

Humanity-Quest:
Contemporary Appropriations
of the *Ekayāna* Doctrine in the *Lotus Sutra*

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This paper explores how religious traditions respond to the call for humanitarian discourse and how they demonstrate their viability and relevancy in terms of their theoretical applicability as well as their practical development in the modern world, especially in civil society's call for peace, in particular, nuclear abolition.

As one endeavor of this exploration, this paper takes as a case study two contemporary Japanese Buddhist thinkers and peace activists, Nikkyō Niwano (1916-1999) of Risshō kōsei-kai (hereafter, RK) and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-) of Sōka gakkai (hereafter, SG). These two figures are prominent leaders of the two largest “new” Buddhist religious organizations in Japan. They have also initiated and organized extensive international peace-making movements, especially in the activities of nuclear disarmament based on the Buddhist philosophy of “*Ekayāna*,” a doctrine of universal enlightenment which appeared in the *Lotus Sutra*, the most revered Buddhist scripture among East Asian Buddhist traditions. In each of their own ways, these leaders have unfolded the *Ekayāna* doctrine to contemporary society in a way that functions as a principle of social-change and peace-building for humanity in both national and international arenas.

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Introduction

Increasingly, conflict-ridden contemporary societies in the world, as well as long lasting religious schools and groups, are in the position of being asked if they are relevant and viable in modern times. Currently, in 2017, 72 years after the atrocities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, civil society and the international community are still facing a most fundamental and existential issue, the issue of nuclear proliferation. This is a growing concern that threatens the very existence of humankind and that challenges human wisdom that has been cultivated, in part, among religious traditions throughout human history.

Civil society, which tenaciously promotes nuclear disarmament, has been advancing its convincing argument of the humanitarian discourse to persuade the international community to support the movement. This humanitarian discourse ostensibly appeared in the UN Human Rights Committee's statement in 1984,² followed by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)'s Advisory Opinion in 1996,³ as well as the consensus document of the 2010 NPT Review Conference, which includes the language of "the catastrophic humanitarian consequence any use of nuclear weapons would have."⁴

Humanitarian discourse is the argument that centers on humanity, focusing on human security, rather than national security, and on humankind's flourishing and wellbeing rather than national and corporate benefits. It is this discourse that opens windows to the obstinate logic of nuclear deterrence. In one aspect, this is the argument that the collective wisdom of the civil society has been able to achieve through their

tenacious efforts.

Needless to say, while the positions and aspects toward human existence vary in diverse religious traditions around the globe, they are important constituents of civil society, which provide for the flourishing of humankind. This paper is an exploration to see how the religious traditions are responding to the call for humanitarian discourse and how they are showing their viability and relevancy in terms of their theoretical applicability and their practical development that intends to be compatible in the modern world, especially in civil society's call for peace.

As one endeavor of this exploration, this paper will take two contemporary Japanese Buddhist thinkers and peace activists, Nikkyō Niwano (1916-1999) of Risshō kōsei-kai (hereafter, RK) and Daisaku Ikeda (1928-) of Sōka gakkai (hereafter, SG), as two case studies. The reason for the selection is that both of these figures are the prominent leaders of the two largest "new" Buddhist religious organizations in Japan. Furthermore, they initiated and organized the extensive scale of peacemaking movements internationally, especially in the activities of nuclear disarmament based on Buddhist philosophy, especially "*Ekayāna*," a doctrine of universal enlightenment which appeared in the Lotus Sutra, the most revered Buddhist scripture in East Asian Buddhist traditions.

1. *The Historical Development of the Ekayāna Doctrine*

In the wake of possible mass death by nuclear weapons after WWII, faith communities have increasingly focused their eyes on finding common values as the greatest common measure shared with other faith communities. Among the attempts are peace-building activities and interfaith dialogue. Currently, in that aspect, RK and SG are the most active organizations among many Japanese Buddhist organizations. As mentioned, these two organizations share the *Ekayāna* doctrine in the Lotus Sutra as the theoretical basis of their activities for peace. However, the *Ekayāna* doctrine itself is a concept that has its own historical development. In order to fully understand Niwano and Ikeda's interpretations and appropriations of the concept into their peace activities, this paper will first briefly look at the historical development of this doctrine.

