliott, “B.R. Ambedkar and the Search for a Meaningful Buddhism,” 28.

<sup>66</sup> K. C. Das, *Indian Dalits: Voices, Visions, and Politics* (New Delhi, India: Global Vision Publishing House, 2004), 67.

<sup>67</sup> Zelliott, 29.

<sup>68</sup> Yurlova, 91.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>70</sup> Naik, 274.

<sup>71</sup> Yurlova, 92.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

another name for the use of force, can be used in two ways: as energy for creative purposes; and as violence for destructive purposes. Buddhism opposed strongly the use of force in a violent way. Communism also follows the dictatorship or State government that has the right to enforce and severely discipline its citizens through the Rule of Law. Instead, Buddhism prefers the Rule of Righteousness, in which the citizens should be trained morally that they are sentiment for the government of righteousness without resorting to any brutal force.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, Ambedkar came to the conclusion to pick Buddhism as his best religion. He explained that "Poverty made me no irreligious. Self-respect is more important than the material gains. Buddhism is for progress, not only for economic progress."<sup>74</sup> Also, according to Gokhale, some Buddhist features seem to have attracted Ambedkar. First, Buddhism emphasized the role of reason as against faith or superstition. Second, as a result, Buddhism rejected many objects of dogmatic belief, such as God and soul, which were accepted by most of the other religions. Third, Buddhism strongly opposed the caste system. Fourth, Buddhism emphasized morality as an essence of good life. This morality according to Buddhism was essentially human-centric and had no reference to soul or to God. Ambedkar not only took these features seriously, but he also tried to elaborate some of them to their logical limit and attempted a reconstruction of Buddhism in that approach of bringing out a real essence of Buddhism according to his variant thoughts and ideas.<sup>75</sup> Also, there are other Buddhist characteristics that really attracted Ambedkar.

After a long process of comparison and selection of the political systems and religious paths, he took the action of actual conversion to Buddhism on October 3, 1954. He exhorted that, "My personal philosophy is to reject Hindu philosophy of *Bhagavad-gita* which is based on a cruel perversion of Sankhya philosophy of Kapila, the caste and graded inequality."<sup>76</sup> I have derived my philosophy from religion of the Buddha in liberty, equality, and fraternity, not from political science."<sup>77</sup> Spiritually, since he was interested in Buddhism during his youth, he made a commitment to become a Buddhist together with a half million of his followers, mainly the untouchables, in October 1956 at Nagpur, two months before his death.<sup>78</sup> Having rejected Hindu religious, social, and political life as well as the possibility of converting to Christianity, Islam, Sikhism, or communism, Ambedkar made the final decision during the last months of his life in October 1956 with about half million Dalit people to

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<sup>73</sup> Naik, 274, 275.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>75</sup> Pradeep P. Gokhale, "Universal Consequentialism: A Note on B. R. Ambedkar's Reconstruction of Buddhism with Special Reference to Religion, Morality, and Spirituality," in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 121.

<sup>76</sup> Naik, 283.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>78</sup> Zelliott, "B.R. Ambedkar," 287.

convert to Buddhism as a mean for attaining equality and social liberation.<sup>79</sup> He also said that this conversion had given him enormous satisfaction and pleasure unimaginable. He felt as if he had been liberated from the hell.<sup>80</sup>

Actually, the act of his conversion to Buddhism had not been an isolated decision but seemed to draw together the different strands of his personality. It expressed his personal convictions as well as his political and social vision.<sup>81</sup> Eleanor Zelliott proposes that Ambedkar's interest in Buddhism can be divided into seven categories.<sup>82</sup> Zelliott provides a list of the early converts to Buddhism, who might have direct and indirect connections with Ambedkar such as a high-caste Dharmanand Kosambi, the Marxist maverick Rahul Sankrityayan, Anand Kausalyayan, Jagdish Kashyap, S. Radhakrishnan, Ananda Kentish Coomaraswamy, Ananda Nair, U. Chandramani (who transmitted the Buddhist vows to Ambedkar in 1956), and others.<sup>83</sup> Zelliott also briefly discusses how Buddhist revivals in the south might have influenced Ambedkar's thoughts such as Appaduraiyar, Lakshmi Narasu, and others.<sup>84</sup>

On October 13, 1956, a day before his formal conversion to Buddhism, Ambedkar convened a press conference to explain his position on conversion in which he declared to adopt neither Hīnayāna nor Mahāyāna, but Navayāna (Neo-Buddhism). Namely, he adopted the actual teachings of the Buddha only.<sup>85</sup> Especially, his reinterpretations of the "Buddha's authentic teachings" were presented explicitly and mainly through the books *The Buddha and the Future of His Religion*, and *The Buddha and His Dhamma*. These books invited a mixed reception. Some criticized him as having misinterpreted the Buddha's teaching, and some defended his view.<sup>86</sup>

The significant impact of his conversion to Buddhism not only changed his spiritual life but also the course of Indian Buddhism because it marked the new era of Buddhist revival in India. Today in India, if there is respect and reverence for Buddhist values, and Buddhism is regarded as the broad highway to salvation by millions people, the credit mostly goes to Ambedkar.<sup>87</sup> Afterward,

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<sup>79</sup> Yurlova, 93, 94.

<sup>80</sup> Ahir, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Beltz, 2.

<sup>82</sup> Zelliott, "B.R. Ambedkar and the Search for a Meaningful Buddhism," 18.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 19, 20.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 22-24.

<sup>85</sup> Ramesh Chandra, *Identity and Genesis of Caste System in India* (New Delhi, India: Kalpaz Publication, 2005), 253.

<sup>86</sup> Ahir, 90.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 12, 13. As per the 1991 Census, Buddhist accounts for 0.8 percent of the total population, or 6.76 million in which was divided into two categories: the traditional Buddhists lived in the hilly areas of Ladakh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh; and the newly converted Buddhists lived in Maharashtra (6.3 per cent of the state's population), Uttar Pradesh (0.2 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (0.3 per cent), and West Bengal (0.3 per cent). The largest Buddhist concentration is in Sikkim, which has 27 per cent of the total Buddhist population in the state, followed by Arunachal

following his inspiration of cutting off the psychological bonds of untouchability, millions of untouchables converted to Buddhism and dozens of Buddhist temples have been built, especially in the state of Maharashtra. Currently, the untouchables still consider him as their savior and Bodhisattva. Since then, together with several of his writings in Buddhism such as *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, hundreds of books have been written by many Dalit writers and Buddhists on Buddhist faith and practice, chiefly in Marathi.<sup>88</sup> Since his death in 1956, his fame as a liberator for the untouchables has grown constantly. His statue can be found in almost every city and many villages in India and generally he is shown carrying a copy of the constitution of India. His birth day, conversion day, and death day are observed by millions and the Buddhist conversion movement continues to grow.<sup>89</sup>

However, he humbly did not take the full credit of revising Indian Buddhism. He reminded his people that “the greatest thing that the Buddha has done is to tell the world that it cannot be reformed except by the reformation of the mind of the man and the mind of the world.” He expressed his deepest affection to the Buddha as “Mother-like Buddha stood in contrast with Jesus, Mohammed, and Krishna in two aspects, self-renunciation and infallibility.”<sup>90</sup> The purpose of Dharma, as a social teaching, is to reconstruct the world. Synonymous with Dharma, Ambedkar considered morality as an instrument of management of society, which regulates relations between its members. His social message in his book *The Buddha and His Dharma* provided a means to solve the problem of social conflict between the Untouchables and caste Hindu.<sup>91</sup> His books and articles on Buddhism include *Buddha or Karl Marx*; *The Buddha and His Dharma*; *Buddha and the Future of His Religion*; and others. He also established the Siddharth College in Bombay in 1946, the Buddha Society in India in 1955, and others.

## Reconstruction of Indian Buddhism

Philosophically, Ambedkar’s effort to reconstruct neo-Buddhism probably might be seen as a deviation from traditional Buddhism, though it may or may not be a deviation from original Buddhism. Gokhale pointed out four features of Ambedkar’s reconstruction of Buddhism. First, Ambedkar merely included Buddhist belief and practices to this world and this life, and excluded the belief

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Pradesh with 13 per cent. See B.K. Prasad, *India’s Development Agenda: Issues, Challenges and Policies* (New Delhi, India: Anmol Publications, 2005), 1: 543.

