

Contemporary Civilization and the Lotus Sutra

Yoichi Kawada

I. Introduction—For Civilization to Evolve

CAPITALISM and democracy are the two main societal systems that have fueled the development of the modern West into the materialistic and scientific civilization it is today. The balance of these two systems have influenced society’s course of development. However, at present, egoism and insatiable greed have distorted capitalism into a form of global mammonism, threatening to consume and destroy the spirit and values of democracy. A spiritual foundation of solidarity, community, trust and empathy together with the rights of equality, fairness, and liberty are necessary for democracy to flourish in a healthy manner, but in today’s society, where egoism and greed alone run rampant, democracy is bound to degenerate.

On January 26, 2009, in his annual peace proposal titled, “Toward Humanitarian Competition: A New Current in History,” SGI President Daisaku Ikeda reflects on the financial crisis which occurred that previous autumn, analyzing its causes and proposing a paradigm shift for modern civilization. Ikeda points out, “the deepest root of the crisis is an unhealthy fixation on the abstract and ultimately insubstantial signifier of wealth—currency. This is the underlying pathology of contemporary civilization.”¹

He also comments on civilization’s need for a paradigm shift saying, “To ensure that any legal or institutional measures to rein in the excesses of capitalism do not remain on the level of the remedial but are part of a long-term vision, it is absolutely imperative that we seek out a new way of thinking, a paradigm shift that will reach to the very foundation of human civilization.”²

In regards to legal and policy measures he states the need to call on governments to enact, “swift and bold measures, such as providing fiscal and financial support and strengthening social safety nets.” He then urges utilization of the concept of “humanitarian competition” environ-

ed by the first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, in his writing, *The Geography of Human Life*. In this book, Makiguchi reviews the entire history of humanity, pointing out the fact that we have undergone military, political and economic competition, and that we should aim to compete humanistically in the age to come.

Makiguchi states, “what is important is to set aside egotistical motives, striving to protect and improve not only one’s own life, but also the lives of others. One should do things for the sake of others, because by benefitting others, we benefit ourselves,”³ citing a need for the spiritual foundation of civilization to switch from egoism to altruism. In line with this, Ikeda concludes that, “I am fully convinced that the time has now arrived, a hundred years after it was originally proposed, for us to turn our attention to humanitarian competition as a guiding principle for the new era.”⁴

The practice of humanism, with altruism as a base, will revive and foster a healthy democracy, keeping in check the forces of capitalism distorted by egoism and greed, and provide the spiritual strength to overcome it by nurturing a strong spirit of goodness—thereby activating feelings of trust, empathy, love for humanity, compassion, courage, creative wisdom, liberty, equality, solidarity, and dignity for life—in each individual. When individuals in a society discover their inner strength, they can begin to transform society.

Jacques Attali, who predicted the financial crisis in his book, *A Brief History of the Future*, warned that three waves would beset humanity in the future, and that altruism should be the basis for creating a new world of hyperdemocracy.

The first wave, he predicted, would be a world dominated by global mammonism (super-empire), and the second wave would bring violent conflicts that spill over international borders (hyperconflict). He also says, “to save humankind from its demons, this third wave of the future [hyperdemocracy] must obviously break before one or other of the two preceding waves makes an end, each in its own way, of the human species.”⁵ He then defines the character of “transhumans” who will be the agents that bring about hyperdemocracy. “Altruistic, conscious of the history of the future, concerned by the fate of their contemporaries and their descendants, anxious to help, to understand, to leave behind them a better world, transhumans will reject...selfishness...and...destructive fury.”⁶

Furthermore, Attali in his book *After The Crisis*, warns of an even more complex crisis which will be a conglomeration of financial, informational and technological aspects, and the even greater challenge

of climate change on a global scale. He again proposes that humanity transition from egoism to altruism as the way to solve the oncoming crises, and optimistically states, “the potential harm will...become a source of good and this deviation will be at the origin of its control.”⁷

The changes in climate he is referring to are the effects of global warming that threaten the existence of the earth’s ecological systems, as well as the very existence of humankind itself. The global financial crisis is but a small omen of the problems that we will have to confront with the impending issues surrounding the environment. The cause of these problems lies in the basis of our current civilization and the key concept that will change this doomed direction will be a shift toward altruism.