“*Ekayāna*” literally means “one-vehicle or -path” and the *Ekayāna* doctrine, emblematic of the Lotus Sutra, signifies the teaching of the universal enlightenment that leads all beings to attain Buddhahood, full enlightenment. The opposite of *Ekayāna* is “*Triyāna* (three-vehicles or -paths),” the hierarchical concept that indicates the three different teachings for *śrāvakas*, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *bodhisattvas*. Among them, the teachings for *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* are called “Two-Vehicles,” teachings benefiting only the groups of people who are seeking to achieve “Arhatship,” which is not the full enlightenment of Buddhahood, but the highest possible stage which the disciples of the Buddha, such as monks and nuns, could reach. However, *Ekayāna*, in fact, is a product in the line of the three-vehicle scheme starting from the earlier centuries before and after the Common Era and the three-vehicle scheme was the dominant model in the Buddhist monastic communities in northwest India during the earlier time period.⁵

In terms of the concept of *bodhisattva*, various episodes found in the *Jātaka* and *Avadāna* stories have already implied that since the early centuries before the Common Era, Buddhist monastic communities began to have the concept of individuals called ‘*bodhisattvas*’ who were the certain figures of the Buddha’s past lifetimes and who were striving on the way to attain Buddhahood. In the earlier stage of this type of literature, “three vehicles” are considered to be two separate paths (the path of Two-Vehicles and that of *bodhisattvas*) and to achieve two separate goals (the goal of Arhatship and that of Buddhahood). In that, the Buddha’s chief role was considered to lead his disciples to become Arhats. Among the mainstream Buddhist communities, it can be said that being a *śrāvaka* endeavoring to be an Arhat was a standard notion.⁶

In the third century CE the amount of *bodhisattva* literature in Chinese translation had increased beyond *Jātaka* and *Avadāna* stories. The *bodhisattvas* in that literature were not from the Buddha’s past lifetime. The literature that highly praised the *bodhisattva* path became more frequent and apparent after the 3rd century. Some literature started to call the teaching of *bodhisattvas* as “*Mahāyāna*” – a greater vehicle or path. Along the way, some of the *Mahāyāna* literature, such as the *Weimojing* (維摩經 *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa sūtra*), started harshly criticizing those who were in the Two-Vehicles, saying that they could never

attained Buddhahood, as they were like a burnt seed. This type of criticism and negation to the innate quality of the Two-Vehicle people indicates the gulf between the strong self-assertion of those who claim themselves as *Mahāyāna* as opposed to “*Hīnayāna*,” – a lesser vehicle or path, and their contempt of those who belonged to the Two-Vehicles as *Hīnayāna*.

It was the late third century, 285 (286) CE, when the *Lotus Sutra* was translated into Chinese by Dharmarakṣa followed by the most accepted Chinese translation by Kumārajīva in 406 CE. The *Lotus Sutra*, though considered to be a “*Mahāyāna*” text, had a significantly different stand from other *Mahāyāna* texts, such as the *Weimojing*. In its second chapter, for example, the *Lotus Sutra* sees the Two-Vehicles in a different light; that is, instead of negating their teachings and paths as being inferior, the teachings of the Two-Vehicles were taught as the Buddha’s “skilful means,” in accord with the disciples’ different spiritual abilities. At the same time, these different teachings and paths of the Two-Vehicles were taught in order to teach *Ekayāna*, the One-Vehicle. This is called “opening the three to reveal the one (開三顯一).”⁷ In the *Lotus Sutra*, the hierarchical gulf dividing teachings, goals, and individuals is resolved and each of them is integrated into the One-Vehicle, *Ekayāna*, which is a synonym of Buddha-vehicle (*buddhayāna*) (Fujita 1975: 110f).