<sup>88</sup> Zelliott, “B.R. Ambedkar,” 286. In the book *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, Ambedkar stressed a rational, humanitarian, egalitarian Buddhism drawn chiefly from Pāli texts. Hindu beliefs and practices and any supernatural Buddhist ideas were eliminated.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 285-287.

<sup>90</sup> Naik, 282.

<sup>91</sup> Yurlova, 81, 82.

in other worlds and past and future as well as the existence of consciousness independent of the body. Second, Ambedkar emphasized scientific rationality as a core of the Buddhist approach to the nature of the world and the individual. Essentially, Ambedkar considered whatever violated the authority of experience and reason as non-Buddhist elements. Third, Ambedkar pushed aside the mystical elements from Buddhism such as *dhyāna* and *samādhi*. Fourth, according to Ambedkar morality is the root of Buddhism, while other religions placed morality in the hands of metaphysical gods.<sup>92</sup> What follows are his controversial interpretation about some of the Buddhist concepts and principles.

First, Ambedkar said that “The Buddha’s Law of karma applied only to karma and its effects on the present life. The extended Buddhist doctrine of karma, including past karma, is a most pernicious doctrine that is often found to be attributed to the Buddha.” It was understandable that he only supported this-worldly interpretation of karma doctrine and excluded the past life’s karma because it may justify the Hindu’s explanation of the victims of social oppression by viewing their sufferings as punishment for misdeeds in former lives.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, his view on soteriology might have been greatly influenced by his Columbia University professor, John Dewey (1859-1952). Ambedkar used a passage from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education*: “An individual can live only in the present. The present is not just something that comes after the past; much less something produced by it. It is what life is in leaving the past behind it. The study of past products will not help us to understand the present.”<sup>94</sup>

Second, Ambedkar criticized the Buddha’s basic teachings, the Four Noble Truths, because, in his view, they deny hope to man and make the gospel of the Buddha a gospel of pessimism. Instead of recognizing the attribution of sufferings to the mental states of ignorance and craving, he blamed social conditions as the cause for massive sufferings such as poverty and injustice.<sup>95</sup> He considered the Four Noble truths as a later monkish accretion. He did not find hope and joy in the third and fourth noble truths, which speak of the cessation of suffering in a state of inner peace and the path to its cessation, involving both ethical and spiritual practices. He also thought that Buddhist monks are for the purpose of self-culture and social service.<sup>96</sup>

Third, within the theistic religions, morality is considered in terms of reward and punishment given by God to individuals. Atheistic religion justified morality in terms of the karmic doctrine, which defines the good or bad consequences according to good or bad actions respectively.<sup>97</sup> Ambedkar

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<sup>92</sup> Gokhale, 124.

<sup>93</sup> Christopher S. Queen, “Ambedkar’s Dhamma: Source and Method in the Construction of Engaged Buddhism,” in Jondhale and Beltz, eds., 137-138.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>97</sup> Gokhale, 125.

justified Buddhist morality as a universalistic consequentialism autonomously, which is devoid of any external consideration, including transcendental religious belief. Generally speaking, he considered theistic religion as the blocking stones of morality and rationality because they only built a God-man relationship and undermined social relations among men. In his perspective, the Buddha defined religion as a way to create a kingdom of righteousness in the world. Also, since morality is essentially social, he excluded in his model the individualistic, spiritualistic aspect of Buddhism, especially the aspect of meditation.<sup>98</sup> He also defined morality as sacred because it is universal and cannot be violated.<sup>99</sup> With the rationalist, humanist, and down-to-earth approaches, he emphasized morality as the root of Buddhism that replaces god, soul, prayers, worship, rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices, and others in religious elements.<sup>100</sup>

In short, his neo-Buddhist perspective as discussed above was controversially criticized by many contemporary scholars, including Buddhists and Neo-Hindu. Namely, they could not accept these approaches of Ambedkar.<sup>101</sup> For instance, Jivaka, a scholar, commented about Ambedkar's book *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, that Ambedkar's Buddhism was based on Hate, the Buddha's on Compassion.<sup>102</sup> In comparison to many other approaches that might be taken to fixing the untouchables' problems, Buddhism's strong suit is mental discipline, the intentional replacement of unwholesome and unskillful states such as hopelessness, defeatism, self-loathing, anxiety, and depression, with wholesome and skillful states, such as effort, determination, inner peace, and clarity. With a new attitude, the former untouchables may progress in their material life. Otherwise, it would be impossible.<sup>103</sup> According to some research scholars, the former untouchables who have embraced Buddhism obtained worthy gains. They have got rid of their inferiority complex. They have a fresh sense of identity and a newly acquired confidence. Their young people have completely shed the old superstitions that had oppressed their existence and have adopted a more positive view of life. A new cultural and social renaissance has transformed Buddhist youth. They no longer believe in pre-ordained fate or in any of the ancient rituals. They only believe that hard work, education and a rational approach can bring progress. Their attitude seems to be firm, progressive, and scientific compared to high-caste Hindu youth.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 125, 126.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>100</sup> Kadam, 47.

<sup>101</sup> Gokhale, 128.

<sup>102</sup> Queen, 139, 141.

<sup>103</sup> Sallie B. King, *Socially engaged Buddhism* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2009), 147.

<sup>104</sup> Ahir, 13, 14.

## Conclusion

While Gandhi was a social reformer, Ambedkar was a social revolutionist, a political leader, an original sociologist, and an advocate of the neo-Buddhist movement in India.<sup>105</sup> After a thorough examination of Ambedkar's life, political and social activities, and his views of religious and secular paths to liberate the untouchable people, I come to the conclusion that Ambedkar turned to Buddhism as a path of liberation due to its doctrines of equality, liberty, and fraternity for his untouchable people after his failure in politics.<sup>106</sup> Because of his conversion to Buddhism, millions of untouchable people have followed his example to become Buddhists, who are enjoying their life as the freemen in their Hindu country. Future research may need to determine how much these followers of Ambedkar enjoy their life or encounter difficulty as Buddhists, who comprise only a small percentage of population in a Hindu country.

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<sup>105</sup> Keer, 1. Ambedkar, regarded as the father of the Indian Constitution and liberator of the Depressed Classes in India, is one of the most remarkable men in Indian history. See Ajay Kumar Kothari, *World-Famous 101 Great Lives* (New Delhi, India: Pustak Mahal Publisher, 2006), 1: 73.

<sup>106</sup> Naik, 283. Ambedkar said that "I have derived my philosophy from religion of the Buddha in liberty, equality, and fraternity, not from political science."





# **MĀDHYAMIKA (MIDDLE PATH) PHILOSOPHY ON HUMANS AND ANDROCENTRISM**

**Mathew Varghese**

Androcentrism, placing males or a masculine perspective at the center of one's worldview, is a widespread and expanding social phenomenon in the world today. This philosophical outlook continues to spread in Asia and around the world with the exportation of modern technology as part and parcel to supposed western advanced civilization and intellectual superiority. But what is turning out to be its simplistic and naïve anthropocentric perspective is pushing human existence toward isolation and making survival increasingly difficult. With time, androcentrism has taken on the further task of defining for all us the ideal controlling male at the center of its worldview. Because the bifurcation and aggressive ethnocentrism basic to androcentrism can be identified as a prime cause of ever increasing human problems, it is necessary now to discuss more than the validity of this worldview and its ideal man. We must seek, instead, ways to stop it. In this context, Mādhyamika Buddhist Philosophy may be useful as a counter narrative. Mādhyamika is the Buddha's Middle Path, which informs us that coexistence and survive is in agreement with nature rather than a challenge to it as presented by scientific rationalism and the consequent logocentric perspectives behind androcentrism.

Androcentrism may have originated as a way to resist the fear that human kind is simply like any other species in the world. It positions humanity as a focus to help us survive in the diverse world. The instinctive attitude of any living species may be that nature supports its existence foremost and it is difficult to escape this notion. But following such a natural feeling and perpetuating identification with it also has implicit dangers. If a person or a community were to think that it belongs the chosen or superior group, it may claim undue responsibility for controlling the world around it. The extreme

expression of such a position may prevent one from considering other perspectives, trigger fear, or even make one go mad. Eventually the desire to control the world might lead to self-destruction and the destruction of others. On the other hand, the natural laws of the living world have always rejected all such extreme viewpoints, however simple their articulation, by advancing counter discourses. Those wrapped up in extreme positions often neglect to notice or acknowledge such counter discourses.

