

# Human Revolution *and* World Peace

*‘You must never seek any of Shakyamuni’s teachings or the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the universe outside yourself. Your mastery of the Buddhist teachings will not relieve you of mortal sufferings in the least unless you perceive the nature of your own life. If you seek enlightenment outside yourself, any discipline or good deed will be meaningless.’*

We tend to think that happiness is caused by something which comes from outside: something ‘makes’ us happy. The happiness we refer to in Buddhism is not dependent on outside events. Rather, true happiness comes about when we value our own Buddha nature. This requires a change from within, not without. This inner change is often referred to as ‘human revolution’ and is the objective of practising Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Our practice, in fact, has a two-fold aim. As well as the process of human revolution, we are working to establish *kosen-rufu*. This is often translated as world peace, but means much more than that. Literally, it is to ‘widely declare and spread’ the teachings of Buddhism. This aim goes far beyond the establishment of a world without war, although this is one aspect of it. *Kosen-rufu* means the widespread acceptance of Buddhist philosophy as the foundation of society.

The great Russian writer, Solzhenitsyn said:

The structure of the state is secondary to the spirit of human relations. Given human integrity, any honest system is acceptable, but given human rancour and selfishness, even the most sweeping of democracies will become unbearable. If the people themselves lack fairness and honesty, this will come to the surface under any system.<sup>1</sup>

This view perfectly accords with the Buddhist perception. Of course we can change the system or have an external revolution, but if the people in that system do not master themselves, the benefits of the change of system will be short-lived. This is why the inner, or human, revolution is so important.

Developments in science and technology have built a formidable body of knowledge which has led civilisation throughout the twentieth century. However, knowledge alone is incapable of leading us through periods of tumultuous and swift change such as we are now witnessing. We need wisdom:

Simply put, knowledge corresponds to the past; it is technology.

Wisdom is the future; it is philosophy. It is people's hearts that move the age. While knowledge may provide a useful point of reference, it cannot become a force to guide the future. By contrast, wisdom captivates people's hearts and has the power to open a new age.<sup>2</sup>

So how are we to gain this wisdom which is so desperately needed to bring about a peaceful and creative world? It is traditionally believed that wisdom comes from thought. However, Buddhism goes further, teaching that wisdom arises from caring: caring for the plight of other human beings, for the animal world and the future of our planet. To take a simple example, a mother who cares about her child naturally has the wisdom to know what to do when her baby is crying. If, however, she is overwrought, she may get angry or depressed. If so, she will not have the wisdom to deal with the problem and may well make it worse.

The source of the Buddha's wisdom is compassion. The Buddha's wisdom arises from and is at one with compassion. The Buddha's wisdom to perceive the nature of reality to the very core, arises from his strong and single-minded compassionate determination to save those who are suffering.<sup>3</sup>

The above quotation seems to be referring to one particular Buddha, but Nichiren Daishonin insists that everyone is a Buddha. We acknowledge this when we chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and take action to teach others about Buddhism. This is how we come to believe in our inherent wisdom: we experience it.

Buddhahood is a completely natural state. We feel calm and untroubled, concerned for the welfare of others and confident in our ability to take wise action. This kind of happiness does not depend on everything going well. It does not disappear when we encounter difficulties, because we understand the true nature of life. Being secure in our sense of oneness with the universe, and in the eternity of life, we are able to act with compassion and wisdom, with the utmost respect for all life. This enlightened life-condition brings an

abiding sense of happiness and well-being.

This change in individual lives will bring about a profound effect in society. Historian Arnold Toynbee perceived that the way people respond to difficulties in their environment is a measure of their civilisation. He said that if people have developed the inner resources to react to calamity with a refusal to be defeated, they are able to emerge from disaster with dignity and optimism.