The *Ekayāna* doctrine became one of the most important doctrines in East Asian Buddhism. In particular, based on the systematic teachings of Zhiyi 智顓 (538-597) in the 6th century China, Saichō 最澄 (767-822) developed his position of the *Ekayāna* doctrine in his various works, such as *Shugo kokkaishō* 守護国界章, *Hokke shūku* 法華秀句, which were, in part, the written responses of the debate, known as the “Debate between the Three Vehicles and the One Vehicle (*San’itsu gonjitu sōron* 三一權実諍論),” taking place with Tokuichi 徳一 (749?-843), a contemporary Buddhist monk of the Hosshō school. Enryaku-ji, a temple that Saichō founded, was officially allowed to establish the Mahāyāna Ordination Platform soon after Saichō’s death and became a major seat of Japanese Buddhist monasticism which produced various well-known Buddhist figures of the Kamakura new Buddhist movements. Among them was Nichiren 日蓮 (1222-82 CE) whose teachings based on the *Lotus Sutra* became the significant pedestal of SG, as well as RK in its initial stages.

Not limited to Monastic communities, however, the *Ekayāna* doctrine was one of the most significant systems of thought throughout the pre-modern Japanese cultural landscape, as a philosophy of universal enlightenment influencing such cultural trends as the original enlightenment thought.⁸

2. Religious Communities Unfolding Peacemaking Activities with the Theoretical Basis of Ekayāna

(1) Risshō Kōseika and Sōka Gakkai

Making *Ekayāna* the core theoretical basis, both Niwano of the RK and Ikeda of the SG began to unfold their peace activities after the WWII. Before analyzing the individual interpretations of and appropriations based on their embrace of the *Ekayāna* doctrine of the Lotus Sutra, we will first take a brief look at their organizations, RK and SG. Having gone through numerous re-shaping and re-defining trials in their histories, RK and SG have become the two most expanded religious groups in post-WWII Japan and are well known to promote peace and interfaith-dialogues whose organizational wings reach an international-scale.

RK was co-founded by Nikkyō Niwano and Myōkō Naganuma (1889-1957) in 1938 centering on ancestor worship in relation to the *Lotus Sutra*. But, it was Niwano who took the initiative to emphasize the modernized theoretical approach to the *Lotus Sutra* (Morioka 1989). In 1963, Niwano had taken an international tour as one of a delegation of Japanese religious groups in order to meet with distinguished figures of various nations to discuss the issue of nuclear disarmament and to give them the delegation's Peace Proposal.⁹ Then, attending the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council in 1965 as an invited Buddhist guest inspired Niwano to engage in creating the World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP), which had the first convention in Kyoto, Japan, in 1970, as well as the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP)¹⁰. Along with the interfaith engagement, RK was also involved in the nuclear disarmament movements, which organized the extensive petition drive submitted to the UN¹¹, as well as the Bright Society Movement, which promotes educational and cultural activities.¹²

SG was founded by Tsunesaburō Makiguchi (1871-1944, the first president) with support by Jōsei Toda (1900-1958, the second president) as the Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai (Educational Association for Value Creation) centering on educational reformation. During WWII, the organization was severely persecuted by the Japanese military government because of their stance against State Shinto and Makiguchi passed away in prison. Toda had to start all over again to rebuild the organization after the war.¹³ With the preeminent support by Daisaku Ikeda along with the rapid economic growth of post-WWII Japan, SG gained in number and expanded its organization in both Japan and overseas. The starting point of their peace activities was Toda's declaration to abolish nuclear weapons, which he issued in 1957. Since then, Ikeda, who became the third president, has taken the initiative to engage in a wide range of peace activities mobilizing the members, such as holding exhibitions for nuclear disarmament on both a national and international scale, petition drive submitted to the UN, publishing a series of books of grass-root interviews of war experiences, among others. Its international organization (Soka Gakkai International – SGI) was founded in 1975.