At the same time if a same person or community were to degrade the importance of being human with a view that we are just another species destined to live in this world, living and dying like any other, one may also face destruction. The simple anthropocentric conception may protect humans from the self-denying formulations of any antitheses. Therefore, when we look at human life, we may have to look at it differently and we may equate it with nature's authority on living beings. The conception as the chosen ones in a way helps us exist and survive with a kind of responsibility and respect for the authority of nature. Likewise, we should create an awareness about how nature shapes life in the world. The birth and existence of a living being are determined by various factors, not just one factor and as living beings we may have to accept those factors. On the contrary, our perspectives about life in the world are fashioned by a notion that since we are the chosen ones, we can manipulate nature for our benefit and with the incursions of ignorance and fear we began to challenge the authority of nature. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it is increasingly difficult for us to control the urge to challenge the authority of the nature. This form of androcentrism that we experience today may have originated from certain conditioned viewpoints originating in the modern period of history when human understanding of the world is based on the viewpoints formulated in a few countries, based on certain kinds of scientific methodologies. According to Immanuel Wallerstein, "But in which countries were such historians located? The overwhelming majority (probably 95 percent) is to be found in only five zones: France, Great Britain, the United States, and the various parts of what would later become Germany and Italy. So at first, the history that was written and taught was primarily the history of these five nations."<sup>1</sup> It is not just the history alone but all other branches of human knowledge disseminated from the parochially conditioned viewpoints of the modern Western Civilization. From this foundation, modern and contemporary scientific philosophy advances various extreme understandings of human existence in the world and promotes viewpoints that are in perpetual conflict with one another.

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<sup>1</sup> Immanuel Wallerstein, *World-Systems Analysis* (London: Duke University Press, 2004), 5.

## The Ways of Extreme Viewpoints

We can see that the idea of being chosen ones has dominated human life when we consider history, which we may also observe is the history of conflicts between the conception of androcentrism and its counter discourses. When people try to dominate with one extreme view, stating their authority and standing against its opposite, both thesis and antithesis normally fight against natural laws. Androcentric men, by taking such extreme views on every aspect of life, may gradually have distanced themselves from the limitations of being human. The projected advantages of following aggressive androcentrism soon become its biggest disadvantages, with another extreme aspect to filling the created vacuum. We are now in the resulting precarious situations in that counter discourses to the androcentric attitude are shooting up in the forms of environmental problems, failing resources, breakages in the social structure and family, poverty and suffering, and fear that a garden path towards self-destruction is opened up before us.

The process of creating viewpoints originates from the natural human ability to memorize the past and to live with intelligence. This ability may be the only inherent advantage that humans enjoy over other living beings, yet it makes us calculate, evaluate and analyze our own experiences into thought structures of various categories of units and sections. It also helps us manipulate the natural world based on those experiences exclusively for our own benefits. Note that prior to the modern period in history, humans used these abilities variously to survive together with other living beings and nature. Modern people began to learn more about their advantages and parochially enforced them aggressively to challenge the forces of nature. Now the situation is that all human efforts are solely focused on developing methods that could only challenge the forces of nature by disregarding the values that have helped them survive together with the existent world.

What are the real reasons for such self-destructive pursuance of extreme views? Are we easily drawn towards them? Why does the self-centered man measure everything from his own perspective while knowing well that he is not going to live forever? There are some hidden naïve conceptions behind these extreme views. The certainty of scientific philosophy in the modern period has created another mythical certainty. Humans may be able to achieve immortality with the help of science or at least they can extend their youth till the end of their life. With this, all other viewpoints from other civilizations on life and natural laws were considered to be antiquated and are parochially rejected as the views of the subaltern, the meek and the weak. It is presumed that the constantly evolving newer methods of science would help people manipulate and control those unseen forces of nature and humans could flex the natural laws according to their whims and fancies. Karl Jaspers (1883-1969) wrote about the root causes of presumptuous conceptions of the humans in the modern times:

In the West, as a sequel of the spread of Christianity, skepticism of another kind became possible. The idea of a transcendental creator, existing before, after, and apart from the world he had fashioned out of chaos, reduced that world to the level of a mere creature. The demons known to paganism vanished from the realm of nature and the world became a godless world. All that had been created was now the object of human cognition rethinking (as it were) God's thoughts. Protestant Christianity took the matter very seriously. The natural sciences, with their rationalism, mathematicization, and mechanization of the world, were closely akin to this form of Christianity. The great scientific investigators of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were pious Christians. But when, finally, advancing doubt made an end of God, the creator, there was left in being no more than the mechanical world-system recognized by the natural sciences – a world-system which would never have been so crudely denuded of spirit but for its previous degradation to the status of a creature.<sup>2</sup>

Since the scientific period with the Protestant Christian conception of a transcendent creator shields us from all forms of negative notions, because humans are the chosen ones, they are protected. Humans are the best creation and God has permitted them to use a set of understandable and simple natural laws that are given for them to learn and utilize. God shall forgive their mistakes like a caring grandfather to his extended family. The one who can learn them well may enforce them with authority over those who may not be as fortunate to have such advantages and abilities. The scientific philosophy of the West promoted the way of rationalism with the accuracy of mathematics, a mechanized form of a "living world," in which the scientifically literate Western man assumed the center stage.<sup>3</sup> Eventually they assumed the position as the most favored ones of the transcended God, but the imminence of God in this world is rejected. The god-grandfather prefers his able bodied and smart sons to control everything and he will protect them if they go wrong. Therefore, the widely accepted presumption today is that everything that is androgenic is androcentric, including the idea of feminism. Women hate being women but compete for the androcentric space, and strive hard to create such a space.

Now the androcentric man is more powered by the weapon of individualism and systematized scientific knowledge, and is trying everything possible to dominate the world. Various conceptions of existentialism demand him to follow aggressive individualism. He uses all clandestine methods to assert his own existence where he assumes a unique position. He is the only subject and the rest of the world are objects or objectified subjects. He now starts to measure the existence of everything else from the existential reality of himself. And he chooses knowledge based on its agreeability and disagreeability to him. That which is agreeable is accepted and that which is not agreeable is rejected with hate and contempt. Spiritually, he is aggressively androcentric and suppresses human values like compassion, love, concern, and care. He considers such

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<sup>2</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Man in the Modern Age* (New York: Anchor Books, 1957), 20.

<sup>3</sup> Wallerstein, 3, 59.

principles as reactionary to the set purpose of life, which is to achieve, dominate and enjoy. At the same time he intelligently uses those same natural human concerns to control those who he considers weaker.

He is everywhere. He is our political leader, the super economist, the scientist who gives us hope, the corporate leader, the CEO, the stock trader, the one who can bring in prosperity. The invincibility of his aggressive power is increasing with the growth of information technology and various other technologies. But at the same time, he is scared, panicked and very angry. And he is now spreading his fear and hate everywhere. The web that has been spun over the years has become worldwide. He may be looking for help from some quarter in the world because his confusion is so huge now and the scientific knowledge is of least help for him.

Androcentrism is an accepted worldview today. Everyone that is a part of a human community is submitted to its dictate in some way. The fear-stricken world is using all methods to understand the problem this has created, but no solution has yet been found. The methods used thus far are inefficient. It has not been possible to change the worldview created by androcentric men. Nor is it possible to change the minds of everyone who madly follows this ideology by furthering their fear through discourses on consequentialism and ethical decline. We have the androcentric man within us. We have created him through our dreams and expectations. Now those extreme viewpoints threaten to jump the limits the world can sustain. This androcentric personality, created out of the scientific musings of Western civilizations, is running amok without being able to see any hope for redemption. Whatever he does now soon faces its counter position with a vengeance.