II. The Structure of Empathy and Compassion

According to the *Iwanami Dictionary of Philosophy and Thought*, altruism is defined as, “The act of seeking the benefit or the happiness of others, even to the point of sacrificing one’s personal gain. This term was coined by the French sociologist Auguste Comte, who aimed to reorganize society in the wake of the French Revolution. Using the Latin root for the word ‘other (alter),’ he proposed altruism as an ideal to contest egoism which was highly prevalent at the time.”⁸

In *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, “benefiting others” is a part of a longer term, “benefiting oneself and benefiting others...an ideal of Mahayana bodhisattvas... ‘benefiting oneself’ means to devote oneself to the Buddhist way and thereby accomplish personal growth and gain... ‘benefiting others’ means to bring benefit and eventually enlightenment to others.”⁹

In Japanese psychology, altruism is referred to as *aitashugi* 愛他主義, which literally means the ideal of showing love to others, but the term *ritashugi* 利他主義, rooted in the Buddhist ideal of benefitting others, came to be used more widely for general use.

The Japanese priest Dengyo, a proponent of the *Lotus Sutra*, said, “Upon quiet contemplation, the national treasure of bodhisattva is expounded in the *Lotus Sutra* and the concept of benefiting others is explained in the Mo-ho-yen.”¹⁰ Nichiren comments on the concept of joy saying, “‘Joy’ means that oneself and others together experience joy,”¹¹ in reference to a phrase from the *Lotus Sutra*, which is a teaching that thoroughly embraces the practice of benefitting others.

The *Lotus Sutra* explains that benefitting others, or the efforts made to help save others from suffering, not only become self-benefit but also

leads both oneself and others to experience true happiness and the joy of living.

The philosophical basis for altruism and performing altruistic acts lies in the components of empathy, sympathy, and compassion, or stated differently, empathy, sympathy and Buddhist compassion are what give rise to altruistic action.

So what is the mechanism that ties empathy, sympathy and Buddhist compassion to altruistic action? In this chapter we will first analyze the structure of empathy and compassion and then observe how these relate with the structure of Buddhist compassion.

A. Empathy and Sympathy

In his book, *The Age of Empathy*, Frans de Waal states, “Greed is out, empathy is in...Human empathy has the backing of a long evolutionary history.”¹² A large number of psychologists and ecologists have researched and shown the ability of animals to empathize, but very few have ventured to study the connection between humans and animals in regard to this ability. Mainly through his study of primates, de Waal has proven the ability of animals to act in empathic ways, and borrowing from the scientific discovery of mirror neurons¹³, have tried to explain the evolutionary basis for empathy. He also strongly argues for a society based in empathy, as it is part of our long natural evolutionary process, and to depart from the current profit-driven civilization. The discovery of mirror neurons in brain cells of monkeys gives strong support for evolutionary theory.

There are many approaches to defining empathy. For example, British researcher Simon Baron-Cohen explains that there are two major structural components of empathy. “The first is the cognitive component: understanding the other’s feelings and the ability to take their perspectives...The second element to empathy is the affective component. This is an observer’s appropriate emotional response to another person’s emotional state.”¹⁴ In regards to sympathy, Baron-Cohen writes, “Sympathy is just one such type of empathic response, where you feel both an emotional response to someone else’s distress and a desire to alleviate their suffering.”¹⁵ He also cites other examples of empathic responses, including feeling anger or fear toward society as a whole, and the feeling of guilt for not being able to help someone, thereby identifying sympathy as one of many possible manifestations of empathy.

In his book, *Kyokan no Shinrigaku—Sono Mekanizumu to Hattatsu* (The Psychology of Empathy—Its Mechanism and Development)

Japanese author, Mizuho Sawada defines empathy as, “not only mere recognition or understanding of another, but a process which involves both recognition and emotion, and includes a sharing or experiencing vicariously the feelings of another.”¹⁶ Here also, both the elements of recognition as well as emotion are regarded major components.

Sawada continues, “At times when the self and other are melded as one, each experiences the same or nearly the same emotions. At times when the self and other are clearly separated, although not identical, a similar type of emotion is felt between both parties, or perhaps there is an emotional response that is closely related to the emotion of the other.”¹⁷ What Sawada means by “empathy of the melding of the self and the other” is the bond formed between parent and child in both animals and humans, and in cases between adults who are extremely close friends. “Empathy between separate individuals” is an ability that develops correspondingly with the ability of recognition. In this type of empathy, the recognition of another person’s suffering gives rise to feelings of sympathy and sorrow for others. Sawada also claims that when someone reacts based on “empathy between separate individuals,” there is the issue of whether that reaction is oriented toward the self or the other¹⁸, and introduces the thinking of C.D. Batson and E. Staub.

Sawada writes, “Batson (and others) illustrate two kinds of emotions evoked when seeing someone suffering. One reaction is to become distressed by seeing another person suffering, thereby leading to action which relieves oneself of suffering. This is an example of personal distress. The other is a reaction of sympathy, leading to action to relieve the other person’s suffering. This may be called empathic concern.”¹⁹ Batson’s personal distress is empathy directed toward oneself, whereas empathic concern is empathy directed toward another.