(2) Niwano and the *Ekayāna* Doctrine and Its Application in RK

The *Ekayāna* doctrine, as evidenced by Niwano's scores of works relating to the *Lotus Sutra*, is appropriated to be the great single vehicle that is opened to and carries all humanity in the world. In his *Hokekyō no atarashii kaishaku (New Interpretation of the Lotus Sutra)*, Niwano explains that the Buddha taught the three vehicles, which are the learning-oriented (*śrāvakas*), experience-oriented (*pratyekabuddhas*), and action-oriented (*bodhisattvas*), as the "various expressions (*hōben* - skilful means)" of the essential truth of the Buddha in order to lead all people according to their own different abilities. (Niwano 1990: 100-101) Commenting on the words, "the various Buddha Tathāgatas only teach bodhisattvas," Niwano discusses the *Ekayāna* in a way that, once the *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas* awaken the determination to practice the *bodhisattva* path, a path that equally saves all people, those of the Two-Vehicles become the true disciples of the Buddha, that is, *bodhisattvas*. (106-108)

Along these lines, Niwano illustrates that the realization through the

path of *śrāvakas*, that of *pratyekabuddhas*, and that of *bodhisattva* to become a Buddha are all originally the same realization to become buddhas. Although one particular person can first attain enlightenment of *śrāvaka* or *pratyekabuddha* in accord with his/her own ability, everyone is in the gates of “the wisdom of the Buddha.” Those of *śrāvakas* and *pratyekabuddhas*, who passed each of their gates, can enter the foyer called the ‘*bodhisattva* practice’ and can proceed to the parlor of the ‘wisdom of the Buddha.’ (108-109) In this illustration, he reiterates the *Ekayāna* doctrine that, as if any gates including the foyer are open for all to enter the parlor, any of the three different vehicles are the gates to enter the path to become a Buddha. (112) This approach shows its accessibility and linearity allowing for all people to follow the path of Buddhahood.¹⁴

This accessibility and linearity are also illustrated in his following words: “Lastly, the Buddha said, ‘The various Buddhas expounded the teaching (of *Ekayāna*) with countless skillful means in accord with each person’s ability. Thus, it is essential to repeatedly learn these teachings and to reflect upon them in the light of everyday life, and then to make actions of the teachings.’”¹⁵ (113) Niwano, in his interpretation, particularly adds his view of “reflecting upon the (teachings) in the light of everyday life, then to make actions of the teachings.” The view points, ‘everyday life’ and ‘making actions,’ resonates with the RK’s Members’ Manifestos, which emphasizes the *bodhisattva* practice to achieve ‘the completion of the human character (*jinkaku no kansei* 人格の完成),’ which means to achieve Buddhahood. The manifestos state that the *bodhisattva* practice involves activities to create peace in the home, society, state, and the world.¹⁶

Along the line of his interpretation that connects ‘the teaching’ and ‘actions of the teaching in everyday life,’ what should be noted here is that, from the institutionalized point of view, RK has organized a concrete and practical life-style framework of “the *bodhisattva* practice” for members to participate, which is called “Donate A Meal Movement” (*Ichijiki undō* 一食運動).¹⁷ This is a practice to set aside one meal twice a month and offer the equivalent monetary contribution to help those who are suffering in the world.¹⁸ The foundation called the One Meal Peace Foundation was created, and its website states,

Dispatching the Message of the Spirit of Ekayāna to Society and to the World

This is a movement based on the spirit of *Ekayāna*, a Buddhist world view which sees that all people with diverse differences in the world are all brothers and sisters who are given birth by the one greater life-force. This is the action to respect each other's life, to have the heart to become happy together, and to move forward to worldwide peace beyond the diverse differences of race and religions, languages, among others.¹⁹

