

BUDDHIST ETHICS

TEROR IN TOKYO'S SUBWAY

Besides having a special interest in Buddhism, Yasuo Hayashi, later dubbed the "Murder Machine" by the Japanese press, had an impeccable science background and quickly climbed to a top position in Aum Shintokyō's Ministry of Science and Technology. And on an early Monday morning, March 20, 1995, in the thick of Tokyo's commuter rush hour, he clearly proved his loyalty to Aum. With the sharpened tip of his umbrella, Hayashi neatly pierced through the rolled morning newspaper concealing his three packets of deadly liquid sarin nerve gas as his train rolled into the Akihabara station. He immediately disembarked, exited the underground subway, took an antidote for the poison, and escaped into a waiting car driven by another Aum member. At the same time, the same scenario played itself out at four other stations as Aum members, each on different trains, pierced their bags of sarin and escaped with their designated drivers.

The result. Total confusion and disaster. Passengers spilled out of subway cars choking, vomiting, and blinded. Thousands of commuters clawed their way to fresh air above ground and collapsed. Twelve victims died and over 5,500 were seriously injured. The Tokyo subway system acts as the circulatory system for the working Japanese and carries over 4 million passengers a day. If full-strength sarin had been used, the fatalities would have reached into the tens of thousands. And Japan was still reeling from the Great Hanshin earthquake that devastated the port city of Kobe and claimed over 6,000 lives two months earlier on January 17, 1995.

Aum members were soon the ultimate target: the subway point of the assailants' train. Parliament, the Ministries of quarters, and Emperor Akhita is also the deepest subway station. Hayashi's Japanese government, where he was Ishigaki Island, where he was those who died from the gas. "Aum Shintokyō" literally being the hallowed Sanskrit of the universe and depicting Shiva. When Aum was given over four thousand members, ship is well over a hundred visionary is the semi-blind Matsumoto. Matsumoto was sushiro on Japan's southern high at Kamikuishiki, carrying the attack. Matsumoto was the murders of twenty-five people to gas the subway along with Asahara's devotees are yohara, the "new Buddha." Matsumastermind behind the Tokyo of Asahara on his *butsumaru* been desperately searching for with a more active and practical, Buddhism had often been losing its meaning among the main convinced that their was a spiritual leader. Not a would provide the final answer Aum Shintokyō sees itself time, it borrows elements from yoga as well as Christian and

Aum members were soon linked to the attacks. Confessions revealed the ultimate target: the subway station at Kasumigaseki, the convergence point of the assailants' trains. The station is a short walk to the Japanese Parliament, the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs, the police headquarters, and Emperor Akihito's Imperial Palace. The Kasumigaseki station is also the deepest subway station in Japan and had been built as the government's own atomic shelter. The attack was aimed at paralyzing the Japanese government. Hayashi was eventually arrested in December 1996 on Ishigaki Island, where he was discovered carrying a token in memorial of those who died from the gas attack—a small Buddhist altar.¹

"Aum Shinrikyo" literally means "the true teachings of Aum," "Aum" being the hallowed Sanskrit mantra (Om) that represents the sacred sound of the universe and depicting the trine Hindu gods Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. When Aum was given official status as a religion in 1989, there were over four thousand members. Now, even after the gas attack, its membership is well over a hundred thousand. Aum's founder and self-proclaimed visionary is the semi-blind Shoko Asahara, whose real name is Chizuo Matsumoto. Matsumoto was born in 1955 in the small village of Yatsushiro on Japan's southernmost island of Kyushu. Nearly two months after the attack, Matsumoto was found in a crawl space less than three feet high at Kamikuishiki, carrying, not a Buddhist altar, but nearly one hundred thousand dollars in cash. He was arrested and eventually charged with the murders of twenty-five people—twelve deaths as a result of his order to gas the subway along with thirteen other related deaths.

Asahara's devotees are young, well-educated, and committed to Asahara, the "new Buddha." Mitsuhara Inaba now knows that Asahara was the mastermind behind the Tokyo nerve gas attacks. Yet he still keeps a photo of Asahara on his *butsudā*, or home altar. He and other members had been desperately searching for a new and transforming Buddhism, one with a more active and practical application for their lives. Among Japanese, Buddhism had often been associated with funerary rites and was thus losing its meaning among the younger generation. Countless followers remain convinced that their master's teachings have a firm footing in the Buddhist tradition. In the words of Inaba: "For me the Master [Asahara] was a spiritual leader. Not a prophet or anything, but the person who would provide the final answer to Buddhist teachings."²

Aum Shinrikyo sees itself as unmistakably Buddhist. At the same time, it borrows elements from other traditions like Hindu and Tibetan yoga as well as Christian and Jewish teachings and even smatterings of

cernible. *Dukkha* refers to suffering that is profoundly existential, of which death is a stark reminder.

SECOND SIGN: ANICCA

The *Buddhacarita* (*Deeds of the Buddha*) tells of young prince Siddhartha, who was born in 623 BCE in Lumbini, on the border of India and what is today Nepal. Siddhartha's father, ruler of the Sakya clan, wanted to shield his young son from the harsh realities of life and prohibited him from going beyond the palace walls. Nevertheless, young Siddhartha bribed his charioteer to take him outside the palace.

On their first journey, they encountered a very old man barely walking along the road. On another journey, they passed by a sick person being attended to by others. On their third journey, they passed by a funeral procession. On their fourth journey, they rode by laborers sweating and struggling while plowing the fields. These experiences left their imprint in young Siddhartha's heart and memory. They laid the groundwork for what he later referred to as the second sign of existence: *anicca*. *Anicca* means "impermanence" and refers to the fact that all of life, without exception, undergoes change. We age. We struggle to make ends meet. And we die. Nothing stays the same. Each moment rises and falls. Each moment in time therefore carries within itself life and death, being and nonbeing. Life is like a never-ending river.

THIRD SIGN: ANATMAN

The third sign of existence, *anatman* (*anatta* in Pali), literally means "no-self," or "no-soul." Here, the Buddha takes issue with the Hindu teaching regarding *atman*. As we recall, *atman* is the individual immortal soul or self in each of us. The all-important goal in Hinduism is to realize the truth of our identity as *atman*. For the Buddha, however, there is no empirical evidence to support the idea of an individual, private, independent soul or self. However, we all possess a true nature. Yet this true nature, our Buddha nature, is not some private entity. Buddhists refer to our true nature as *anatman*. This notion of *anatman* is the most challenging idea in Buddhist thought. We in the West are accustomed to think and speak in terms of an individual, private, and permanent entity we call "self." For Buddhists, what we think of as "self" is actually a continually changing pattern of

MAKING MORE SENSE OF NO-SELF

Interconnectedness We can situate *anatman* within the Buddhist teaching of dependent origination, called *pratityasamutpada*. What this means is that all things in existence are so intimately connected with each other that all things affect everything else. No events happen in isolation. Existence is an intricate web of mutual and symbiotic cause-and-effect. Once we cast a pebble into a calm lake, it sends out a ripple effect that reaches onto the shore. Yet the stone's ripple effect does not end with the shore. It continues to affect all aspects of the environment in subtle but meaningful ways. As we shall see in our final chapter, all this has profound implications for the environment. Our human actions produce their ripple effects upon our environment and upon all other sentient beings.

The innate interconnectedness of *pratityasamutpada* helps to explain why the idea of individualism and individual rights is foreign in Buddhist cultures. Interconnectedness emphasizes notions of duty and obligation rather than rights and thus subordinates the idea of individual autonomy, a key moral precept in the West that we have seen highlighted through Kant's discussion of the "person" as a moral agent. In this way, *pratityasamutpada* holds us accountable and duty-bound to all sentient beings.