Regarding these two types of empathy, Sawada says, “according to Staub, those who are adept in outer-directed empathy often take action to help or cooperate with their friends, and are also often receivers of such help.”²⁰ This serves as an explanation of the mechanism that ties empathy and sympathy to action for the sake of others. As separate individuals, when empathy is activated by recognition, the outer-directed feelings of empathic concern manifest as sorrow or sympathy, which in turn lead to action for the sake of others.

Sawada further distinguishes the difference between empathy and sympathy by saying, “Generally speaking, we don’t say, ‘I sympathize with his joy.’ Sympathy is a type of empathy limited to cases where others are suffering or unhappy...Sympathy is a reaction that derives from being separate individuals, so sympathy may be regarded an

emotional response which is a variant of empathy.”²¹

Among the various empathic responses possible, sympathy is an emotion that we feel when we recognize others’ suffering or unhappiness, evoking the feeling of wanting to relieve that suffering, and then leading to helpful or cooperative action which serves others.

B. The Structure of Compassion

Buddhist scholar Hajime Nakamura speaks of compassion in the following way, “underlying most religious activities, there needs to be warm sentiments of empathy toward others. In Buddhism, we refer to that sentiment in its purest form as compassion.”²² Nakamura regards compassion as empathy “in its purest form.” Compassion is to feel affection for and to look kindly upon all people. The Japanese word for compassion is made up of two Chinese characters. The first character *ji*, or 慈, is *metta* in Pali, *maitri* in Sanskrit, carrying the meaning of true friendship, and pure affection. The second character *hi*, or 悲, is *karuna* in both Pali and Sanskrit, and carries the meaning of sympathy, sorrow for others, and pity²³.

In Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, Nagarjuna’s interpretation of *ji* and *hi* is often cited. “Great pity means giving all people happiness, and great sympathy means relieving all people of suffering. Great affection bestows the cause of joy and happiness upon all, and great sympathy bestows the cause of separation from suffering upon all.”²⁴ (From *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*)

Of the two components of compassion, sympathy has already been analyzed from the perspective of modern psychology in the previous section. Buddhist “affection” goes beyond merely lessening the suffering of others, but aims to root out the causes or conditions of that suffering. Simultaneously, feelings of sympathy as well as Buddhist affection arise in compassion. Affectionate emotion drives the desire to make others happy, and supports actions that help implement the causes and conditions necessary for happiness. In this way, compassionate action involves rooting out suffering and bestowing happiness, just as Nagarjuna stated.

This spirit of compassion can be observed in the motherly affection for her child. In the *Sutta Nipata*, it states, “Just as a mother would protect with her life her own son, her only son, so one should cultivate and unbounded mind towards all beings, and loving-kindness towards all the world.”²⁵ The spirit of compassion appears in the form of pure action for the sake of others, sympathizing with others’ pain, and with fondness, taking away their suffering, and bestowing happiness, just as a

mother would protect the life of her child with her own. Furthermore, this spirit of compassion extends not only to human beings, but to any and all living things. This expansion of compassionate spirit from not only those close to us, but to all living things is described in the *Theragatha* in the following way,

to all, a friend;
to all, a comrade;
for all beings, sympathetic.
And I develop a mind of good will,
Delighting in non-malevolence—always.²⁶

Nakamura says, “In the earliest days of Buddhism, only *metta* was emphasized as important, but later, pity was added together with compassion, and followers of the Way were taught the importance of incorporating both principles... However, at even later stages of Buddhism, the qualities of joy and impartiality were also added, to make a total of four components.”²⁷

In the Expedient Means Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, one of the specific unique qualities of a Buddha is described as “infinite”²⁸ (four infinite virtues).

In *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, there is the following explanation.

four infinite virtues [四無量心] (Jpn *shi-muryoshin*): Boundless pity, boundless compassion, boundless joy, and boundless impartiality (or indifference). Pity...here is interpreted as giving living beings delight or happiness; compassion...as removing their suffering; and joy...as rejoicing at seeing beings become free from suffering and gain happiness. Impartiality...is interpreted as abandoning attachments to love and hatred and being impartial toward everyone.²⁹

In Buddhism, these infinite virtues of compassion prompt us to take action for the sake of others, which is the Bodhisattva Way.

That is why Nagarjuna says, “compassion is the foundation of the Buddhist Way,”³⁰ in *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*. In the Entrustment Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* it says, “the thus come one has great pity and compassion,”³¹ and in the Teacher of the Law Chapter it says, “The ‘thus come one’s room’ is the state of mind that shows great pity and compassion toward all living beings.”³² Furthermore, this sutra explains that the Buddha’s compassion is like parental love.