Through this activity, the members of RK are encouraged (1) to share a sense of feeling hunger with those who are suffering from poverty and/or war, (2) to pray for those who are in disparate situations, and (3) to make the set-aside meal a monetary support to the sufferers, as well as to reflect one's own covetousness and to develop the sense of humbleness.²⁰ With the monetary contribution made through this activity, the foundation has been supporting various humanitarian activities conducted internationally.²¹

These principles of the practice remind us of, in parts, of the Muslim practitioners' mindset toward Ramadan, although *Ichijiki undō* is more accessible in practical means. In one aspect, it can be considered a 'life-style (food-intake) framework' externally imposed on each of the members. At the same time, the monetary-contribution is made by his/her set-aside meal and is to be used to support the foundation's aid activities. Thus, although the activity of *Ichijiki undō* is the externally imposed life-style framework, each member who involves the activity has his/her own first-person experience, that is, an experience to view the societal and international issues as something that they themselves are involving to commit. In other words, it helps raise each member's self-awareness toward the international issues through vicariously experiencing what the sufferers' experience. Thus, for the participating members, the international support activities of the "Peace Foundation of One Meal," although huge in scale geographically and budgetarily,²² are consistent with each member's 'first-person' involvement. As cited previously, this movement is a form of their application of the *Ekayāna*

doctrine, that is, “all people with diverse differences in the world are all brothers and sisters who are given birth by the one greater life-force.” From the practitioners’ perspective, humanity is all brothers and sisters on the one ‘greater life-force (vehicle).’ ‘Vehicle’ is taken literally as ‘the starship Earth,’²³ and every single one of them is equally onboard. This application of the *Ekayāna* doctrine creates a sense of “linkage” to connect the members to the people in the world not just in a theoretical level but on a practical level of each member’s everyday life in an accessible manner. This can be called the “linkage model” of the *Ekayāna* doctrine, which connects and frames all people without discrimination.

Another point to mention with regard to the application of the *Ekayāna* doctrine by Niwano is the establishment of WCRP, as well as ACRP, of which Niwano was the major contributor.²⁴ The theoretical motivation for him to make the effort was his conviction that all teachings and truths will be “in future... united in one teaching, and one truth.”

(T)he real and the highest teaching can never be two. Though it can be expressed in various ways, in its fundamental meaning it is one.

Therefore, “the Great-vehicle Sutra called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law, the Law by which bodhisattvas are instructed and which the buddhas watch over and keep in mind” indicates neither the *Lotus Sutra* is a proper noun nor that the object of worship and veneration, the *Tathāgata* Sakyamuni, is a proper noun. Accordingly, if we interpret the paragraph in a broader sense, citing the words of all the deities in this universe – “Take refuge in this teaching and pay homage to Sakyamuni Buddha” – this cannot but be the following prediction: “At present, there exist various kinds of teachings in this *sahā*-world, and that fact prevents mankind from finding the way to a common happiness. However, in the future, every teaching and study will surely come to be united in one teaching, in one truth. At that time, this *sahā*-world will become the most holy place in the whole universe.”²⁵

This description appears in the section discussing the initial stage for

Niwano to contribute to creating the WCRP in his book, *A Buddhist Approach to Peace*. Although the term “*Ekayāna*” does not appear here, the philosophical base-note of the description perfectly resonates with the concept of the *Ekayāna* doctrine. Actualizing the unity of various teachings and truths, he states as his prediction, will come in the future. In the meantime, he turned his effort to making an international federation among diverse religious organizations, which he calls “Religious Cooperation.” Currently this international federation is called Religions for Peace which is recognized as NGO and in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with UNESCO as well as UNICEF. It can be said that the current phenomenal worldwide appearance of Religions for Peace is a result of Niwano’s vision and theoretical basis that resonates with his interpretation of the *Ekayāna* doctrine of the *Lotus Sutra*. The *Ekayāna* doctrine has been, in this aspect as well, functioning as a principle to link diverse entities of religious traditions regardless of the differences. This also fits with the “linkage model,” which we saw in our analysis of “*Ichijiki undō*.”