Nirvana According to Buddhists, as long as we remain under the illusion of a separate, permanent self, we will experience countless rebirths. Enlightenment comes about when "I" awaken to the truth that *there is no "I."* This awakening is called *nirvana*, which literally means "extinguishing," as in extinguishing a flame. What is extinguished is the false sense of an individual, private, and permanent self-entity. If and when I experience *nirvana*, I am then liberated from the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. Here we see a radical difference from Hindu thought. For Hindus, the highest experience, *moksha*, entails an awakening to one's genuine self, *atman*. In contrast, for Buddhists, because there is no *atman*, the ultimate experience, *nirvana*, consists in awakening to the fact of the illusion of self.

When Shoko Asahara returned from a visit to India and Tibet in 1986, he publicly announced that he had experienced *nirvana* while meditating in Tibet. He then proceeded to engage in a full-fledged marketing campaign to tout his alleged *nirvana* experience. After visiting the Dalai Lama in the following year, he then claimed to be the new Buddha, not only for the salvation of Japan, but for the whole world. This is a far cry from the selflessness experienced in *nirvana*.

PART THREE: THE QUEST: OTHER TRADITIONS

■ THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The Four Noble Truths remain the pivotal teaching in Buddhism and provide an existential context for Buddhist ethics. Through these truths, the Buddha acts as our physician, first conveying to us his diagnosis of our human condition, and then offering us a way to be healed from our condition.

THE FIRST TRUTH: SUFFERING IS UNIVERSAL

The Buddha describes this first Truth of suffering (*dukkha*):

... this is the Noble Truth of Sorrow. Birth is Sorrow, age is sorrow, disease is sorrow, death is sorrow, contact with the unpleasant is sorrow, separation from the pleasant is sorrow, every wish unfulfilled is sorrow — in short all the five components of individuality are sorrow.⁵

Dukkha is ubiquitous. Consider the world scandal of poverty. The celebrated Thai activist and cofounder of the International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Sulak Sivaraksa, reminds us that of the more than forty thousand people who die each day from undernourishment and starvation, at least 75 percent of them are children.⁶

THE SECOND TRUTH: THE SOURCE OF SUFFERING LIES IN CRAVING

What is the cause of our suffering? The root cause of suffering is *tanha* (*trishna* in Sanskrit), which literally means "desire," "thirst," and "craving." "Craving" comes closer to the meaning of *tanha*, for craving represents the extreme manifestation of desire. Recall how Kisagotami literally clung to her dead baby boy. As the Buddha states,

this is the Noble Truth of the Arising of Sorrow. It arises from craving, which leads to rebirth, which brings delight and passion, and seeks pleasure now here, now there — the craving for sensual pleasure, the craving for continued life, the craving for power.⁷ [emphasis added]

The Buddha singles out three distinct objects of craving: sensual pleasure, continued life, and power. Underlying these three is an even deeper object

of our craving—ideas, which we regard as continuing to our birth to our death when we cling to an idea, that idea attached to an idea, that idea where Alice Melling and idea of "freedom for all in Shoko Asahara's active privilege, and material calling it "Miracle Pond" rains Asahara's own blood \$10,000. The buyer is supposed of the "the Master's" power, a "telepathy headset for \$1,000,000 a month" for the same brain wavelenght.

THE THIRD TRUTH: FROM SUFFERING

Note that the source of within us. We ourselves hope that would not exist our control. Of the five, uly of volition, or will, volition by its very nature our mental faculty that Ludwig van Beethoven Yet he managed to compose *Symphony*, relying on My mind can free me we can extricate ourselves from the ontological error as we sustain the illusion waking up to the truth pursue.

of our craving—ideas, whether it is an *idea* of what constitutes pleasure, *ideas* regarding continued life, or *ideas* about power and control. Since our minds give birth to our ideas, the driving force in all of this is mind. And when we cling to an idea, we become attached to it. When we become attached to an idea, that idea takes us over. We no longer *have* the idea. The idea *has us*. Witness the opening scene in our chapter on utilitarianism where Alice Melling and her crew of IRA terrorists are ensnared by the idea of “freedom for all Ireland, at any cost.”

Shoko Asahara's actions clearly demonstrated his craving for power, privilege, and material comforts. He charged outrageous fees for certain “religious aids” such as his bathwater for ¥100,000 (about \$1,000) per liter, calling it “Miracle Pond”! The sect also sold a tiny vial that allegedly contained Asahara's own blood for the incredible fee of ¥1,000,000, or about \$10,000. The buyer is supposed to drink the blood in order to acquire some of the “the Master's” powers. There is also the PSI, or Perfect Salvation Initiation, a “telepathy headgear” with all sorts of wiring that can be rented for ¥1,000,000 a month! The device supposedly enables the wearer to be on the same brain wavelength as “the Master.”⁸

THE THIRD TRUTH: WE CAN FREE OURSELVES FROM SUFFERING

Note that the source of suffering, our tendency to cling and to grasp, lies within us. We ourselves create our suffering. Thus, there is a window of hope that would not exist if the cause were external and therefore beyond our control. Of the five components we discussed earlier, the mental faculty of volition, or will, generates our tendency to crave or to cling. But volition by its very nature can be controlled. How? It is precisely *through* our mental faculty that we can exert some control over our mental faculty. Ludwig van Beethoven (1770–1827) was virtually stone-deaf by 1817. Yet he managed to compose masterpieces like his string quartets and *Ninth Symphony*, relying on his inner ear as well as sight in order to “hear.” My mind can free me from my mind. How is this possible? Only if we can extricate ourselves from the illusion of self. The key lies in uncovering the ontological error of an independent and permanent “I.” As long as we sustain the illusion of “I,” we will continue to crave. The key lies in waking up to the truth of *anatman*. Yet this is the most difficult course to pursue.

addition and pro-
these truths, the
mosis of our hu-
n our condition.

age is sorrow,
e unpleasant is
ery wish unful-
of individuality

erty. The cele-
work of Engaged
han forty thou-
d starvation, at

ffering is *tanha*
st,” and “crav-
r craving repre-
gotami literally

ises from crav-
nd passion, and
or sensual plea-
ower.” [empha-

sual pleasure,
n deeper object

Right Speech Speech indicates character. Right speech is speech that is harmonious. It avoids any negativity such as deceit, cursing, gossiping, and spreading rumors. Right speech ultimately means that we should speak in ways that alleviate suffering. The Buddha lays the groundwork for right speech in his *Discourse to Prince Abhaya* when he asks the prince to consider three fundamental questions regarding speech: Is it true? Is it gracious? Is it useful?¹⁰ According to the renowned German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), much of our speech consists of “idle talk.” His view comes close to what the Buddha was getting at. In his classic *Being and Time*, Heidegger states:

What is said-in-the-talk as such, spreads in wider circles and takes on an authoritative character. Things are so because one says so. Idle talk is constituted by just such gossiping and passing the word along — a process by which its initial lack of grounds to stand on becomes aggravated to complete groundlessness. . . . The groundlessness of idle talk is no obstacle to its becoming public; instead it encourages this. Idle talk is the possibility of understanding everything without previously making the thing one's own.¹¹

Right Conduct Right conduct helps to alleviate the suffering of all sentient creatures. It forbids any behavior that brings about unnecessary harm and thus prohibits injuring others, stealing, destroying property, living unchastely, self-debasement, and any other actions that spawn suffering. The *Majjhima-nikaya* describes how, while instructing his son Rahula, the Buddha uses the image of a mirror to show him the vital relationship between behavior and reflection:

What do you think about this, Rahula? What is the purpose of a mirror?