For example in the *Lotus Sutra*, there is a parable of the three carts and the burning house. The father in the parable represents the Buddha, the burning house represents the world, aflame with earthly desires, and the children represent the people of the world. The father uses an expedient means to cleverly save his children by leading them out of the burning house. “But now this threefold world is my domain, and the living beings in it are all my children. Now this place is beset by many pains and trials. I am the only person who can rescue and protect others...”³³ Here, the act of compassion is highlighted through the parable of the father saving his children, which represents the Buddha’s actions to save the people from suffering in the phenomenal world.

Again, in the parable of the skilled physician and his sick children, the story describes how a skilled physician, who represents the Buddha, cleverly uses expedient means to administer the cure that saves his sons who mistakenly drink poison. In the Life Span of the Thus Come One Chapter, it is explained that the father sends a message that he has perished in a distant land. The children’s longing for their father is explained, “If our father were alive he would have pity on us and see that we were protected.”³⁴ To this, the Buddha next explains, “I am the father of this world, saving those who suffer and are afflicted.”³⁵ Salvation from the struggle of life and death is depicted here. It is explained in the *Lotus Sutra* that the compassionate action of the Buddha to save all people is carried on by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth after the Buddha’s passing.

III. The Three Rules of Preaching and the Requirements for Global Citizenship

In the Teacher of the Law Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, the three rules of preaching are set forth as guiding principles for those who preach the *Lotus Sutra* after the Buddha’s passing, stating, “These good men and good women should enter the thus come one’s room, put on the thus come one’s robe, sit in the thus come one’s seat, and then for the sake of the four kinds of believers broadly expound this sutra.”³⁶ Nichiren explains these three rules saying, “The robe is the robe that is ‘gentle and forbearing’...as well as that which is referred to in the passage that says, ‘we...will put on the armor of perseverance.’ As for the seat, if one devotes oneself to the practice without begrudging one’s life, then it becomes the seat of ‘the emptiness of all phenomena.’ The room is so called because one dwells in ‘pity and compassion’ when one expounds the teachings. It means to have the kind of concern that a mother has for

her child. And are we not fulfilling these three rules of preaching in each moment of our lives?"³⁷

Next, I would like to take a look at these three rules for preaching in the light of the idea of global citizenship. That is, I would like to extract from these three rules, the essential spirit of working for the sake of humanity, which is also a quality of global citizens, those who work to improve civilization.

Of the three rules, the first is to "put on the thus come one's robes," and this is in reference to the spirit of gentleness and forbearance. Bodhisattva, when challenging themselves to change civilization, must have the spiritual power to show both staunch fortitude and adaptive flexibility at the appropriate times to overcome any and all difficulties that come before them. In the Encouraging Devotion Chapter, bodhisattvas such as Medicine King and Great Joy of Preaching vow to staunchly spread the teachings of the *Lotus Sutra* in the time after the Buddha's death no matter what persecutions they encounter. However, in the Emerging from the Earth Chapter, Shakyamuni rejects the vows of the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching, and entrusts the spread of the *Lotus Sutra* after his passing to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Therefore, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the ones who are to carry out the three rules of preaching, including having the spirit of gentleness and forbearance.

Returning to the discussion of how to transform our current materialistic and scientific civilization, those who aim to be global citizens are first faced with the task of dealing with the wave of global mammonism, as predicted by Attali. As the name suggests, greedy capitalism is filled with the evil energy of avarice, one of the three poisons. On a global level, avarice forms the philosophical foundation of the financial and economic crisis and of the environmental problems to come. The energy of greed expands from individuals to ethnic groups, then to nations, and to humanity as a whole and widens the economic gap between developed and developing nations, as well as between groups within a nation or ethnic group. Because of this greed, the earth's natural resources are wastefully consumed and as symbolized by the problem of global warming, the earth's ecosystems become critically damaged. It is essential that we control the energy of greed in order to overcome the first wave.

In the Encouraging Devotion Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, those that practice the Bodhisattva Way are said to have 少欲知足 "non-excessive wanting and knowing contentment" or also translated as "little desire and contentment with a little gain." In the *Legacy Teachings Sutra*, it

says, “observe the lesson of ‘contentment,’ as it is the source of wealth, joy and peace. A contented person is happy, if he be lying down on the ground,”³⁸ whereas, “the discontented are poor, having great wealth.”³⁹

The “non-excessive wanting” mentioned in Buddhist writings refers to controlling one’s greed so as to avoid being consumed by it. Greed inflicts pain on both oneself and others, and when exploited, triggers an ever-increasing avalanche of desires. In addition, the Buddhist concept of “knowing contentment” refers to creating joy by controlling greed, fulfilling one’s basic needs as a human being, and contributing to others. This is the Buddhist model of self-actualization, and the view of happiness referred to as, “contentment equals joy.” When this view of happiness can be shared on a wide scale, we can steadfastly overcome the lures of greedy capitalism, and protect ourselves from its vengeance. This is the contemporary meaning of putting on the robes of gentleness and forbearance.