(3) Ikeda and the *Ekayāna* Doctrine

In his commentary on the *Lotus Sutra*, *The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra*, Ikeda discusses the issue of the *Ekayāna* doctrine, universal enlightenment, from the aspect of ‘the mutual possession of the ten-world system’ of beings, which explains that each being of the ten-world inherently possesses the ten-worlds within in a manner of ten different states of life-conditions that go from the hell state to the enlightened state (2000:147). This mutual possession of the ten-world system is expounded as an essential theme of ‘the three thousand realms in a single moment of thought’ systematized by the 6th century Chinese Buddhist, Tiantai Zhiyi, chiefly based on the *Lotus Sutra* as the essential theoretical basis of the One-Vehicle thought. This system was carried out and developed by the 13th century Japanese Buddhist, Nichiren.

Because, based on this system, one inherently possesses the ten different life states within, even those who belong to the Two-Vehicles hold a state of Buddhahood, which, Ikeda emphasizes, indicates the theoretical source of human dignity and equality. Ikeda articulates this

point, “To see ourselves in others and feel an inner oneness and sense of unity with them represents a fundamental revolution in the way we view and live our lives.” (149) For Ikeda, the *Ekayāna* system – universal enlightenment – of the *Lotus Sutra* provides the integrated approach toward universal dignity found within each individual of diverse background in the contemporary world. While ‘the Two-Vehicles’ symbolize diversity, such as different traditions’ ways of lives and different goals to achieve, ‘One-Vehicle’ symbolizes the innate Buddha nature, in other words, the ubiquity of human dignity and equal potentiality of human flourishing found in each individual.

For the application to translate the ideal state of Buddhahood inherent in all humankind, into one’s own life in this modern world, Ikeda claims ‘human revolution,’ a process of act and achievement to an inner personal transformation. It starts, he says in his article, ‘The SGI’s Peace Movement,’ from chanting *daimoku*, the title of the *Lotus Sutra* “*Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō*,” to the *Gohonzon*, that is a *mandala* originally inscribed by Nichiren based on the *Lotus Sutra* (1999:130-131). Along with this practice, each of the local SG communities organizes the monthly discussion meeting, which provides members and non-members alike an opportunity to share their life experiences based on their faith and to mutually inspire further empowerment and growth. (131) This aspect of “discussion” to, in particular, non-members can be seen as a modern redefinition of SG’s propagative activity, called *shakubuku*.²⁶ These two practices, chanting *daimoku* and participating in the discussion meeting, are the sources to manifest or activate one’s own Buddha nature, one which, Ikeda states, refers to ‘human revolution’ that creates a life-state of supreme happiness.²⁷ Based on the individuals’ endeavor of faith progressing toward ‘human revolution,’ as the institutionalized involvements, under Ikeda’s leadership, SG has unfolded their activities into the areas of peace, culture, and education on a worldwide basis.²⁸

While both RK and SG have their expansive activities in similar purpose for humanity, we can find a significant difference in SG’s activities from RK’s, in that SG does not institutionalize the interfaith activities within SG’s organizations on the national level or create or belong to any sort of interfaith federation among other religious organizations. SG has, however, conducted interfaith activities in its

auxiliary institutions, such as the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research and the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, and in the international level, such as the individual national levels among SGI.²⁹ Nevertheless, unlike RK's major role to establish the interfaith organizations like WCRP, there seems to be little interest for SG to create or institutionalize any leagues or federations that engulf various religious groups, schools or congregations.³⁰ This is most likely an intentional decision. This intention can be seen in Ikeda's following description:

(First) president Makiguchi ... strongly advocated a shift to humanitarian competition... He analyzed competition among nations as consisting of the phases of: military competition, political competition, economic competition, and humanitarian competition. ... Cooperative (humanitarian) competition, he wrote, was a process through which, working for the sake of others, one could benefit oneself even as others benefit. ... I have regularly called for us to vie with one another in the fostering of world citizens as one form of humanitarian competition. I am referring to people who, while rooted in their cultural tradition, dedicate the fruit of that culture to the cause of a lasting peace for human kind. In Buddhist terms, such people are referred to as *bodhisattvas*. My dream is to see all the world's religious and cultural traditions produce a continuous stream of such world citizens who will compete with one another to contribute to world peace.³¹

This description implies that Ikeda's focus is not on forming leagues or creating coalitions of religious organizations but on fostering "individuals" to become global citizens and encouraging their contribution to the cause as a resulting flowering of their own "human revolution." According to Ikeda's description above, the individuals who contribute to the lasting peace in the world are called '*bodhisattvas*,' regardless of his/her own religious or cultural traditions. In other words, for Ikeda, anyone in diverse backgrounds who contributes to the betterment of humankind and to world peace is equally considered to be "*bodhisattvas*." Ikeda sees each of religious and cultural traditions as a 'locus,' in which the capable individuals of "*bodhisattvas*" are fostered, and these various traditions

should participate with the cooperative ‘humanitarian competition’ to produce such individuals. In this, we can see Ikeda’s contemporary take of *Ekayāna*, that, while faith communities and religious traditions are so diverse in the world, each of them is a ‘locus,’ and, to an extent, a skilful means, to compete with each other to foster the capable individuals who have immense potentiality to contribute to the cause for humanity.³² With Ikeda’s theoretical context, this can be reiterated that he is focusing on actualizing or manifesting one’s own profound potentiality which is equally immanent to every individual, and anyone who is fully exhibiting it through contributing to the cause is called “*bodhisattvas*.” This approach can be considered as the “activating model” of the *Ekayāna* doctrine.³³

This focus on individual flourishing accompanies the theme of Ikeda’s lifework, *Human Revolution* and *New Human Revolution*, “A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation, and, further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind.”³⁴

Conclusion

This paper examines how religious traditions have been responding to the threat of nuclear weapons in the discourse of humanity through focusing on two well-known figures among Japanese contemporary religious communities, Niwano of RK and Ikeda of SG. Although this case-study involves the comparison between two central figures of major religious organizations in Japan, it does not aim to make a normative conclusion, but to show the two different applications of one particular Buddhist theory, the *Ekayāna* doctrine, for the cause by these two figures. Niwano played a major role to establish the WCRP among other leagues, both national- and international-wide, which are the stages of linkage among various religious traditions and groups. In its institutional aspect, among many activities in the RK, this paper looked at *ichijiki-undō* as the activity to create the internal link for the RK members, a link to connect their own Buddhist practices to people in the world through the worldwide peace-building activities. In particular, with regard to the *Ekayāna* doctrine, in the aspect of Niwano’s standpoint who is advocating *Ichijiki undō*, all people in the world are already linked into an equal

connection, that is, “One-Vehicle,” with the members of RK as the brothers and sisters, which this paper calls the “linkage model” of the *Ekayāna* doctrine. Ikeda, on the other hand, does not seem to affirm to participate in any federations of religious organizations. Rather, his focus is on each individual’s human flourishing, “human revolution,” equally possible for every individual, which makes each of them significant in leading the changes to the betterment of humanity. In terms of *Ekayāna*, from Ikeda’s aspect, it signifies the point that everyone possesses his/her own immense potentiality that can be equally activated. This paper calls his approach as the “activating model” of *Ekayāna* doctrine.

Regardless of their differences, both figures consider *Ekayāna* as the inherent Buddha-nature immanent in all people. This aspect calls to mind the ‘original enlightenment thought’ developed during medieval Japan. While remarkably influential to pre-modern Japanese culture, ‘original enlightenment thought’ created degenerate effects among monastic, as well as secular communities.³⁵ Recalling this medieval development gives us, however, an interesting light to see the role that the contemporary Buddhist figures Niwano and Ikeda have played in modern times. Instead of giving a complete and blind affirmation to people and their contemporary situations like the original enlightenment thought had played in Japanese history, these two figures have unfolded *Ekayāna* doctrine to society in a way that functions as a principle of social-change and peace-building for humanity in both national and international arenas.