## **The Concept of Human from a Buddhist Perspective**

The conception of human beings in Mādhyamika Buddhism is not difficult to understand if we could naturally view how things function around us. It is very different from a Western philosophical conception of man, and therefore to modern educated person it would be difficult to cognize well. For instance, once I asked a question with a child's curiosity to my mother, I asked her where is "mother Mary" whom we pray to every day. As a normal mother to the child she told me "She" is in heaven protecting us and giving us all we need. But to my enthusiastic further questioning on the location of heaven, she gave me a philosophical lesson: Mother Mary is in her (in my mother), in every woman in the world, and she is there in love, compassion and care. She protects us from all the enemies in the form of anger, hate, aggression, greed, etc., by staying deep inside of our heart just as the Mother Goddess in the nearby Hindu temple does. She is there within you (me). By worshiping her, I may enter into the world of compassion, love and care, because "She" is the embodiment of wisdom or insight. I later learned that the Buddhist concept of human beings is a teaching

about the imminent internal mechanism that protects our survival and existence in this world.

The Buddha lived in a world similar in many ways to that of contemporary times. The Brahmanical Vedic schools promoted extreme conceptions of subjectivity and taught a kind of the eternal existence of a human being with its unique conception of *ātman* and Brahman. On the other hand, other schools opposed the extreme position of subjectivity of the Brahmins. A group known as Samānās taught that the objective world is eternal, stating that a set of natural laws that are humanly understandable and verifiable supports everything in the world.<sup>4</sup> But in both cases adherents respected the authority of the natural laws and worshipped and meditated on them to get clarity and certainty. The Buddha opposed these two opposing philosophical views and the selective choosing their sources of the knowledge: the irrational pursuance of acceptable premises suitable for publishing their viewpoint while rejecting others as invalid and as only counter concepts. The Vedic tradition considered human body only as a carrier of the eternal soul that is eternal; and contrarily, the Samānās rejected the eternity of the soul and considered that the human being is a creation of the nature and natural laws. The Buddha found dangers in these two extreme views and logically argued that following any of the extreme views would damage the natural prospect of human existence in the world as it pushes him to face various instances of suffering.

The Samānās generally had the opinion that the Brahmanical views are inconsistent and should be opposed. Therefore they criticized the fundamental premises of their philosophy and the Vedic texts. They might be the first philosophical school that had accentuated counter discoursing and active critiquing. They criticized the conception of an eternal soul, the idea of karma (action), the concept of knowledge, etc., which are the foundational principles of the Brahmanical thought. The non-Vedic schools, including Buddhism and Jainism, actively criticized the Brahmanical views on “this worldly life” for considering it as a passing phase on the progress of the soul towards finding its eternal life. In other words, the non-Vedic schools rejected the idea of accepting “this worldly life” only as a temporary phase for improving the soul’s chances to attain eternal life, which was being promoted by the Brahmanical schools. Therefore, the Samānās promoted a view that the human life is only this worldly. There is nothing beyond this world. One of their schools is known as Lokāyata (believe only in the natural laws of the world) or Caruvaka (sweet speakers), whose teachings were attractive to the common masses. The contemporary conception of “man” is comparable to the conception of “man” discoursed on the basis of the views by Caruvaka-Lokāyata. Though many schools opposed the Brahmanical views (63 of them according to the Buddhists texts),<sup>5</sup> we here

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<sup>4</sup> Mathew Varghese, *Exploring the Structure of Emptiness* (New Delhi: Sanctum Books, 2011), 59.

<sup>5</sup> Maurice Walshe, ed., *Dīgha Nikāya* (Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society, 1995), 69.

review the typical view of Caruvaka-Lokāyata. Buddhists had the opinion that the views of materialists were more damaging than the notion of eternal subjectivity based on spiritual doctrines of the Vedic schools.<sup>6</sup> Because the Vedic schools accepted the use action (karma) and knowledge to purify the soul, the Buddha found that their views on human actions in life and on the acceptance of knowledge as the nature of eternity were indeed respectable views.

At the same time, the Buddha identified that both Brahmins and Lokāyatas used dialectically divergent metaphysical doctrines to advance their positions. The logic and epistemology they followed were meant only to substantiate those viewpoints. According to the Buddha, as far as this worldly life is concerned, holding on to either of these views can only bring or perpetuate sufferings. The adherence to such metaphysical principles caused them to seek solutions to problems based only on those viewpoints. The Buddha, on the other hand, found that holding on to such viewpoints was not actually helping people solve life's problems, but enhancing them. He also identified suffering as a natural part of life and therefore based his philosophical investigations on the nature of and reasons for sufferings. Suffering is the most common facet of human life, it is what most bothers people. The four noble truths should be taken as the preamble of Buddhist philosophy: (1) the existence of suffering; (2) the accruing of suffering; (3) the stoppage of suffering; and (4) the ways to stop sufferings.<sup>7</sup> The realization of the Buddha is that human life is always confronted with suffering, how one can face suffering, and the way to achieve the goal of ending suffering. The nature of suffering is that suffering accrues and intensifies at a fast rate and it is difficult to remove completely. It forms a structure that soon eludes common sense understandings and rationalizations. The modern problems of androcentrism can be equated to such a structure and be interpreted from this perspective. We use rationalism as the basis of our understanding of the living world and androcentrism is based on scientific philosophy and reasoning, so common sense is integrated with scientific rationalism. We only follow a kind of reasoning as common sense reasoning which may be different from the reasoning of the nature.

### **The Dialectics of Sufferings**

Brahmins valued sufferings with conditions and sought to realize the pure nature of soul unattached to sufferings. They classified sufferings as illusions, but huge suffering that might destroy a person is rejected. They used the method of learning about the natural laws as a way to manage huge sufferings. On the other hand, the Lokāyatas focused on ways to resist and control suffering by learning about it using natural laws and researching it to find ways to control

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<sup>6</sup> Mathew Varghese, *Principles of Buddhist Tantra* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2008), 98.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.



and manipulate so that it could be an advantage to us in life. They sought to stop it with pleasure, the opposite of suffering. They also used the fear of suffering as a tool to control and manipulate others. Our discussion on androcentrism is based on such articulation of the human being. But though we have such ways to control suffering, following pleasure has a danger of increasing suffering. One may soon fall into delusion and fear of losing all possessions one might have accumulated. We create a shadow around us with all the materialistic things and other related identities, but losing them may push us into a state of voidness and sufferings. The god of Lokāyatas is natural laws. The meditated on the ways to learn more about it. The contemporary androcentric man depends on science and hopes that the method of science will help him find ways to know natural laws in order to control suffering.<sup>8</sup> The fear of voidness is evident with the followers of both the ancient Lokāyatas and the modern scientism.

The androcentric men of our times are armed with scientific-analytical knowledge about the natural laws, pride themselves as knowers of everything, consider themselves to be the chosen ones by nature, and have no remorse in exploiting and destroying the world without fear. They are very close to the sweet speeches and the viewpoints of the followers of the Caruvaka-Lokāyata, constantly threatened by fear, delusion and suffering. Yet unlike the world-views of today, the Lokāyatas feared the forces of nature and showed considerable respect towards it. The androcentric man lacks such considerations of nature or natural laws but considers himself to be the controller of natural laws, challenging the forces of nature by using the methodologies of science with a sense of pride and clarity.

The importance of Buddhist teachings, in this context, is that the Buddha has identified from his meditations that one can stop the accruing sufferings effectively, that there is a way to stop suffering. One can see that the discourses in Buddhist philosophy are meant to achieve the stoppage of sufferings. Most of the philosophical discourses for the last 2,500 years are based on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> aspects of the Noble Truths. The Buddha explained the reasons of sufferings are the internal urges of humans to reach to the extremes propelled by their desires and cravings. The Buddhist answer to the Caruvaka-Lokāyata idea of seeking pleasure can be understood by the view of a noted 2<sup>nd</sup> century Buddhist philosopher, Āryadeva: “A horse ride in the evening is an enjoyable activity that could cheer up a person providing him with pleasure and happiness, but if he continues to ride on the same horse without rest for days and nights, it would end up in total pain and suffering.”<sup>9</sup> Eating sweet food or drinking wine gives a lot of happiness and pleasure, but eating it too much would certainly end up in diabetes or obesity. Likewise, there are instances of sufferings in each and every aspect of life. At the same time one may manage the instances of sufferings in

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<sup>8</sup> Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya, *Lokāyata* (New Delhi: People’s Publishing House, 1959), 39.