Its purpose is reflection, reverend sir.

Even so, Rahula, a deed is to be done with the body [only] after repeated reflection; a deed is to be done with speech . . . with the mind [only] after repeated reflection.¹²

Especially in light of the interconnectedness of all things, our actions in some way impacts upon all others, and we need to reflect upon this before we act.¹³

ity. If we diligently
dition of suffering
ows us the way, but
ese steps:

hey incorporate the
right effort, right
right speech, right

Three Signs and the
Buddhists call the

to a false sense of
d explains why we
dea that is for us an

position needed to
purity of intention.
ght requires having
is a sort of critical
about. It is an epis-
and underlying all
t, independent self,

Right Livelihood Right livelihood pertains to the life choices we make regarding our careers. First, does our career promote happiness or does it bring about suffering? Buddhists warn against becoming warriors or butchers. The preoccupation of Aum scientists with producing sarin nerve gas at their Kamikushiki complex unreservedly violates right livelihood. And in 1992, after purchasing a machine factory in Ishikawa Prefecture, Aum members made parts for AK-74 assault rifles. Second, does our career arouse unhealthy attachments? Do we choose careers that reinforce attachments? Expending energies to enhance our material comfort may mean denying or remaining ignorant of the bigger picture, the more global view that exposes worldwide famine, disease, and poverty.

Right Effort The mind can be a wild beast that enslaves us, or it can be our vehicle to attain our goal. It depends upon our volition or will. Volition can be our undoing, or it can be our lifeline. Right effort requires guarding the mind through volition against forces that distract and pull us away from our goal of liberation. We can rationalize to ourselves any action that we take, hence, the power of the mind. This capacity for self-vindication bares itself in the interior conflict between what we desire and what we value. Desires, temporary by nature, can be so powerful that they can drive us to do things we would not do under the rule of reason. To think that I am a passive tool of my mind is wrongheaded. Right effort means realizing our capacity to control our mind. It reclaims for us our proper compass so that we stay on the right track.

Right Mindfulness In the course of day-to-day activities, we generally take for granted our bodies and our minds. Are we aware of our posture, the way we walk, the way we sit, where our hands are, what we do with our bodies while we're doing it? The same can be said for mind. Our minds speed ahead with thoughts of work, deadlines, and meetings, but are we reflecting, or are we simply caught up in our thoughts? Right mindfulness requires that we be fully aware of both body and mind and demands that we keep both in balance. Although this balance is possible, it demands discipline, patience, and proper meditation, or *dhyana*. In Buddhist tradition, the practice of meditation is all-important especially because it seeks to sustain the unity of mind and body.¹⁴

Right Concentration It is through the mind that we can be free from the mind. When we are free from the mind, we reach a state called *samādhi*, the term for right concentration. This is a state of pure con-

consciousness, a condition of "that is reached when I have think of a natural difference and the object. This requires in the attainment of: and keep positive thought order to release our mind requires that we purge our naturally, we remove from our pure consciousness, pure and distract us. This is a state between subject and object or self.

THE MIDDLE WAY

Despite having a wife, a son Gautama felt a profound search. He journeyed for wandering Hindu ascetics, fasting, and to no avail. So journeyed on his own.

According to legend, w That same day, a maiden, for the gods under the tree to be a god incarnate. She dharttha discovered the for bodily strength and mental found insight. He realized through bodily deprivation indulgence, his former life these two extremes, and committed himself to staying meditated until he reached As the cornerstone of F live a life of balance. Here

consciousness, a condition of "neither-perception-nor-nonperception," a state that is reached when I have abolished the conventional dualistic tendency to think of a natural difference between the observer and the observed, the "I" and the object. This requires enduring practice and patience and is immensely difficult in our culture, which flourishes on the quick fix and immediate gratification. The Buddhist scholar Walpola Rahula outlines four steps in the attainment of *samādhi*.¹⁵ First, we purge all negative thoughts and keep positive thoughts. Second, we eliminate thoughts altogether in order to release our minds from the hold of intellect. The third step requires that we purge our minds of the feelings of joy and happiness. Finally, we remove from our minds *all* sensations so that we enter a state of pure consciousness, pure awareness, without any thoughts or sensations to distract us. This is a state of pure equanimity, the absence of any dualism between subject and object and of any notion of a distinct and separate "I" or self.

■ THE MIDDLE WAY

Despite having a wife, a son, and all the blessings of family life, Siddhartha Gautama felt a profound discontent in his heart that gnawed away at him so that he decided to leave his family and embark upon his own personal search. He journeyed for many months in the forest and joined a group of wandering Hindu ascetics. In order to attain *moksha*, or spiritual enlightenment, these ascetics practiced all sorts of bodily deprivation including fasting, and to no avail. Siddhartha eventually abandoned the group and journeyed on his own.

According to legend, weary and emaciated, he passed out under a tree. That same day, a maiden, who regularly made a habit of leaving offerings for the gods under the tree, came upon the sleeping figure and believed him to be a god incarnate. She left the food there for him. Upon waking up, Siddhartha discovered the food and, eating portions of it, slowly regained his bodily strength and mental concentration. He then experienced a most profound insight. He realized that the path to enlightenment cannot lie through bodily deprivation, the ascetic path, nor can it lie through bodily indulgence, his former lifestyle at home. The way to enlightenment avoids these two extremes, and this is the Middle Way to salvation. He then committed himself to staying under what is now known as the Bodhi tree, and meditated until he reached his enlightenment.

As the cornerstone of Buddhist ethics, the Middle Way requires that we live a life of balance. Here we see a strong likeness with Aristotle's view of

the choices we make in happiness or does it bring warriors or producing satin nerve its right livelihood. nikawa Prefecture, and, does our career that reinforce material comfort may be, the more global

es us, or it can be on or will. Volition requires guarding and pull us away es any action that or self-vindication and what we hat they can drive on. To think that I fort means realiz- ur proper compass

ties, we generally re of our posture, hat we do with our mind. Our minds ings, but are we ight mindfulness and demands that e, it demands dis- uddhist tradition, because it seeks to

can be free from ch a state called

ate of pure con-

virtue. Recall that for Aristotle, virtue avoids the extremes of excess and deficit. The Buddha knew firsthand that attachment to either extreme embodies an attachment to self, for the illusory self is the driving force behind both the desire for excess and the desire for deprivation. As the Buddha states, "All mortification is vain so long as self remains, so long as self continues to lust after either worldly or heavenly pleasures."¹⁶

In American culture, excess continues to be the norm in many ways, from fashion to food. A student in my class from the war-torn country of Bosnia expressed amazement at her American roommate's daily habit of showers. Such excess seduces us into mistaking what we *desire* with what we *really need*. And slipping into the other extreme of deficit is equally dangerous. Not only does bodily deprivation endanger health, but it also enslaves one in a prison of self-absorption. Consider our culture's obsession with beauty as thinness. The Buddhist text *Vinaya-pitaka* tells the story of the monk Sona, a lute player before he entered the monastery. Obsessed with seeking enlightenment, he engaged in self-deprivation and practiced walking meditation so strenuously that his feet bled. At one point, the Buddha addressed Sona:

"Now what do you think, when the strings of your lute became too tight, could you get the right tune, or was it fit to play?"
 "No indeed, Sir."
 "Likewise, when the strings became too slack, could you get the right tune or was it then fit to play?"
 "No indeed, Sir."
 "But when the strings were neither too tight nor too slack but were keyed to an even pitch, then did it give the right tune?"
 "Yes indeed, Sir."
 "Even so, Sona, too much zeal conduces to restlessness and too much slackness conduces to mental sloth." So saying, the Master admonished the young monk to strike a balance between these two extremes and develop an even tempo of spiritual equilibrium.¹⁷

The Buddha offers us a positive attitude toward material and physical comfort so long as it is in moderation. As he states in his Sermon at Benares, the key is moderation:

But to satisfy the necessities of life is not evil. To keep the body in good health is a duty, for otherwise we shall not be able to trim the

*lamp of wisdom, and keep our mind strong and clear. This is the middle path, O bhikkhus, that keeps aloof from both extremes.*¹⁸

The second-century Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's landmark work, *Madhyamika Karika* ("Fundamentals of the Middle Way"), is surely one of the most influential works in Buddhist philosophy.¹⁹ Here Nagarjuna gives another twist to the Middle Way by situating it within the context of the Buddhist idea of *sunyata*, or "emptiness." *Sunyata* essentially means that all things and all sentient beings are void of a permanent substance and therefore lack a permanent self-entity. At the same time, things and beings do exist. The Middle Way therefore avoids the extremes of materialism, which claims that only the material matters, and nihilism, which asserts that the material and physical count for nothing.