Attali, however, also predicted a second wave. Carried out by violent groups seeking to destroy anything in its path, this wave of violence is predicted to cross national borders. These include conflicts over resources for basic needs such as energy, water and food; conflicts in response to suppression of human rights; and the problem of massive groups of refugees produced by inter-ethnic conflicts to escape poverty.

The philosophical basis for conflict and war on a global scale has its roots in yet another of the three poisons—anger. This tendency for aggression is also something that spreads from individuals to ethnic groups, to nations, to national groups, then permeates the deepest levels of humanity as a whole. This energy of anger on a global scale manifests not only as direct violence, but also structural and cultural violence. Those that aim to be global citizens must face this anger within oneself as well as with others. To challenge and overcome the violence prevalent throughout society, one must control the tendency for anger within one’s own life, and practice non-violence as preached by M. K. Gandhi and carried out as Bodhisattva Never Disparaging as described in the Never-Disparaging Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*. This also is a contemporary example of putting on the robes of gentleness and forbearance, expanding the arenas in which global citizens can contribute.

The second rule of preaching, which is to sit in the seat of the Buddha, means to establish the life state of “all phenomena are non-substantiality.” This life state is explained in the Peaceful Practices Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra* as, “[to view] all phenomena as empty, that being their true aspect.”⁴⁰

“All phenomena are non-substantiality” means to perceive the nature of the phenomenal world as essentially being non-substantial. That is, this concept teaches that all observable phenomena have no real substance, independent in and of itself, but arise and disappear in relation to all others, therefore non-substantial. Continuing this line of thinking, we ourselves are also non-fixed, non-real entities, and exist within a network of dependent relationships. This situation of mutual causation and mutual effect is called dependent origination, and this relationship extends outward on the deepest levels of existence connecting the individual, to others, to the ethnic group, to the nation, to the life of all human beings, to all living things on earth, and even to the life of the universe itself.

If human beings can expand their consciousness beyond their own small egos, and walk the path of symbiosis with all living things, they can establish an expansive life state of non-substantiality full of freedom, founded on the eternal universal life. This expansive life state, which is one with the universal life and in harmony with all other living things, makes up what can be called the “greater self,” and is endowed with a vast spirit of altruism.

Although modern civilization seeks to achieve symbiosis and harmony with all living things, it is hindered by its inability to overcome egoism at the various stages from the individual to humanity as a whole.

Buddhism sheds light on the fundamental darkness of life from which all earthly desires originate, illuminating the roots of egoism at each level. Fundamental darkness refers to the lack of understanding that all things are mutually dependent and connected to each other, and this ignorance is the root cause of egoism and an attachment to the “lesser self.” Fundamental darkness is the source of all earthly desires that envelop global civilization as a whole, from which greed, anger, distrust, deceit, exploitation, discrimination, and division all originate.

Examples of egoism on various levels may include: an individual or group egoism in which greed for money may lead to the exploitation of others—insensitive to feelings of pain inflicted upon them; ethnic egoism in which caring only about one’s own ethnic group may lead to discrimination against or domination of another ethnic group; or national egoism which breeds an unhealthy nationalism leading to economic exploitation or military aggression of other countries. Other forms may include attachment to one’s own culture or religion leading to discrimination of the ideologies and spirituality of all other cultures and ethnicities, which in turn may breed radicalism and fundamentalism that manifest as violent action. But one of the most critical levels of

egoism facing our world today, and lies at the root of many global issues, is human egoism which condones mankind's dominance over and exploitation of nature.

Facing egoism at these various levels, ridding the world of earthly desires originating in fundamental darkness, while creatively finding ways to make a symbiotic society based on a spirit of altruism is literally "[devoting] oneself to the practice without begrudging one's life" as Nichiren stated. The arena for practicing as modern day bodhisattvas is no other than in the midst of contemporary society filled with suffering and earthly desires.

From the perspective of global citizens who practice altruism and seek to establish their "greater selves" in symbiosis with all living things, and oppose the forces of egoism that originates from fundamental darkness within the depths of civilization, they can be regarded as compassionately practicing the Bodhisattva Way—"removing suffering and giving joy."