Dr Toynbee believed that even in instances where 'knowledge' hesitates and shrinks back, 'hope' courageously steps forward, advancing dauntlessly and infusing life with eternal brilliance. Hope is strength. Hope is born of courage and wisdom; it is not born of knowledge alone. And faith creates the wisdom that gives rise to boundless and eternal hope.<sup>4</sup>

A book called *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad*<sup>5</sup>, tells the stories of people who endured a two-and-a-half year ordeal. Amazingly, the author discovered that what sustained the people more than anything were radio transmissions of poetry and music. These broadcasts were important, too, for those musicians, readers and poets who made the great effort to respond to those trapped without much food or heat. The radio broadcasts gave great hope and nourished the spirits both of those who received and those who gave.

For too long we have imagined that our own feelings and opinions are unreliable and unimportant. In many ways, we have handed our lives over to experts or professionals who, we think, know better than we do. There are now many signs that people in various fields are recognising the importance of the subjective self. This change of emphasis is not confined to alternative medicine or religion.

Physicists and biologists have discovered that the mind informs and guides the intricate interactions of every cell in the body. Scientists who previously thought that reality was purely physical have now discovered that consciousness plays a crucial role in

determining the physical self. It may be a long time yet before the prevailing scientific thinking, and therefore that of society, presents a balanced view of the interaction between consciousness and physical reality. However, as Buddhists, we establish this balance daily through our practice for ourselves and others.

Buddhist concepts clarify the true nature of life: the law of cause and effect; the interconnectedness of all life, sentient and insentient; equality, respect and the dignity of life. If society were to be based on these values, it would be a very different place. However, we do not have to wait for society to improve before establishing these values as the basis for our own lives. In fact, a healthy society depends on us doing this.

We can be happy and fulfilled amidst the turmoil and sufferings of our troubled times. As we each create this enlightened life-condition and influence our surroundings, the ripples spread outwards to create the kind of world we all want.

Establishing a peaceful society means overcoming prejudice and the desire to dominate others. However, we also have to overcome greed and short-term profit motives in order to sustain the natural environment. Legislation and political initiatives are not enough in themselves to establish this kind of world. The most important factor lies in the hearts of people.

For too long, it would seem, we have failed to acknowledge the vital role that the subjective self plays in our well-being, the wealth of positive, creative qualities within that we can nourish. We have also failed to acknowledge how a looked-for change in social and natural conditions depends on these resources.

Peace is not merely the absence of war; and peace is irrelevant if the planet is destroyed through pollution and waste of natural resources. The only certain way to achieve lasting peace and creative living is surely the human revolution, whereby each individual overcomes greed, hatred and narrow-mindedness, cultivating the treasures of the heart.

Real solutions to the environmental problems we face cannot be found on the political or economic level alone; we must dig down to grapple with the values that shape them on a deeper dimension. Buddhist teachings include an exquisite metaphor of the cosmic view of history, showing how all the phenomena of the universe interrelate, producing a perfect, delicate harmony. They also present the law of oneness of life and its environment (*esho funi*), which defines the dynamic pulsing of creative life that prevails between the subjective human life (*shoho*) and the objective environmental world (*eho*) that surrounds it. This law shares the same principle as expressed in the words of Spanish philosopher, Jose Ortega y Gasset: 'I am my environment. If that environment cannot be saved, I cannot be saved.' That is the reason the Soka Gakkai International has long aspired to achieve an 'environmental revolution' and a 'global revolution' through the medium of 'human revolution'.<sup>6</sup>

1 Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, *Rebuilding Russia: Reflections and Tentative Proposals*, p. 49.

2 Daisaku Ikeda, *Conversations and Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, Vol. 2, p. 184.

3 Daisaku Ikeda, *Conversations and Lectures on the Lotus Sutra*, Vol. 2, pp. 184-5.

4 Daisaku Ikeda, 'Spreading the Philosophy of Great Compassion throughout the World', printed in *SGI-UK Guidance Booklet*, Vol. 11, p. 171.

5 Harrison E. Salisbury, *The 900 Days: The Siege of Leningrad*.

6 Daisaku Ikeda, *Peace Proposal* 1997.