THE SUPREME VIRTUES AND MIDDLE WAY

Buddhists point to an inseparable link between insight and action, wisdom and morality. As the Buddha tells his disciple Ananda, "So you see, Ananda, good conduct gradually leads to the summit."²⁰ *Nirvana*, the annihilation of the illusion of self, can only be achieved by living virtuously. Along these lines, these four supreme virtues embody the prescription of the Middle Way:

- compassion, *karuna*
- lovingkindness, *metta*
- sympathetic joy, *mudita*
- impartiality, *upekkha*²¹

Compassion The Theravada ideal was to become an *arhat*, a person who achieves perfect insight into his or her true nature. Upon experiencing this nirvana, the *arhat* would be liberated from the wheel of birth, death, and rebirth. The *arhat* depicted the virtue of wisdom, or *prajna*, and the Theravada school considered wisdom as the highest virtue. In contrast, the Mahayana ideal was to become a *bodhisattva*, one who achieves nirvana yet decides to reenter the cycle of birth and death in order to help free others from suffering. The *bodhisattva* chooses to do so out of compassion for all sentient beings and therefore embodies both wisdom and compassion.

Eventually, all Buddhists have come to think of compassion as the consummate virtue. As the *bodhisattva* demonstrates, compassion not only

means the ability to *feel* the suffering of another, but also requires that we *commit ourselves to alleviating* the suffering of others. In our selection at the end of the chapter, the seventh-century Buddhist Shantideva says of the *bodhisattva*, "He will not lay down his arms of enlightenment because of the corrupt generations of men, nor does he waver in his resolution to save the world because of their wretched quarrels."²²

This commitment to alleviate suffering is ultimately what Buddhist ethics is all about. It requires us to detach ourselves from the illusion of permanence and self. The metaphysical principle of dependent origination supports this further by underscoring that the "other" is not really "other" but is also "myself." In this way, the suffering of the "other" is also "my" suffering.

This compassion represents the Middle Way. It avoids drawing a clear distinction between myself and the other so that I convince myself that "I" am not the "other." In such a way, I harden my heart to the experiences of the other. Compassion also avoids my identifying totally with the other so that I cannot effectively do anything to remedy the suffering.

Lovingkindness Lovingkindness requires cultivating the inner disposition to seek the well-being of all others. Though it is easier to be concerned about the well-being of those whom we love, those closest to us, Buddhists urge that we foster this same attitude toward *all* beings, even our enemies. This virtue illustrates the Middle Way. On the one hand, total identification with the other interferes with the perspective necessary to ascertain others' best interests. On the other hand, lovingkindness requires that we avoid indifference to the other, in which case all that matters to me is my own satisfaction. This is challenging in our culture where self-absorption is nearly raised to the level of a virtue.

Lovingkindness is synonymous with the Buddhist and Hindu principle of *ahimsa*, or nonviolence. Shoko Asahara, however, interpreted Buddhist teachings in convenient ways. For instance, the Tibetan Tantra Vajrayana Buddhist notion of *phoa* means that prayers to the dying person can bring about positive karma for the soul of that person and help raise that soul to a higher spiritual level. Asahara gave a perverse twist to this idea. He claimed that killing persons who are evil or who participate in evil systems would release them from their negative karma, and would bring about needed positive karma for their souls. Those who kill these "evil" persons would actually be performing a sort of "mercy killing."²³ At the same time, those who do the killing would bring upon themselves spiritual merit.

In 1989, parents of Aum members claimed that their adult children were being brainwashed into donating monies. They hired a young and energetic lawyer, Tsutsumi Sakamoto, who vigorously spoke out against the cult. Within weeks, he, his wife, and their year-old child were missing from their Yokohama apartment. Six years later, months after the nerve gas attack, their remains were found in makeshift graves far from Yokohama. Confessions by Aum members revealed that six men murdered the family under Asahara's orders. His twisted use of *pho* and his self-inflation completely contradicts the virtue of lovingkindness. It also runs counter to the virtue of sympathetic joy.

Sympathetic Joy Though it is easy to share in the happiness of those whom we love, can we share in the joy of strangers? Of enemies? This is what sympathetic joy requires. It assumes the deep ontological and meta-physical truth of interconnectedness. Sharing in another's happiness is a natural by-product of this interconnectedness since the so-called "other" is really "myself." *Pratityasamutpada* and *anatman* convey the Buddhist teaching that we are all of the same essence, and we all share the same Buddha nature.

As with the first two virtues, sympathetic joy represents the Middle Way. In the first place, it avoids indulging totally in the happiness of others, for this absorption is actually a disguised form of self-indulgence. In addition, it avoids the other extreme of indifference toward the happiness of another as well as resentment of another's good fortune.

Impartiality The *Visuddhimagga* tells of an encounter between bandits and four monks, or *bhikkus* (literally meaning "beggars").

Suppose a person is sitting in a place with a dear, a neutral, and a hostile person, himself being the fourth; then bandits come to him and say, "Venerable sir, give us a *bhikkhu*," and on being asked why, they answer "So that we may kill him and use the blood of his throat as an offering," then if that *bhikkhu* thinks "Let them take this one, or this one," he has not broken down the barriers. And also if he thinks "Let them take me but not these three," he has not broken down the barriers either. Why? Because he seeks the harm of him whom he wishes to be taken and seeks the welfare of the others only. But it is when he does not see a single one among the four people to be given to the bandits and he directs his mind impartially towards himself and towards those three people that he has broken down the barriers.²⁴

so requires that we
In our selection at
Shantideva says of
rightenment because
in his resolution to

ely what Buddhist
from the illusion of
endent origination
not really "other"
ther" is also "my"

ids drawing a clear
nce myself that "I"
the experiences of
y with the other so
ering.

the inner disposi-
ter to be concerned
st to us, Buddhists
even our enemies.
hand, total identi-
necessary to ascer-
dness requires that
hat matters to me
ulture where self-

and Hindu prin-
wever, interpreted
the Tibetan Tantra
to the dying person
son and help raise
verse twist to this
o participate in evil
a, and would bring
no kill these "evil"
ercy killing."²³ At
on themselves spir-

Impartiality means "breaking down the barriers." *Upekkha*, translated as "equanimity" and "neutrality," requires a "steady mind," one not swayed by any ties. This may well be the most difficult thing for us to achieve because we naturally tend to discern differences. Note the Middle Way here in which impartiality avoids the one extreme whereby we become so impartial that we have complete indifference toward all things and all creatures. It also avoids the other extreme of blatant prejudice. Buddhists were the most outspoken opponents of the Hindu caste system. The Buddha believed that this caste separation led to spiritual elitism. The *Brahman* caste, being the highest, may tend to view themselves as more spiritually advanced than the other castes. And the fifth caste, *panchamas*, or *harijans* ("children of God") as Mahatma Gandhi called them, continue to suffer intense discrimination in India.