The third of the three rules is to enter the room of the Thus Come One, which means to take away the sufferings of all people and invite happiness. Both Shakyamuni and Nichiren use the pure love between mother and child to compare with the working of compassion. As mentioned earlier, Buddhism aims to implement compassion, symbolized by the love between mother and child, from the family or local area to the ethnic group, the nation, and then to all humanity. In other words, it is the practice of creating a network of friendship between all people, and ultimately, to spread this spirit of compassion to all living things.

Altruistic action fueled by the spirit of compassion has the power to inspire the Buddha nature to manifest, making it possible for all people to call forth an immense spirit of goodness from within oneself. The spirit of goodness has a life force powerful enough to destroy all earthly desires that originate from fundamental darkness, making it possible to manifest qualities such as non-violence, love for humanity, control of desires, the wisdom of symbiosis, trust, empathy, courage, perseverance, freedom, equality and solidarity. That is how altruistic action, through the qualities of solidarity, trust and empathy contained within the spirit of goodness, deepens the bonds between people; how through perseverance we can work to achieve equality and freedom in human rights; and how we can open the path to non-violence, allowing us to create a world of symbiosis for all humanity by using the guiding light of the wisdom of dependent origination.

When mutual trust builds regions of people in solidarity, as the movement grows and expands on various levels throughout the globe,

the spirit of goodness such as compassion, love for humanity, and non-violence work to overcome egoism of the nation, ethnic group, culture, and religion. The spirit of altruism will sweep over humanity as a whole, and then penetrate into the deepest layers of life. Furthermore, it is hoped that there will be a change in the materialistic and scientific civilization of present, from an egoistic capitalism and democracy to an altruistic one. Capitalism ruled by greed will transform into an altruistic-colored capitalism with the ability to control greed. Democracy will transform from a forum for egos to clash into a forum for dialog based on the spirit of goodness, and function as it was meant to be. In this way, as capitalism and democracy take on altruistic hues, a healthy balance can be restored on a global scale.

The three rules for preaching as depicted in the *Lotus Sutra*, in other words, the spirit of patience and forbearance, non-substantiality of phenomena, and compassion may serve as guidelines for global citizens who wish to implement a paradigm shift of current civilization.

Next, I would like to take these three rules for preaching and principles from the *Lotus Sutra* overall relating to the Bodhisattva Way, and extract the requirements for global citizens living in today's civilization.

The first requirement of a global citizen is to hold a view of life that respects the dignity of life, and respects the dignity of human beings. This view of life should also be supported by a cosmology with a far-reaching vision. In the Life Span of the Thus Come One Chapter of the *Lotus Sutra*, a vast cosmology, spanning eternity is expounded using the metaphor of numberless major world system dust particle *kalpas* 五百塵点劫, and at the core of this cosmology lies the Eternal Buddha. The Eternal Buddha is at one with the Eternal Law, and the life of the universe itself is the manifestation of the Eternal Savior Buddha.

Secondly, based on the framework of the Eternal Savior Buddha, the mission as the "envoy of the Thus Come One,"⁴¹ or the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who vow to spread the Buddha's teachings after his demise is expounded. It is required of global citizens to realize their mission to live with great compassion and to work for the evolution of the eternal universe. On this Earth, the workings of compassion within the great cosmos manifests as the evolution of living things and of humankind, but the egoism of humankind has damaged the environment, caused the appearance of global problems, and through wars, conflicts, economic inequality and suppression of human rights, caused itself to divide, and is set on a course for self-destruction. Global citizens must realize their mission to save humankind through the transformation of current civilization. That is, they must make a sacred pledge to save humanity,

and live their life to fulfill that pledge.

Third, self-actualization for global citizens means to live altruistically, and to serve others. Only by working to save humankind and by working for the cause of peace can one truly and fully develop. Global citizens can find ultimate happiness by achieving self-actualization based on the life state of “all phenomena is non-substantiality,” and by aiming to establish one’s “greater self.”

Fourth, while aiming to achieve a “greater self” the bodhisattvic global citizen should also work to build a “multi-faceted self” that can easily relate with many others. In the *Lotus Sutra*, the bodhisattvas of the provisional teachings take on various forms, altering themselves to fulfill various needs of the people they want to save. For example, Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound has thirty-four different forms he assumes in order to save people⁴², and Bodhisattva Perceiver of the World’s Sounds has thirty-three different forms⁴³. In this way, when global citizens diversify their character, they can call on the appropriate form when necessary. The ideal is for each individual to play on their strengths, while they gain experience and learn throughout their lives, and to provide the optimum solution to whatever situation arises.