<sup>9</sup> Karen Lang, *Āryadeva’s Catuḥśataka* (Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1986), 17.

many ways, if one understands them with an insightful mind. A rich person may think life in the slum may be full of suffering, but if one decides to live in a slum for a few days, the earlier visualized unthinkable situation may become rather agreeable.<sup>10</sup>

### Silence as the Paradigm of Dialectics

Buddhism as a philosophical system has understood that doing anything too much creates problems for the body and mind, and that even though we try to remove suffering by forsaking or forgetting it, the reasons for suffering remain to trouble us persistently. Typically people will try to avoid the obvious parts of suffering and latch on to a metaphysical system of thought to explain its causes. To the contrary, seeking that this too perpetuates suffering, the Buddha avoided arguing with other thinkers of his time about various metaphysical issues. This is known as the silence of the Buddha. This philosophical silence can be seen in his unwillingness to answer questions relating to eternalism and nihilism. We may follow this method of unique negation in his answers to the questions of Vacchagotta, a philosopher of another non-Vedic school:

Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is reborn. Then, Gotama he is not reborn; and Vaccha, it is not true to say that, he is not reborn. Then, Gotama, he is both born and not reborn. Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is both reborn and not reborn. Then, Gotama he is neither reborn nor reborn. Vaccha, it is not true to say that he is neither reborn nor not reborn.<sup>11</sup>

The Buddhist position on human life in the world follows a different method of analysis. The Buddha refused to accept the notion of an eternal soul and also the eternity of the material world that the opposing Lokāyata thinkers advocated. One may wonder what is the real position of the Buddhists on the concept of man. In fact like the Lokāyata materialists, Buddhists also would accept that there is no eternal subjectivity or soul, but at the same time, they refused to follow the Lokāyatas on accepting an eternally existing objectivity as the only reality and natural laws as the prime controller of everything. The Buddha to Ānanda something of this very important aspect of Buddhist philosophy.

If, Ānanda, when asked: “Is there a self?” I had replied to him, “There is a self”, then Ānanda, that would be aiding with the recluses and Brahmins who are eternalists. But if, Ānanda, when asked “Is there not a self?” I had replied that it

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<sup>10</sup> Varghese, 106.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4. I cited from the *Majjhima Nikāya*.

does not exist, that, Ānanda, would be aiding with those recluses and Brahmins who are annihilationists.<sup>12</sup>

The Buddhist position on this contentious question of rejecting a view but not accepting the contrary view can be explained from the example of a bracelet worn on hand. The bracelet on hand is directly observable, because it is closer to our eyes; it is directly experienced as it always touches our skin; and we can use all sense faculties to understand it, whichever perspectives we want to have. Moreover, there is a subtle common sense knowledge about it being a constant companion. To such a thing one needs not have to seek an external theory to know and understand. But, for most of our understanding about the phenomenal world, we attempt to use a theory by experts to understand a bracelet on hand. This aspect is philosophically explained by the noted Mādhyamika Buddhist philosophy Āryadeva in the text *Hastavālanāma-prakaraṇavṛtti*.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, to understand this position and the concept of man, we may have to look into the nature of subjectivity and objectivity. Nāgārjunian philosophy helps us understand this aspect better.

### **Nāgārjuna's Philosophical Understanding of Buddhist Dialectics**

Nāgārjuna gives penetrating philosophical interpretation about Buddhist dialectics and the conception of the Middle Path. He uses a method of discourse involving the introduction of the Buddhist conception of emptiness. The idea of subjectivity and that of objectivity are co-dependent on various elements of subjectivity and objectivity. He explains what is really meant by the no-self view in the Buddhist discourses. An original method of hermeneutics on five aggregates is introduced to understand this difficult issue. In this case, each element of these five aggregates is understood as (1) the ability to view visual objects; (2) the ability to perceive and generate conceptual understanding; (3) the individual dispositions, volitions, one's duties, religious beliefs, inheritance, etc.; (4) the ability to feel and experience; and (5) the ability to know with awareness and consciousness. Consciousness is the defining aspect that makes a human being distinct from other living beings, and the property of consciousness is the ability to acquire knowledge.

The segregation of these elements is there in the teachings of the Buddha on the contentious question of subjectivity in Buddhism, where the Buddha confuted the view of the Vedic schools on a singular entity self, and the views of the Lokāyatās giving undue existential value to the external world. He

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<sup>12</sup> Peter Della Santina, *Mādhyamika Schools in India* (Delhi: Motilal Benarsidas, 1986), 13.

<sup>13</sup> Varghese, 62.

understood the conception of subjectivity is a co-dependent formation of the five aggregates. The Buddha explained it in a discourse with Vacchagotta:

It is, Vaccha, because of not directly cognizing form, feelings, perception, volitional formulation, and consciousness, its origin, its cessation, and the way leading to its cessation that those various speculative views arise in the world: “The world is eternal”; and “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.” This, Vaccha, is the cause and reason why those various speculative views arise in the world: “The world is eternal”; “The world is not eternal”; “The world is finite”; “The world is infinite”; “The soul and body are same”; “The soul is one thing or the body is another”; “The Tathāgata exists after death”; “The Tathāgata does not exist after death”; “The Tathāgata both exists and does not exist after death”; or “The Tathāgata neither exists nor does not exist after death.”<sup>14</sup>

In this discourse the Buddha explains that we may not understand the real nature of these five elements and their activities in the subjective self of a human being and therefore assume it as eternally existing or not existing at all. In fact these entities are in a unique way co-dependent on one another to function as the self of a human being. As an after-effect of this co-dependent formulation the human being may use different methods to protect itself, in the Buddhist context it is protected by inculcating perfected knowledge, but getting to know the true nature of insight is a real philosophical problem. Contextually the Vedic schools eternalized the conception of self and integrated with an eternal subjectivity, Brahman. At the same time they forced themselves to reject objectivity and saw it as indefinable or illusion. However, Lokāyatās eternalized the objectivity and presumed that nature and natural laws are eternal and permanent and human beings are just creatures of nature.

It is possible to argue that discourses on Indian philosophy revolved around these two fundamental conceptions for several centuries and though the Buddhists introduced a different conception for explaining the existent world, they also eventually fell into the dialectical trap or had to have joined issue with those two philosophical viewpoints. It was the philosopher Nāgārjuna who conceptually explained the framework of co-dependent evolution of various elements of the five aggregates.<sup>15</sup>

Nāgārjuna pointed out that the Buddhist teaching on the five aggregates may create the same misconception of accepting or rejecting the “self” if each of the elements of existence is conceived as real entities; or it may be misunderstood that the Vedic conception of an eternal soul is reinterpreted using the five elements and its co-dependent formations. In the original Buddhist

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<sup>14</sup> *Samyutta Nikāya*, III, 33.

<sup>15</sup> Mathew Varghese, “Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) for Caring the Self in the Middle Path: Reinvestigating the Middle Path Philosophy of Nāgārjuna,” *Philosophy Study* 2.5 (2012): 347-361.

discourses, the purpose of introducing such a concept was to help people understand the true nature of their existence and to manage their suffering. However, in the interpretational and exegetic tradition of Buddhism (especially in the case of Abhidharma schools), the same problem of suffering, of following the conceptions of an eternal soul or the negation of it, becomes a matter of serious contention. When proposing his view, Nāgārjuna wanted to reintroduce the Buddhist idea that the human being is endowed with a special ability to search for true knowledge and instead of true knowledge, one may fall into the trap of ignorance or wrong knowledge. Such ignorance could trap a person in the depths of accruing sufferings. Based on the idea of knowledge the Buddhists introduced their philosophy of controlling suffering. This special ability to use knowledge makes a human being different from the other living beings but it is also his biggest weakness as he may fall into the trap of wrong knowledge. To address this problem, Nāgārjuna introduced the idea of emptiness into Buddhist philosophy. In order to explain the nature of subjectivity and “self,” a new interpretation of dependent co-arising was introduced and explained as the conceptual framework of emptiness. By introducing emptiness, Nāgārjuna removed the problem of counter concepts such as ignorance, and explained the nature of true knowledge. His arguments on the conception of emptiness are intellectually penetrating onto any of the critiques of the rival schools. They also can help us create a new paradigm for discussing our current difficulties including the problem of androcentrism.