Asahara at first proclaimed himself to be the new Buddha for Japan. In the late 1980s, he broadened his mission to include the whole world and added an apocalyptic flavor to his role. He viewed all nonbelievers, particularly America, much of Japan, rival Japanese religions, Jews, and Freemasons, as enemies of Aum. This divisive rhetoric provided the rationale for the cult's later terrorist actions. Instead of "breaking down the barriers," Asahara's teachings erected unbridgeable barricades, a far cry from the spirit of impartiality.

These virtues are relevant on a broader, political level. Burma's Aung San Suu Kyi, born in 1945, won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for her defense of human rights against Burma's military regime. In the spirit of Buddhist and Gandhi's teachings regarding nonviolent resistance against corrupt government, she endured hunger strikes and imprisonment. She was finally released in July 1995 after six years in detention. As we see in the selection "In Quest of Democracy," she reminds us that the principles of good government have their basis in Buddhist teachings, as outlined in the "Ten Duties of Kings." These duties embody the supreme virtues. Aung San Suu Kyi remains a living legacy of Buddhist social ethics as she continues in her struggle for human rights.

■ WEAKNESSES IN BUDDHIST ETHICS

Does Buddhism justify acts of violence? It is clearly the case that the Aum Shintokyō attack violates the principle of *ahimsa* and the prohibition of unnecessary harm. Yet, Buddhism's history is spotted with incidents where violence appeared to be sanctioned. In medieval Japan, there were territorial feuds among Buddhist temples and many Japanese Buddhists were

armed for defense. Kōfuku Buddhist monk assassinated Bandaranaike, on suppose Buddhist monks often led Lanka. Buddhists have def governments and rulers.²³ But where does Buddhism that are justified and those any form of violence. The even in cases of self-defense intentional killing. Yet if on intentional? And what protection? As we can see through exists in other traditions. Another weakness is rather naive in view of our criminatory. This is certain viewpoint. My visual perspective Tokyo campus is determined pond. My colleague, although distinct and different visual occupy my standpoint. My religious terrorism is my own me. It naturally differs from Along these same lines to all sentient creatures. Should we not love our natural and actually more moral weight?

Here is a third flaw.

Combined with previous

belief in our essential com

also generate complete s

identity could also lead to

A few days after the s

oratory and weapons hid

complex, they came upon

ated that they needed in

their worldly possessions.

armed for defense. Kofukuj! Temple's monk-warriors enabled the temple to acquire control over the region of Nara for hundreds of years. In 1959, a Buddhist monk assassinated the prime minister of Sri Lanka, S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike, on supposedly religious grounds. And armed uprisings by Buddhist monks often led to the overthrow of corrupt governments in Sri Lanka. Buddhists have defended these uprisings as actions against corrupt governments and rulers.²⁵

But where does Buddhism draw the line between those acts of violence that are justified and those that are not? Many Buddhists are opposed to any form of violence. The Dalai Lama, for one, prohibits the use of arms, even in cases of self-defense. And Buddhist teachings generally proscribe intentional killing. Yet if one kills in an act of self-defense, is the killing unintentional? And what precisely distinguishes necessary from "unnecessary harm"? As we can see throughout this work, this lack of precise delineation exists in other traditions as well.

Another weakness is that the Buddhist virtue of impartiality seems rather naive in view of our human nature. We humans are naturally discriminatory. This is certainly the case from a purely phenomenological viewpoint. My visual perspective of Sanshiro Pond on the University of Tokyo campus is determined by where I am standing in relationship to the pond. My colleague, although he stands next to me, will naturally have a distinct and different visual perspective, even if only slightly, since he cannot occupy my standpoint. My perspective and understanding regarding religious terrorism is my own because I am who I am and no one else can be me. It naturally differs from that of a militant member of Aum Shinrikyo. Along these same lines, Buddhists urge us to assign equal moral weight to all sentient creatures. Is this not counterintuitive and even unnatural? Should we not love our family and friends more so than strangers? Is it not natural and actually more humane to treat those closer to us with greater moral weight?

Here is a third flaw. According to Buddhists, there is no independent self. Combined with *pratiṣyasamutpada*, this notion helps to enhance the belief in our essential connectedness with each other. Yet, this same idea can also generate complete self-effacement. That is, stressing our collective identity could also lead to minimizing the importance of the individual. A few days after the sarin gas attack, police raided Aum's chemical laboratory and weapons hideout in Kamikuishiki. When they broke into the complex, they came upon at least fifty Aum members who were so emaciated that they needed medical treatment. These members had given up their worldly possessions to the cult, and they also gave up their health,

ekka, translated
mind," one not
thing for us to
Note the Middle
whereby we be-
ard all things and
t prejudice. Bud-
caste system. The
tual elitism. The
emselves as more
caste, *panchamas*,
ed them, continue

ddha for Japan. In
whole world and
nbelievers, partic-
ews, and Freema-
d the rationale for
own the barriers,"
far cry from the

el. Burma's Aung
n 1991 for her de-
e. In the spirit of
resistance against
imprisonment. She
tion. As we see in
that the principles
ngs, as outlined in
supreme virtues.
social ethics as she

case that the Aum
prohibition of un-
h incidents where
there were territo-
se Buddhists were

of our actions is now a reality that we ought not to cling to. Seriously pondering the idea of *anattā* impacts upon how we behave with each other and naturally sustains a more selfless way of being in the world with others. And the notion of *prāṭīyasamutpāda* enjoins us to treat others as ourselves and vice versa. All this engenders a more collective, communal vision of both who we in essence are and how we should behave with each other. Furthermore, it provides a sound basis for an ecological ethic. Herein lies a most valuable component in Buddhist ethics. The metaphysical groundwork of interdependence acts as a necessary corrective to our over-emphasis upon individualism. It reminds us that the moral community extends beyond self and carries us beyond the private sphere of family and friends. It compels us to think in terms of community and global accountability. And in stressing that all sentient creatures comprise our moral community, it is vitally relevant for a more ecological ethic.

■ NOTES

1. Haruki Murakami, *Underground: The Tokyo Gas Attack and the Japanese Psyche*, trans. Alfred Birnbaum and Philip Gabriel (New York: Vintage International, 2001, first published by Kodansha Ltd. as *Andagurawando* in 1997), pp. 144–45.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 284.
3. Note that this use of *dharma* is distinct from the Hindu term *dharma* in the last chapter where *dharma* refers to sound, moral conduct. Here, it refers to the Buddha's teachings. The text here uses the more common terms, even though some are in Pali and others are in Sanskrit.
4. There is much controversy in Japan regarding exorbitant rates of these rituals along with criticism that such temples are exploiting the parents' grief.
5. From Samyutta Nikaya, 5:421ff, in William Theodore de Bary, ed., *The Buddhist Tradition in India, China and Japan* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1969), p. 16.
6. Sulak Sivaraksa, *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, ed. Tom Ginsberg (Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press, 1992), p. 28.
7. From Samyutta Nikaya, in de Bary, p. 16.
8. Brackett, pp. 72–74.
9. See Anguttara Nikaya 4, 49, 1, in Hans Wolfgang Schumann, *Buddhism: An Outline of Its Teachings and Schools* (Wheaton, IL: Theosophical Publishing House, 1973), p. 69.

us away from the
 anybody this Middle
 man while striking
 seems that Buddhist
 the collective at the