Fifth, the bodhisattvic global citizen should practice the maxim “think globally, act locally.” From this viewpoint, it can be seen that “the self” has several levels of community—congruent with the “greater self,” which spans the levels from individual to regional to all of humanity. In *Life and Human Geography*, Makiguchi proposed an “order for viewing our place in the world”⁴⁴ in which people simultaneously belong to the local community, the national community, and the world community. The local community where one lives is the most immediate area of activity, and from closely observing the local community, one can perceive the wider context of the ethnic group and nation, and then to ultimately realize their place as a global citizen in symbiosis with nature.

The reason Makiguchi stressed the importance of making daily life in the local community as a starting point for viewing the world is because doing so grounds people in reality on a grassroots level. The bodhisattvic global citizen has an identity on the local, national, and global level, and these exist dynamically and harmoniously within one person. Then, as each individual expands their life activities in the local community, while also recognizing that they are a part of a national and global community, true global citizens work to contribute to the life of others in their respective areas and fields.

Sixth, the area of activity where global citizens apply themselves goes

from individual to others and through the altruistic actions of contributing to others, they expand the solidarity for the spirit of goodness on a number of levels. The compassionate action toward all people regarding them as friends helps global citizens expand the people's solidarity of courage, helping them to overcome any and all obstacles (such as temptation and persecution) by encouraging patience to endure hardships with a spirit of non-violence. This expansion of solidarity of the spirit of goodness among people is the key to achieving the paradigm shift from the current society of egoism and earthly desires to one of altruism.

Seventh, the challenge for global citizens today is overcoming the global issues facing humanity. The solution involves global citizens becoming proactive in inter-civilization and inter-faith dialog. This becomes possible because the "self" of a global citizen is rich with diversity, and can relate to a wide variety of people across multiple levels. They do not have attachments to a single civilization, culture, or religion, but rather have a deep understanding of many different civilizations and cultures, and at the same time are able to open their hearts to the various religions that lie at the spiritual center of civilizations. Through inter-civilization and inter-faith dialogs, they will become well-versed in the features of their own civilization, culture or religion, while simultaneously paying respect to and learning from the wisdom of other spiritual legacies throughout the world that have evolved over the course of humanity's long history. Inspired by these interactions, their own spirituality will expand and find creative ways to open a path to a new culture. The focus of these dialogs should always be how to solve issues facing humanity and how to save humankind.

For any civilization, culture or religion, there is no issue more pressing than finding a way to achieve the peaceful co-existence of all humanity and co-existence with nature.

When we think about organizations which could possibly lead the endeavor to build an altruistic civilization, the United Nations, or various international institutions, corporations, NGOs or NPOs may come to mind. Within this framework, it is conceivable that a religious organization could participate as an NGO to carry out activities for religious altruism.

Naoshi Yamawaki, from the perspective of public philosophy, describes the NGO phase of an organization, saying:

Many NGOs operate as non-governmental entities on an international scale, fulfilling the needs of people from a civic standpoint—needs that

cannot be fulfilled by governments—through activities that go beyond national borders.

Advocacy for less fortunate members of society is one important feature of an NGO, and especially in the fields of poverty, the environment, and economics, NGOs play an invaluable role in focusing attention on specific problems and proposing solutions. Put simply, this is the function of the NGO as a civic entity.⁴⁵

The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is extremely active as an NGO of the United Nations⁴⁶, carrying out activities of religious altruism in society. The Soka Gakkai was registered as an NGO with the UN Office of Public Information in 1981, and is also on the list of NGOs who work in association with the Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The SGI has UN liaison offices in New York, Geneva, and Vienna and works in cooperation with UN institutions and many other NGOs.

In terms of activities for peace, the SGI has promoted exhibits on building peace and reducing arms titled, “From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit.” They have also sponsored events to hear experiences of survivors of the nuclear holocaust and wars, and have also undertaken projects to help former child soldiers find their place in society, as well as a project to clear land mines. In addition, they have cooperated with movements to limit small arms and to abolish the use of bio-chemical weapons.

Sustainable development is also a theme for exhibits such as the “21st Century Environment Exhibition—The Future is in Our Hearts,” and “Seeds of Change.” Also related to this effort is the screening of a movie titled, “A Quiet Revolution.” Various SGI organizations throughout the world have also taken action to protect the environment, such as SGI-Brazil, which started a project in 1993 to revitalize the rainforest and involves tree planting and preserving seeds vital to the ecosystem surrounding the Amazon River. SGI-Canada and SGI-Philippines have also conducted tree planting activities.

On the issue of human rights education, the “21st Century Human Rights Exhibition of Hope—You Are Invaluable” has been held in conjunction with a lecture. Also, the Women’s Peace Committee has convened Peace Forums throughout Japan, and produced a DVD of women’s war experiences titled, “Testimonies of Hiroshima and Nagasaki: Women Speak Out for Peace” to use as a tool in their peace education activities.