Nāgārjuna said in the text *Lokātītastava* that most Buddhists intellectually challenge opponents in such a perfectly understandable way to them.<sup>16</sup> Because there is no existing soul signified beyond the realm of the five aggregates, their apparent existence may be similar to an illusion, a mirage, a celestial city, or a dream.<sup>17</sup> For example, by mirage is meant a state of mind that craves something, similar to the state of a person standing in the middle of a desert desiring water. Everyone is facing a real life situation. Unlike other schools of Buddhism or other Vedic or non-Vedic schools of Indian philosophy, that accept conditioned realism as a position, there is no substantial entity directly or implicitly working together with the apparent phenomenal world of existence. The manifested five aggregates are visualized as the subjective spirit. The conception of self from the view of the five aggregates is apparent to us because of the activity of strong feelings with inherent dispositional tendencies and ignorance, the opposite of knowledge, and working together to form the image of an eternal self.<sup>18</sup> When one understands the influence of the dispositional tendencies and feelings with adequate knowledge, the individual existence of each of the aggregates would be redundant. There is a dialectical relationship between knowledge and ignorance. When knowledge becomes clearer and reaches the level of wisdom, ignorance

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<sup>16</sup> Varghese, *Exploring the structure of Emptiness*, 309.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), 76.

becomes empty.<sup>19</sup> The individual existence of each element of the aggregates cannot be substantiated, as each exists in dependence on the other four.

As an example, philosophy today adopts various methods to interpret concepts and ideas.<sup>20</sup> “Concept” actually makes one see an object in the way it is presented before us by providing a framework. It is closely linked to feelings: the object of experience is perceived based on one’s feelings. Most importantly, “concept” is the property of subjectivity that forms experiences with phenomenal objects, transforming them into linguistic or symbolic representations. The analytical tradition of modern philosophy introduces a consistent discussion on this aspect of human cognition, especially with the introduction of “*concept script*” of Frege. The world of experience is expressible in the form of language and language shows a kind of intrinsic logical relationship which exists between objects of the world. The discourses in Western philosophy to a certain extent were born out of the conception of sense and reference where there is a consistent enquiry into the truth-value of the object of experience.<sup>21</sup> This aspect took analytical philosophy to play a significant role in shaping a worldview.

The Nāgārjunian attitude toward this aspect is very similar to what is introduced in analytical philosophy. However, he never founded his views from this aspect; instead, he guided us to look into the logical inconsistencies of “concept.” Like any other philosopher, he agreed that most theories originate from human understandings of the world, out of naming and explaining the intrinsic nature of the object of experience by naming it.<sup>22</sup> The nature of water is implicit in the word “water,” which otherwise explains what water can do. However, he dared to question the validity of the extreme understanding of such a view. His dialectics follows a unique formulation to review the nature of the relationship between a concept and the object it represents, by bringing in the issue of the objectivity of fire and the concept of “fire.” The argument here is that if the concept “fire” and the objectivity that it represents are same, our face should burn when we utter the word “fire.” It does not happen in the normal life, the word “fire” does not carry the characteristic features of the burning aspect of the fire. On the other hand, if we are to follow apophantic logic<sup>23</sup> and conclude that since the word “fire” has no intrinsic power to burn the face and conclude

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<sup>19</sup> Varghese, *Principles of Buddhist Tantra*, 133, 240. Insight is like the stretched string of a bow, from which an arrow can be shot to remove ignorance. Wisdom removes the accruing activity of wrong knowledge.

<sup>20</sup> Concept is the psychological aspect of perception which can be tentatively termed as idea or concept.

<sup>21</sup> Antony Kenny, “Gottlob Frege,” in Ted Honderich, ed., *The Philosophers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 207.

<sup>22</sup> Karl Jaspers, *Anaximander, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Plotinus, Lao-Tzu, Nāgārjuna* (London: A Harvest Book, 1974), 117.

<sup>23</sup> Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Investigations* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 21.

that it has no relevance in speaking about what fire can do with the word “fire,” no knowledge is possible about the existent world.<sup>24</sup>

Here we can see that there is a kind of dichotomy generated in our understanding of the phenomenal world of existence if we follow the bipolar logic of acceptance and rejection, either true or false. Normally theories are made based on a chosen truth. Nevertheless, it is difficult to say that the word “fire” will not denote the burning aspects of fire, but at the same time it is not possible to conclude that, just because the word “fire” would not burn our face, there is no significant value for the word “fire” to denote the burning aspects.<sup>25</sup>

This issue can further be exemplified with reference to various reasonings about the origin of objects. One such origination theory can be seen in the example of a seed and sprout. Ascertaining the existence value of a seed and sprout is one of the simplest forms that represent an origination theory, because it holds the view that the process of reasoning about an origination is like that of the sprout originated from its seed. However, what is the logic of this reasoning process? Is it from the seed that no longer exists or that still exists that the sprout originated? If this logical process concludes with the idea that the destroyed causes are the reason for the origination of a sprout, it must explain with the same logical process how the destroyed seed causes can be the reason for the sprout.<sup>26</sup> However, at the same time, it is not plausible to say that a sprout comes to existence like in a dream. Dream objects come into being until one wakes from sleep. The cause of the sprout’s origination is not from the destroyed causes: mainly the seed from which it comes forth. On the contrary, we should not conclude that the seed is not the cause of the sprout.<sup>27</sup> This dichotomy of identifying the reason of the sprout with a seed or with no seed is evident in almost all theories on origination and destruction. If the seed causes the sprout, where is it now? It disappears when the sprout comes into being; and if it were destroyed after the birth of the sprout, all is destroyed, seeds would cause sprouts: the seeds we eat or the seeds sowed on dry land would complicate the arguments on the ontology of sprout. A persistent argument on this unique relationship of seed and sprout may force us to accept the view that the origination of things is similar to dream objects, real life things are coming into being as if dream objects. But at the end of a dream, dream objects vanish and the mind (consciousness) transforms to another stage of existence. Nāgārjuna further philosophically concludes, “The process of origination is like that of an

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<sup>24</sup> Varghese, *Exploring the structure of Emptiness*, 310.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 313.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. There is a similar discussion introduced by Wittgenstein on explaining a system of impulses going out of the brain and correlating it with spoken or written thoughts. Here he argues that the origination of thought (sprout) and the seed (impulses of brain) have no intrinsic relation. See Noam Chomsky, *Rules and Representations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 49.

illusion.”<sup>28</sup> The word “illusion” has a special meaning in Mādhyamika: “illusion” can be an explanation, but illusion should be interpreted as the inherent inexplicable nature of phenomenal objects, that nothing in the phenomenal world is permanent. If we take the example of a magical illusion, we would believe that a magician is creating real phenomenal experiences and overlook that fact he is hiding certain obvious causes for presenting such an illusion. In fact, we like to watch such illusions. Illusion is used as a concept to show that the original reasons of origination are not understandable to human cognition, but neither can it be equated to a dream.<sup>29</sup> The original Buddhist discourses will not agree with the argument that things are originated like dream objects.<sup>30</sup>

We all know from the experiential world that every seed does not become a sprout. We eat some seeds, which is again an instance of the destroyed seeds, and none of those sprout and grow into plants. For a sprout to take birth, it needs to have dependent conditions like water, air, good earth and many of such adequate conditions. The realm of those dependent conditions is inexplicable. All those arguments dismiss the view that seed is not the most important cause of the sprout. Without a seed, there will not be a sprout. However, the theorists or philosophers who rationalize this apparent phenomenon into conceptual theories are making a big mistake of not seeing dependent conditions that guide a phenomenal happening in the world. That is the reason many theories can be made about the same situation. In the earlier example of “fire,” we have seen that this word signifies the burning, heating, and lighting properties, but at the same time, the word has no intrinsic power to burn the mouth when it is uttered. The philosophers who interpreted the conception of five aggregates never understood that the thing a word represents has no “own being.” The entities of the world of experience have no intrinsic own being, but they are dependent on causes and conditions, which come in the realm of emptiness. The subjectivity of a human being is insubstantial and functions based on the principles of dependent co-arising. Therefore, the “self” of a person is the dependent co-evolution of the five aggregates.<sup>31</sup> This co-dependent evolution functions in a very delicate way and may confuse a person if s/he watches them only in the perspective of natural laws. Therefore, instead of imbibing the natural laws, one needs to develop deep insight into the “consciousness faculty” to resist all the confusions. In fact, knowledge is the property of the “consciousness faculty,” though it may be shadowed by ignorance. Through learning and practices, one

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<sup>28</sup> In the Mādhyamika context, illusion is different from dream. Illusion is like an illustrative tool.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 51. Thus through the examples of illusion, etc., you the great physician have explained clearly the actual nature of the phenomena which is a cure for all viewpoints (philosophical thoughts on the nature of phenomena).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., v.18.