When we get caught up
 Spanish philosopher
 no has redoubled his
 ethics fundamentally
 message is particu-
 tious forms of mili-
 tarian Hamas, the Jew-
 use of violence by an
 al worldview. In the
 Department listed
 s, more than half of
 vo, al-jihad, Hamas,
 may not view them-
 force to achieve their
 that led Aum Shin-
 on innocent victims.
 us against uncruti-

res the importance of
 through the notion of
 ht—insight into our
 ers on being who we
 a nature. It concerns
 ist ethics reminds us
 . Whereas an empha-
 ship, Buddhist ethics
 and is thereby deeply

even metaphysics and
 universe—as fleeing
 tion since the context

10. See the *Abhayarajakumara-sutta* and the discussion in David J. Kalupahana, *A History of Buddhist Philosophy: Continuities and Discontinuities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1992, pp. 50–52).
11. From Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), pp. 212–13.
12. From *Majjhima-nikaya* 1.415, in Kalupahana, p. 106.
13. Ibid.
14. One of the most important Buddhist meditative techniques is *vipassana*, which literally means “insight.” This technique cultivates complete awareness of four domains: bodhiness, feelings and sensations, ideas, and mind.
15. Walpola Rahula, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd ed. (New York: Grove Press, 1974), pp. 48–49.
16. From the Buddha’s Sermon at Benares, in Lucien Stryk, ed., *World of the Buddha: A Reader* (New York: Doubleday, Anchor Books, 1968), p. 50.
17. From the *Vinaya-pitaka*, in Stryk, pp. 211–12.
18. In Stryk, pp. 50–51.
19. He represents the Mahayana school of Buddhism, a school that resulted from a dispute within the early, more conservative school called Theravada. The Mahayana and the Theravada remain the two major Buddhist schools. The Mahayana school purports to be more faithful to the Buddha’s genuine teachings and gave itself the name “Mahayana,” which literally means “greater vehicle,” “vehicle” referring to the Buddha’s teachings. Mahayana labeled the original Theravada school “Hinayana,” meaning “small vehicle.” Nagarjuna was Mahayana’s most brilliant apologist.
20. In *Anguttara-nikaya*, V.2, cited in Gunapala Dharmasiri, *Fundamentals of Buddhist Ethics* (California: Golden Leaves, 1989), p. 22.
21. See the discussion in Dharmasiri, pp. 42ff.
22. From Shantideva’s *Compendium of Doctrine* (*Sikṣasamuccaya*), in de Bary, p. 84.
23. See Mark Juegensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 114.
24. From *Visuddhimagga*, 305–07, in Dharmasiri, p. 47.
25. See the discussion in Juegensmeyer, pp. 112–13.
26. See <http://web.nps.navy.mil/~library/igp/igpndx.htm>.

1. These six, generosity (*dāna*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*pañña*) developed to perfection. *Māra* means “to take to lead indivi- circumstances (*upāyukāṇḍa*); Much attention was concentrated on *jāpānamitā*), which was per named.

the desire for existence all beings are caught in and sin, from the round world from the forest of have resolved to save the . . . nor do I despair. Assure it all. I do not turn own body. . . . I take upon- ness or know the Order. karma . . . so that they ca- “All creatures are in re- . . . He does not lose his arms of enlightenment he waver in his resolution or by their sin or heresy, from bringing to fruition by rugged mountains, so rising from the four conti- Just as the rising sun, lightenment with the wis- must subdue Māra, with I who support them. . . . I who help them. The per- virtues of morality, patience of generosity is not in- true of generosity is not in- “Whatever all beings s and he resolves thus: supreme wisdom. He acts a will steed with courage The bodhisattva is lonely,

FROM COMPENDIUM OF DOCTRINE

SHANTIDEVA

THE SUFFERING SAVIOR

The bodhisattva is lonely, with no . . . companion, and he puts on the armor of supreme wisdom. He acts himself, and leaves nothing to others, working with a will steeled with courage and strength. He is strong in his own strength . . . and he resolves thus:

"Whatever all beings should obtain, I will help them to obtain. . . . The virtue of generosity is not my helper—I am the helper of generosity. Nor do the virtues of morality, patience, courage, meditation and wisdom help me—it is I who help them. The perfections of the bodhisattva do not support me—it is I who support them. I alone, standing in this round and adamantine world, must subdue Māra, with all his hosts and chariots, and develop supreme enlightenment with the wisdom of instantaneous insight!" . . .

Just as the rising sun, the child of the gods, is not stopped . . . by all the dust rising from the four continents of the earth . . . or by wreaths of smoke . . . or by rugged mountains, so the bodhisattva, the Great Being, . . . is not deterred from bringing to fruition the root of good, whether by the malice of others, . . . or by their sin or heresy, or by their agitation of mind. . . . He will not lay down his arms of enlightenment because of the corrupt generations of men, nor does he waver in his resolution to save the world because of their wretched quarrels. . . . He does not lose heart on account of their faults. . . .

"All creatures are in pain," he resolves, "all suffer from bad and hindering karma . . . so that they cannot see the Buddha or hear the Law of Righteousness or know the Order. . . . All that mass of pain and evil karma I take in my own body. . . . I take upon myself the burden of sorrow; I resolve to do so; I endure it all. I do not turn back or run away, I do not tremble. . . . I am not afraid to save them all. I must set them all free, I must save the whole world from the forest of birth, old age, disease, and rebirth, from misfortune and sin, from the round of birth and death, from the coils of heresy. . . . For all beings are caught in the net of craving, encompassed by ignorance, held by the desire for existence; they are doomed to destruction, shut in a cage of

1. These six, generosity (*dāna*), moral conduct (*śīla*), patience (*kṣānti*), courage or energy (*vīrya*), meditation (*dhyāna*) and wisdom (*prajñā*) are the *Paramitas*, or virtues of the bodhisattva, which he has developed to perfection. Many sources add four further perfections—"skill in knowing the right means" to take to lead individual beings to salvation according to their several characters and circumstances (*upāyākusālyā*), determination (*pramādhāna*), strength (*bala*), and knowledge (*jñāna*). Much attention was concentrated on these perfections, especially on the Perfection of Wisdom (*prajñāpāramitā*), which was personified as a goddess, and after which numerous Buddhist texts were named.

ess, 2000), p. 114.

uccaya), in de Bary,

ri, *Fundamentals of*

school that resulted
ol called Theravada.
Buddhist schools. The
dha's genuine teach-
means "greater ve-
ahayana labeled the
vehicle," Nagarjuna

1968), p. 50.

k, ed., *World of the*

(New York: Grove

and mind.

complete awareness

niques is *vipassana*,

Macquarrie and E.

and *Discontinuities*

in David J. Kalupa-

pain . . . ; they are ignorant, untrustworthy, full of doubts, always at logger-heads one with another, always prone to see evil; they cannot find a refuge in the ocean of existence; they are all on the edge of the gulf of destruction.

"I work to establish the kingdom of perfect wisdom for all beings. I care not at all for my own deliverance. I must save all beings from the torrent to rebirth with the raft of my omniscient mind. I must pull them back from the great precipice. I must free them from all misfortune, ferry them over the stream of rebirth.