Examples of international humanistic relief activities of the SGI

include providing financial assistance to the victims of the Great Shichuan Earthquake in China and the victims of the cyclone in Myanmar, as well as providing support for democratic elections in Cambodia and a campaign to help refugees. Domestically, community centers of the Soka Gakkai were opened to the public, served as shelters for local residents, and operated as relief coordination centers where emergency supplies were stocked and distributed during the Great Hanshin Earthquake, the Niigata Chuetsu Earthquake, and the Great East Japan Earthquake. Also, human resources such as youth members, and members of the Doctors and Nurses Divisions were dispatched to critically affected areas.

Efforts to provide solutions for global issues are carried out by the SGI through inter-religious and inter-civilizational dialogs with various academic institutions around the world, and also through exchanges with Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, Confucian, Taoist, Hindi, and Gandhian representatives.

Besides those mentioned above, the SGI takes part in various other educational, cultural and artistic activities. Our institute is also a part of this effort, as we strive to further understanding of Buddhist principles through exhibits and symposiums on the *Lotus Sutra*, and the holding of inter-faith dialogues with people throughout the world.

NOTES

¹ Ikeda, D. *2009 SGI Peace Proposal*. <http://www.sgi.org/assets/pdf/peace2009.pdf> (accessed on 15 November 2011).

² *Ibid.*

³ Makiguchi, T. *The Geography of Human Life*. In *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* [The Collected Writings of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi], vol.2. (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 2002) p. 399.

⁴ Ikeda, D. *2009 SGI Peace Proposal*. <http://www.sgi.org/assets/pdf/peace2009.pdf> (accessed on 15 November 2011).

⁵ Attali, J. *Une Brève histoire de l'avenir* [A Brief History of the Future: A Brave and Controversial Look at the Twenty-first Century], translated into English by Jeremy Leggett (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2009) p. 256.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 260.

⁷ Attali, J. *La crise, et après?* [After the Crisis: How Did This Happen?], translated into English by ESKA Publishing and Holt, *et al.*; (Paris: ESKA Publishing, 2010) p. 174.

⁸ *Iwanami Dictionary of Philosophy and Thought*. (Tokyo: Iwanami Books, 2006) p. 1680.

⁹ *Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*. (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002) p. 40.

¹⁰ *Dengyo Daishi Zenshu* [Complete Works of Dengyo Daishi], vol. 1. (Tokyo: Nihon Bussho Kankoukai, 1966) p. 19.

¹¹ Nichiren, *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, translated by Burton

Watson. (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2004) p. 146.

¹² Please see: da Waal, F. *The Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Baron-Cohen, S. *The Essential Difference*. (England: Penguin Books, 2003) p. 28.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Translated from the Japanese. Sawada, M. *Kyokan no Shinrigaku—Sono Mekanizumu to Hattatsu* [The Psychology of Empathy—Its Mechanism and Development]. (Tokyo: Sekai Shisosha, 1992) p. 18.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²² Translated from the Japanese. Nakamura, H. *Jihi* [Compassion]. (Tokyo: Heirakuji Books, 1956) p. 19.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Translated from the Japanese. *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom* vol. 27. In Taisho Tripitaka, vol. 25, p. 256.

²⁵ Norman, K.R., tr. *The Group of Discourses (Sutta Nipata)*, vol. 2 (Oxford, The Pali Text Society, 2000) p. 17.

²⁶ <http://www.accesstoinight.org/tripitaka/kn/thag/thag.14.01.than.html>

²⁷ *Jihi*. pp. 37–38.

²⁸ *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, translated by Burton Watson. (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009) p. 56.

²⁹ *Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, p. 222.

³⁰ *The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom*, p. 256.

³¹ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 319.

³² *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 205.

³³ *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 105–6.

³⁴ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 270.

³⁵ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 273.

³⁶ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 205.

³⁷ *The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings*, pp. 84–5.

³⁸ *The Sutra of Buddha's Last Instruction*. (Tokyo: Morie Shouten, 1897) p. 10. <http://kindai.da.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/817596> (accessed on 15 November 2011).

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁰ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 237.

⁴¹ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 200.

⁴² *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 336.

⁴³ *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 342–343.

⁴⁴ *Geography of Human Life*, p. 33.

⁴⁵ Yamawaki, N. *Keizai no Rinrigaku* [The Ethics of Economics]. (Tokyo: Maruzen, 2002) p. 78.

⁴⁶ Inaba, K., Sakurai, Y., ed. *Shakai Kouken Suru Shukyo* [Religions That Contribute to Society]. (Tokyo: Sekai Shisousha, 2009) pp. 199–200.