<sup>31</sup> Mathew Varghese, “Emptiness (*Śūnyatā*) for - Caring the Self - in the Middle Path: Reinvestigating the Middle Path Philosophy of Nāgārjuna,” 347-361.



can achieve perfection of knowledge and may live comfortably with the “living world.”

According to this view, the individualism and self-centered attitude of the androcentric man are unsustainable because they violate the principles of co-dependent evolution of entities of one’s phenomenal experience, and mostly the androcentric man is driven by ignorance, considering ignorance to be true knowledge. The self that we consider as having an own being and self-nature is actually functioning in the realm of dependence and depending on other selves. The highly valued own being and self-nature of not just subjectivity but also objectivity are transitory and temporary. The Nāgārjunian conception of the object is an important aspect for our discussion.

### **Human Personality and the Object**

The aspect that leads a human being to feel superior in comparison to other beings in the living world also makes one learn the natural laws, to scientifically analyze and use them to one’s advantage. It makes a person feel superior to other living beings and even to nature. It is a misconception. In our discussion on subjectivity, the self of a person can interact with forms of objects with the support of form faculty. As we know, humans cannot perceive microscopic objects or high frequency sounds that are available around us, we have serious limitations in perceiving world around. Nevertheless, we make analytical theories based on direct experience of objects and presume that we have complete knowledge of everything. We construct linguistic expressions with regard to the ontology of the objects based on “own being” of the objects by overlooking our limitations. The Mādhyamika Buddhists have a different view on the question of ontology, and to explain ontology fully, they use a fourfold logical analytical method. In this method, a phenomenon is analyzed using four levels of analysis instead of the two in Aristotelian logic and scientific philosophy. In this method, a proposition, statement, or fact relating the existence of the phenomenal experience of the world is analyzed using four premises that have been applied for learning about the existence of a thing (or proposition). This is a method in the classical Indian philosophy even at the time of Buddha.<sup>32</sup> Theorists normally use two, sometimes three. However, the fourth premise has a unique philosophical value and significance. The importance of this method of analysis is that if a statement or proposition is not consistent in one premise, it would not naturally move into the opposite premise, based on apagogic proof as in the case of twofold logical system.<sup>33</sup> For example, a

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<sup>32</sup> Mathew Varghese, “Sañjaya Bellatthiputta’s technique of ‘denials and deny denials’: An original critique on knowledge and judgment,” in *International Journal of Philosophy* 36 (January, 2007): 52.

<sup>33</sup> T. R. V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (New Delhi: HarperColins, 1955), 131.

critique on capitalism may not end in unconditionally accepting extreme socialism but may allow one to enquire into all forms of political administrative systems including tyrannical authoritarianism and present a very wider picture of the problem. In order to achieve this, valid methods of analysis are needed to understand propositions and statements. In the case of twofold system, we are forced to accept one as true and the other as untrue. The thought only can swing between the either/or situations. In the case of fourfold system: the proposition and its opposite together (both P and  $\sim$ P), neither the proposition nor the opposite (neither P nor  $\sim$ P). The fourfold system can be symbolically represented as, (P,  $\sim$ P, both P and  $\sim$ P, neither P nor  $\sim$ P).<sup>34</sup> The last possibility, (neither P nor  $\sim$ P) would entail another proposition for furthering the analysis.<sup>35</sup> The critique on capitalism may explore the possibility of enquiring with Gandhism (Q); then it can explore empire-ism (R); then cannibalism (S), and so on. Another important aspect of this analysis is that if the proposition is consistent in anyone of the premises, the analytical method never passes on to the other alternative. The truth-value is discerned from the consistent premise. On the ontology of experienced phenomena, Nāgārjuna expressed his view in these words: “You have said that the phenomena are beyond the realm of the four categories of existence. They cannot be known even with the help of deep consciousness. Then how can they come within the fold of words?”<sup>36</sup>

The Mādhyaṃika Buddhists do not have the problem of choosing from the either/or situations: Pepsi or Coke, right or wrong, friend or enemy, freedom or bondage, communism or capitalism; yet s/he would desist from making a judgment that Coke is the best drink in the world; however he may have an opinion on Coke because it makes him happy. At the same time, he would continue to look at other kinds of drinks people may prefer around the world and try to understand the dependent conditions on which he might have made a judgment. The two prong logical analysis methods never helps one continue the investigation. It would be difficult to fix one’s views that Coke is something everyone should drink everywhere. Alternatively, people everywhere in the world should follow democracy and democratic values; otherwise, they may move towards communism. However, when the analytical process progresses

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<sup>34</sup> K. N. Jayathilleke, *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge* (Delhi: George Allen and Unwin, 1963), 136.

<sup>35</sup> The meaning of the word consciousness is difficult to translate into English. It can be a sense of deep awareness and which is distributed to all aspects of sense perception such as eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, touch-consciousness, etc. It is one part of the aggregates and also a part of the dependent origination. The fourfold logical formulation that is a part of classical Indian philosophy is a unique way of describing the phenomenal world of existence.

See Karen Lang, chapter XIV. Differing to Western logic, here excluded middle and double negation is added in the fourfold negation of the Mādhyaṃikas. See Tom J. F. Tillemans, *Materials for the Study of Āryadeva, Candrakīrti and Dharmapala* (Vienna: Arbeitskreis Für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität Wien, 1990), 75.

<sup>36</sup> Varghese, *Exploring the Structure of Emptiness*, 328.

into fourfold analysis, it would enhance the realm of understanding like the expanse of space. One may find reasoning in Tribalism, Gandhism, etc. The fourfold method, instead of true objects, accepts only the mental phenomenon. We can understand this method with the example of the rope and snake. One mistakes a rope for a snake. One perceives the rope as a rope with the help of one's senses and full awareness. One can consider it as the perception of a true object; one perceives the earlier perceived snake as a wrong perception; and at the same time, one may also conceive it as a rope and a snake because of confusion. For example, with inadequate knowledge about a rope, one may perceive the object as both a rope and a snake. The object as neither a rope nor a snake, for example, it could be an iron rod. Beyond these four possibilities, we cannot define the conception of an object. In the case of scientific analysis and scientific philosophy, the understanding of objects of the phenomenal world should be either true or false as envisioned in the *apophantic logos*.<sup>37</sup> They reject the possibility for concluding a situation where a thing can be true and false at the same time, or the possibility of excluded middle and double negation. To avoid this, the scientific method is used to authorize original methods of research where they can use mathematics to make a conclusive true judgment. In addition, thereby, they create a new authorized standard on the functioning of natural laws. Scientific theories use such innumerable constants.

The cognized "rope" on closer examination reveals itself as a bunch of fiber; and the fiber when examined further through an electronic microscope would reveal itself as an entity totally different from what was originally been conceived as snake. The present understanding of an object ends with the conception of "rope." The scientific philosophers and the scientists go mad when they have to define the nature of sub-atomic particles that constitute the object "rope." They conveniently avoid explaining such situations but may consider them as the next challenge that is to be accomplished. However, the philosophy of the Middle Path is well equipped to explain the nature of all the phenomenal experience with the support of emptiness and could explain us without any ambiguous suggestions, the dependent conditions in which all these objects from snake to sub-atomic particles exist.<sup>38</sup>

### **Mirage, Soup Bubble and Iron Rod**

With the help of some of the examples from the phenomenal experience, it is possible to explain the Mādhyamika view on the objects of the world. The first one we examine is an illusory object like a mirage; the second one is a momentary object like a soap bubble; and the third one is a utility object like

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<sup>37</sup> Gadamer, 120. In the Aristotelian sense the totality of logic is on the concept of the proposition, *the apophansis*, that is the assertion of a judgment. The truth or falsehood of assertions is what is dealt by Aristotle in his logic.