"For I have taken upon myself, by my own will, the whole of the pain of all things living. Thus I dare try every abode of pain, in . . . every part of the universe, for I must not defraud the world of the root of good. I resolve to dwell in each state of misfortune through countless ages . . . for the salvation of all beings . . . for it is better that I alone suffer than that all beings sink to the worlds of misfortune. There I shall give myself into bondage, to redeem all the world from the forest of purgatory, from rebirth as beasts, from the realm of death. I shall bear all grief and pain in my own body, for the good of all things living. I venture to stand surely for all beings, speaking the truth, trustworthy, not breaking my word. I shall not forsake them. . . . I must so bring to fruition the root of goodness that all beings find the utmost joy, unheard of joy, the joy of omniscience. I must be their charioteer, I must be their leader, I must be their torchbearer, I must be their guide to safety. . . . I must not wait for the help of another, nor must I lose my resolution and leave my tasks to another. I must not turn back in my efforts to save all beings nor cease to use my pain. And I must not be satisfied with small successes."

[From *Sikṣāsamuccaya*, pp. 278–83]

THE LOST SON

A man parted from his father and went to another city; and he dwelt there many years. . . . The father grew rich and the son poor. While the son wandered in all directions [begging] in order to get food and clothes, the father moved to another land, where he lived in great luxury. . . . wealthy from business, money-lending, and trade. In course of time the son, wandering in search of his living through town and country, came to the city in which his father dwelled. Now the poor man's father . . . forever thought of the son whom he had lost . . . years ago, but he told no one of this, though he grieved inwardly, and thought: "I am old, and well advanced in years, and though I have great possessions I have no son. Alas that time should do its work upon me, and that all this wealth should perish unused! . . . It would be bliss indeed if my son might enjoy all my wealth!"

Then the poor man, in search of food and clothing, came to the rich man's home. And the rich man was sitting in great pomp at the gate of his house, surrounded by a large throng of attendants . . . on a splendid throne, with a foot-

stool inlaid with gold and silver, under a wide awning decked with pearls and flowers and adorned with hanging garlands of jewels; and he transacted business to the value of millions of gold pieces, all the while fanned by a fly-whisk. . . . When he saw him the poor man was terrified. . . . and the hair of his body stood on end, for he thought that he had happened on a king or on some high officer of state, and had no business there. "I must go," he thought, "to the poor quarter of the town, where I'll get food and clothing without trouble. If I stop here they'll seize me and set me to do forced labor, or some other disaster will befall me!" So he quickly ran away. . . .

But the rich man . . . recognized his son as soon as he saw him; and he was full of joy. . . . and thought: "This is wonderful! I have found him who shall enjoy my riches. He of whom I thought constantly has come back, now that I am old and full of years!" Then, longing for his son, he sent swift messengers, telling them to go and fetch him quickly. They ran at full speed and overtook him; the poor man trembled with fear, the hair of his body stood on end. . . . and he uttered a cry of distress and exclaimed: "I've done you no wrong!" But they dragged him along by force. . . . until . . . fearful that he would be killed or beaten, he fainted and fell on the ground. His father in dismay said to the men, "Don't drag him along in that way!" and, without saying more, he sprinkled his face with cold water—for though he knew that the poor man was his son, he realized that his estate was very humble, while his own was very high.

So the householder told no one that the poor man was his son. He ordered one of his servants to tell the poor man that he was free to go where he chose. . . . And the poor man was amazed [that he was allowed to go free], and he went off to the poor quarter of the town in search of food and clothing. Now in order to attract him back the rich man made use of the virtue of "skill in means." He called two men of low caste and of no great dignity and told them: "Go to that poor man . . . and hire him in your own names to do work in my house at double the normal daily wage; and if he asks what work he has to do tell him that he has to help clear away the refuse-dump." So these two men and the poor man cleared the refuse every day . . . in the house of the rich man, and lived in a straw hut nearby. . . . And the rich man saw through a window his son clearing refuse, and was again filled with compassion. So he came down, took off his wreath and jewels and rich clothes, put on dirty garments, covered his body with dust, and, taking a basket in his hand, went up to his son. And he greeted him at a distance and said, "Take this basket and clear away the dust at once!" By this means he managed to speak to his son. [And as time went on he spoke more often to him, and thus he gradually encouraged him. First he urged him to remain in his service and not take another job, offering him double wages, together with any small extras that he might require, such as the price of a cooking-pot . . . or food and clothes. Then he offered him his own cloak, if he should want it. . . . And at last he said: "You must be cheerful my good fellow, and think of me as a father. . . . for I'm older than you and you've

always at logger-
or find a refuge in
destruction.
I care not
torrent to rebirth
back from the great
over the stream of

he of the pain of all
ry part of the uni-
I resolve to dwell
the salvation of all
beings sink to the
e, to redeem all the
from the realm of
e good of all things
truth, trustworthy,
to bring to fruition
eard of joy, the joy
leader, I must be
st not wait for the
y tasks to another.
ase to use my pain.

and he dwelt there
While the son wan-
clothes, the father
wealthy from busi-
wandering in search
in which his father
of the son whom he
grieved inwardly,
though I have great
upon me, and that
s indeed if my son
ne to the rich man's
re of his house, sur-
throne, with a foot-

PART THREE: THE QUEST: OTHER TRADITIONS

done me good service in clearing away my refuse. As long as you've worked for me you've shown no roguery or guile. . . . I've not noticed one of the vices in you that I've noticed in my other servants! From now on you are like my own son to me!"

Thenceforward the householder called the poor man "son," and the latter felt towards the householder as a son feels towards his father. So the householder, full of longing and love for his son, employed him in clearing away refuse for twenty years. By the end of that time the poor man felt quite at home in the house, and came and went as he chose, though he still lived in the straw hut.

Then the householder fell ill, and felt that the hour of his death was near. So he said to the poor man: "Come, my dear man! I have great riches . . . and am very sick. I need someone upon whom I can bestow my wealth as a deposit, and you must accept it. From now on you are just as much its owner as I am, but you must not squander it." And the poor man accepted the rich man's wealth . . . but personally he cared nothing for it, and asked for no share of it, not even the price of a measure of flour. He still lived in the straw hut, and thought of himself as just as poor as before.

Thus the householder proved that his son was frugal, mature, and mentally developed, and that though he knew that he was now wealthy he still remembered his past poverty, and was still . . . humble and meek. . . . So he sent for the poor man again, presented him before a gathering of his relatives, and, in the presence of the king, his officers, and the people of town and country, he said: "Listen, gentlemen! This is my son, whom I begot. . . . To him I leave all my family revenues, and my private wealth he shall have as his own."

[From Saddharmapundarika, 4.101 ff.]

IN QUEST OF DEMOCRACY

AUNG SAN SUUKYI

Opponents of the movement for democracy in Burma have sought to undermine it by on the one hand casting aspersions on the competence of the people to judge what was best for the nation and on the other condemning the basic tenets of democracy as un-Burmese. There is nothing new in Third World governments seeking to justify and perpetuate authoritarian rule by denouncing liberal democratic principles as alien. By implication they claim for themselves the official and sole right to decide what does or does not conform to indigenous cultural norms. Such conventional propaganda aimed at consolidating the powers of the establishment has been studied, analysed and disproved by pe-

litical scientists, jurists and sociologists. But in Burma, distanced by several decades of isolationism from political and intellectual developments in the outside world, the people have had to draw on their own resources to explode the twin myths of their unfitness for political responsibility and the unsuitability of democracy for their society. As soon as the movement for democracy spread out across Burma there was a surge of intense interest in the meaning of the word 'democracy', in its history and its practical implications. More than a quarter-century of narrow authoritarianism under which they had been fed a pabulum of shallow, negative dogma had not blunted the perceptiveness or political alertness of the Burmese. On the contrary, perhaps not all that surprisingly, their appetite for discussion and debate, for uncensored information and objective analysis, seemed to have been sharpened. Not only was there an eagerness to study and to absorb standard theories on modern politics and political institutions, there was also widespread and intelligent speculation on the nature of democracy as a social system of which they had had little experience but which appealed to their common-sense notions of what was due to a civilized society. There was a spontaneous interpretative response to such basic ideas as representative government, human rights and the rule of law. The privileges and freedoms which would be guaranteed by democratic institutions were contemplated with understandable enthusiasm. But the duties of those who would bear responsibility for the maintenance of a stable democracy also provoked much thoughtful consideration. It is natural that a people who have suffered much from the consequences of bad government should be preoccupied with theories of good government.

Members of the Buddhist *sangha* in their customary role as mentors have led the way in articulating popular expectations by drawing on classical learning to illuminate timeless values. But the conscious effort to make traditional knowledge relevant to contemporary needs was not confined to any particular circle—it went right through Burmese society from urban intellectuals and small shopkeepers to doughy village grandmothers.

Why has Burma with its abundant natural and human resources failed to live up to its early promise as one of the most energetic and fastest-developing nations in South-east Asia? International scholars have provided detailed answers supported by careful analyses of historical, cultural, political and economic factors. The Burmese people, who have had no access to sophisticated academic material, got to the heart of the matter by turning to the words of the Buddha on the four causes of decline and decay: failure to recover that which had been lost, omission to repair that which had been damaged, disregard of the need for reasonable economy, and the elevation to leadership of men without morality or learning. Translated into contemporary terms, when democratic rights had been lost to military dictatorship sufficient efforts had not been made to regain them, moral and political values had been allowed to deteriorate without concerted attempts to save the situation, the economy had

sought to under-
ence of the people
reming the basic
Third World gov-
by denouncing
m for themselves
nform to indige-
consolidating the
disproved by po-

his own."
To him I leave all

and country, he
relatives, and, in
So he sent for
he still remem-
and mentally

e straw hut, and
or no share of it,
d the rich man's
s owner as I am,
alth as a deposit,
at riches . . . and
death was near.

still lived in the
man felt quite at
in clearing away
r. So the house-
and the latter

s you've worked
one of the vices
you are like my

been badly managed, and the country had been ruled by men without integrity or wisdom. A thorough study by the cleverest scholar using the best and latest methods of research could hardly have identified more correctly or succinctly the chief causes of Burma's decline since 1962.

Under totalitarian socialism, official policies with little relevance to actual needs had placed Burma in an economic and administrative limbo where government bribery and evasion of regulations were the indispensable lubricant to keep the wheels of everyday life turning. But through the years of moral decay and material decline there has survived a vision of a society in which the people and the leadership could unite in principled efforts to achieve prosperity and security. In 1988 the movement for democracy gave rise to the hope that the vision might become reality. At its most basic and immediate level, liberal democracy would mean in institutional terms a representative government appointed for a constitutionally limited term through free and fair elections. By exercising responsibly their right to choose their own leaders the Burmese hope to make an effective start at reversing the process of decline. They have countered the propagandist doctrine that democracy is unsuited to their cultural norms by examining traditional theories of government.

The Buddhist view of world history tells that when society fell from its original state of purity into moral and social chaos a king was elected to restore peace and justice. The ruler was known by three titles: *Mahasammata*, 'because he is named ruler by the unanimous consent of the people'; *Khatthiya*, 'because he has dominion over agricultural land'; and *Raja*, 'because he wins the people to affection through observance of the *dhamma* (virtue, justice; the law)'. The agreement by which their first monarch undertakes to rule righteously in return for a portion of the rice crop represents the Buddhist version of government by social contract. The *Mahasammata* follows the general pattern of Indic kingship in South-east Asia. This has been criticized as antithetical to the idea of the modern state because it promotes a personalized form of monarchy lacking the continuity inherent in the western abstraction of the king as possessed of both a body politic and a body natural. However, because the *Mahasammata* was chosen by popular consent and required to govern in accordance with just laws, the concept of government elective and *sub lege* is not alien to traditional Burmese thought.

The Buddhist view of kingship does not invest the ruler with the divine right to govern the realm as he pleases. He is expected to observe the Ten Duties of Kings, the Seven Safeguards against Decline, the Four Assistances to the People, and to be guided by numerous other codes of conduct such as the Twelve Practices of Rulers, the Six Attributes of Leaders, the Eight Virtues of Kings and the Four Ways to Overcome Peril. There is logic to a tradition which includes the king among the five enemies or perils and which subscribes to many sets of moral instructions for the edification of those in positions of authority. The people of Burma have had much experience of despotic rule and

possess a great awareness of the unhappy gap that can exist between the theory and practice of government.

The Ten Duties of Kings are widely known and generally accepted as a yardstick which could be applied just as well to modern government as to the first monarch of the world. The duties are liberality, morality, self-sacrifice, integrity, kindness, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and non-opposition (to the will of the people).

The first duty of liberality (*dana*) which demands that a ruler should contribute generously towards the welfare of the people, makes the tacit assumption that a government should have the competence to provide adequately for its citizens. In the context of modern politics, one of the prime duties of a responsible administration would be to ensure the economic security of the state. Morality (*sila*) in traditional Buddhist terms is based on the observance of the five precepts, which entails refraining from destruction of life, theft, adultery, falsehood and indulgence in intoxicants. The ruler must bear a high moral character to win the respect and trust of the people, to ensure their happiness and prosperity and to provide a proper example. When the king does not observe the *dhamma*, state, functionalities become corrupt, and when state functionalities are corrupt the people are caused much suffering. It is further believed that an unrighteous king brings down calamity on the land. The root of a nation's misfortunes has to be sought in the moral failings of the government.

The third duty, *paricagga*, is sometimes translated as generosity and sometimes as self-sacrifice. The former would constitute a duplication of the first duty, *dana*, so self-sacrifice as the ultimate generosity which gives up all for the sake of the people would appear the more satisfactory interpretation. The concept of selfless public service is sometimes illustrated by the story of the hermit Sumedha who took the vow of Buddhahood. In so doing he who could have realized the supreme liberation of *nirvana* in a single lifetime committed himself to countless incarnations that he might help other beings free themselves from suffering. Equally popular is the story of the lord of the monkeys who sacrificed his life to save his subjects, including one who had always wished him harm and who was the eventual cause of his death. The good ruler sublimates his needs as an individual to the service of the nation.

Integrity (*ajjawa*) implies incorruptibility in the discharge of public duties as well as honesty and sincerity in personal relations. There is a Burmese saying: 'With rulers, truth, with (ordinary) men, vows'. While a private individual may be bound only by the formal vows that he makes, those who govern should be wholly bound by the truth in thought, word and deed. Truth is the very essence of the teachings of the Buddha, who referred to himself as the *Tathagata* or 'one who has come to the truth'. The Buddhist king must therefore live and rule by truth. The Buddhist king must therefore live and rule by truth, which is the perfect uniformity between nomenclature and nature. To deceive or to mislead the people in any way would be an occupational failing as

en without integrity
ing the best and latest
rectly or succinctly

e relevance to actual

the jingo where gov-

pensable lubricant to

years of moral de-

society in which the

to achieve prosper-

ave rise to the hope

immediate level, lib-

representative govern-

h free and fair elec-

their own leaders the

process of decline.

cracy is unsuited to

government.

society fell from its

as elected to restore

Mahasammata, 'be-

people'; *Khattiya*;

a, 'because he wins

(virtue, justice; the

takes to rule right-

the Buddhist version

the general pat-

iticized as antithet-

personalized form of

abstraction of the

However, because

acquired to govern in

ive and *sub lege* is

her with the divine

observe the Ten Du-

our Assistances to

conduct such as the

the Eight Virtues of

to a tradition which

which subscribes to

in positions of au-

f despotic rule and