<sup>38</sup> Varghese, 180.

“iron-rod.” According to Mādhyaṃikas, all these objects are of the same category as all are in actuality essenceless. The ontological existence of each of them is equally uncertain. The mirage is real to a person who stands in the middle of a desert and is thirsty and tired, but it will soon become unreal when he gets into an air-conditioned coach at the same place and time in the same desert. A soap bubble comes to reality for a few moments and by itself quickly turns as unreal. An “iron rod” is the most usable object that can be made into various forms of daily utility objects, from weapons to kitchen knives. However, when we look at it through an electronic microscope, the same rod or the objects made out of it would turn out to be empty of any of the qualities of “iron rod,” equally essenceless like other objects. Its objectivity turns in to unreality.<sup>39</sup> It is possible to conclude that each of the objects of the world is essenceless of its own being. However, we normally take the view of mirage from a person walking in the desert but we get a different picture when it is viewed from an air-conditioned coach; and the view of the one who uses the knife, not the one who watch it through the electronic microscope. Most of our theories are based on such partial views. On the contrary, the Mādhyaṃika view says that there is no object in the world that is consistent within the realm of the fourfold logical analytical method. In fact, they say that the objects are like things created by a magician, and that the phenomena are beyond the limit of the fourfold logical understanding, and they are awkwardly formulated.<sup>40</sup> The process of this understanding follows a negative method of argumentation: symbolically it is represented as (1) – (p) ; (2) – (not p) ; (3) – (p. not p) ; (4) – (not (p. not p)); and (5) – (1.2.3.4).<sup>41</sup> The Mādhyaṃika method of arriving at the conception of emptiness is only through negation of what is construed as real. Negation is not meant to create confusion in the mind of a person. Nāgārjuna aptly uses negation to understand the conception of dependent co-arising because all the co-dependent adjuncts function in a particular phase in the realm of emptiness to make a phenomenal experience possible.<sup>42</sup> In other words, it could be explained as various entities co-dependent to form an experience possible, which is explained as emptiness; and when apprehending everything with this kind of insightful understanding, one may understand and move in the Middle Path.<sup>43</sup>

We now are nearing an understanding of the concept of people and their role in the world. In our discussion, we found that human beings can be distinguished by their ability to memorize and analyze information about life and that they could find a better place in the world of existence. The ability of consciousness is the main foundation on which Buddhist philosophy constructs its viewpoints. In the perspective of the Mādhyaṃika Buddhists, one could get

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 198, 331.

<sup>41</sup> Jayathilleke, 138.

<sup>42</sup> Varghese, 332.

<sup>43</sup> J. W. de Jong, ed., *Nāgārjuna's Mūlamādhyaṃika kārika*, v 24-18 (Chennai: The Adayar Library and Research Center, 1977), 35.

perfection of knowledge, insight, and wisdom when knowledge is reflected with the other adjuncts of the self and the experiences of the phenomenal world. The knowledge one conceives from phenomenal experience is co-dependent on the other elements in one's self; but when one realizes the extension of this co-dependence, the self achieves an insightful awareness about everything in the living world. The essence of all Buddhist spiritual practices is to achieve such a stage of awareness. It is possible only if we imbibe a method of negation in our mind to learn about the co-dependent evolution of each phenomenon in the dominion of subjectivity where it functions in the realm of emptiness. The conceptions of emptiness and insight are intrinsically connected. Therefore, the teachings on co-dependence are important for us to know the Middle Path philosophy. The androcentric man of today ignores the conception of co-dependent evolution that he needs to have when dealing with the world of existence. The modern Western scientific philosophy doctrines, theories and concepts enable him to neglect all those aspects of his co-dependent existence with his family, community, nature, etc. He is now hugely androcentric, where the feminine values are ignored as reactionary when pursuing the limitless opportunities that are to be exploited and enjoyed! In the classical philosophy and religion such co-dependence was highly revered and considered as the realm of God.

My mother's teaching was correct that the conception of insight is of feminine nature in Buddhist religion elaborately explained in the Buddhist Tantric principles. Many of the goddesses in the Buddhist pantheon are the essentialized conception of deep insight and emptiness. Therefore, any conception of the divine mother is seen in this view: Madonna, Tāra, Kāli, Hidimbi, or any other form of feminine deity as an embodiment of the insight, it is aptly called as *Prajñāpāramitā Devi*. It is an embodiment of wisdom and its nature is compassion, love, affection, and wisdom. At the same time, she is aggressive and destructive against ignorance and sloth like many of the goddesses depicted in temples and pictures. She appears with a fearsome face and has weapons, yet she is kind to one who respects the world of existence and follows wisdom in dealing with the existent world. She appears and disappears like the soap bubble; changes over a desert-like situation to one that is comfortable and acceptable. She reigns in the mind of a sentient being in the form of awakened perfect consciousness.<sup>44</sup> As in the legendary narrative of mother goddess, she takes the shape of the mother with invincible wisdom that would remove all form of ignorance, often depicted as a male deity. After killing (removing) the causes of ignorance, the Goddess has an abundance of compassion. To the one who suffers, she takes the form of a loving mother. However, into the mind filled with ignorance, wisdom may not enter. One would suffer from ignorance-ridden knowledge and with aggression the androcentric man is forced to suffer more.

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<sup>44</sup> Varghese, *Principles of Buddhist Tantra*, 131.

Fundamental discussions on the existence of humans in the world took place almost 2,000 years ago. The world population was figured just 3% of what we are today by certain studies. It is now seven billions. However, these philosophical ideas on humans and the relationship with the world could challenge the androcentric view of the modern scientific philosophers as now their views have reached its pinnacle and the discourses are turning against it. For example, the methods such as huge exploitation of the resources left with environmental destruction and resource scarcity. Individualism has retarded human beings with fear and panic. Scientific methods of choosing and analyzing knowledge made partial views endangering everything. Androcentric values degraded the dignity of women in society and considered them as objects of pleasure and sex. In addition and most importantly, by rejecting wisdom and insightful awareness, what is considered acceptable knowledge is sourced only from scientifically acceptable knowledge. In the classical beliefs people searched for wisdom, but now for scientific knowledge so that one can take maximum advantage of situations to have more economic power and more actualized sexual strength to enjoy the pleasures of the world. The purpose of education is almost redefined in these lines today. One is taught to learn more scientific methods that could help give access to wealth and then to pleasures of life. One who may not have those abilities is destined to perish or live in want of the essentials of life. The philosophy of androcentrism is indeed reaching its pinnacle and a point of no return

As I am writing this, we now experience a pinnacle situation in the financial industry, especially in its forms of banking and investment economics. Economic activity is controlled not based on requirements but to support banking and investment activities. Banks are flooded with money, but no one is there to borrow and investors have no more opportunities to exploit wealth. Humans have no opportunity to find work and use knowledge and skills, so that one can turn the knowledge into wisdom. People today live in fear, irrespective of whether one is an investment banker or a shoe repairer. Nobody knows when s/he will lose the opportunity to work and become mentally dead. To such a person the Mādhyaṃika would say to stand upright and look at the world with the prism of wisdom, to see the dependent conditions that have created the monster of androcentrism. Mādhyaṃika helps one respect femininity and feminine values that are envisioned as the perfect comingling of wisdom and compassion, the true conception of God. Look at the plight of the economic thinkers. The magical spell of investment economics is just moving away and everyone is confused about what will come next. In the process of achieving perfect richness for the chosen ones, we have destroyed the mother earth, and made billions of people live in danger. A Mādhyaṃika philosopher would advise the person who is thus far confused to stand upright understanding that science is only one form of knowledge that could save humanity and it is dependent on conditions. When it is possible to look at those dependent conditions, it would be possible to see the compassionate face of the goddess and realize how a difficult situation is co-dependent and evolves into the realm

of compassion. Most importantly, one would learn to respect femininity and feminine values, not madly searching for an androcentric woman. After all, we all die one day, why can we not make death a peaceful experience like one falls into sleep naturally after a long day's work. I think people in the present world should make sure that death should be in the hands of the compassionate Mother.

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