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Notes

- 1 This paper is based on the author’s presentation at the International Lotus Sutra Seminar 2017.
- 2 Human Rights Committee, General Comment 14, Article 6 (Twenty-third session,

- 1984), Compilation of General Comments and General Recommendations Adopted by Human Rights Treaty Bodies, U.N. Doc. HRI/GEN/1/Rev.1 at 18 (1994).
- 3 International Court of Justice, 'REPORTS OF JUDGMENTS, ADVISORY OPINIONS AND ORDERS "LEGALITY OF THE THREAT OR USE OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS" Advisory Opinion of 8 July 1996.'
 - 4 "The Conference expresses its deep concern at the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of any use of nuclear weapons and reaffirms the need for all States at all times to comply with applicable international law, including international humanitarian law." http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=NPT/CONF.2010/50%20%28VOL.I%29
 - 5 The nine inscriptions among fifty-nine Gandharan Buddhist inscriptions pay homage to the three individuals, which are, all Buddhas (G. *budha*), all *pratyekabuddha* (G. *pracegasabudha*), and all arhats (G. *arahamta*, *arahadi*). While "bodhisattva" was not mentioned as one of the three-hold paradigm in the manuscripts but mentioned as "bodhisattva training (G. *bosisatvaśikṣā*, Skt. *bodhisatvaśikṣā*, Strauch 2010:28.)," these three, Buddhas, *pratyekabuddhas*, and *arhats*, are revered individuals who have hierarchically different spiritual attainments (Baums 2012, Falk 2014, Apple 2014).
 - 6 However, literature like *Daoxing banruojing* 道行般若經, one of the earliest *Prajña* corpus translated into Chinese by Lokakṣema during the second century CE, shows an engenderment of "one path" in its discourse: "As the Buddha said, ... (t)hose three (those who seek arhatship, those who seek [the state of] pretyekabuddha, and those who seek Buddhahood) are not considered as three. As Subhūti said, they belong to one and the same path." (T.224, 454a 20-21; Karashima 2011:299-300) Although this description of "one path (一道 *ekam eva yānam*)" in this Chinese translation is collated in later Sanskrit text as "the Buddha-vehicle, the bodhisattva-vehicle." (Karashima 2011: 300n386), the detailed analysis shows that the inclusive discourse among all three paths and vehicles had yet to fully develop (Apple 2014:263).
 - 7 T.262, 19a10-11 "隨諸衆生 宿世善根 又知成熟 未成熟者 種種壽量 分別已知 於一乘道 隨宜說三", and T.262, 26a22 "但是如來方便之力 於一佛乘分別說三". Along with this integral approach towards the teachings and paths of the Two-Vehicles, the Buddha Śākyamuni in the *Lotus Sutra* called all the disciples including those who belong to the Two-Vehicles as "Buddha's children" and predicted their future enlightenment to become buddhas.
 - 8 Stone (2003) has authored an extensive study on original enlightenment thought in medieval Japan. For the critical aspect of this thought system, see Tamura (1973). Miyata (2002) introduces the summary of Stone's voluminous work in Japanese.
 - 9 RK's nuclear disarmament activities since 1970 are recorded in the article by Katsuji Suzuki (2010).
 - 10 ACRP's first convention was held in Singapore in 1976.
 - 11 The Development of Rishso Kosei-kai's Nuclear Disarmament Activities http://www.rk-world.org/dharmaworld/dw_2010aprjunerkkdisarmament.aspx
 - 12 Robert Kisala (1999: 106-107). Niwano (1989: 251-254).
 - 13 Kisala (1999: 74-81).
 - 14 This explanation can be considered 'the three carts' position among two different theoretical positions of 'the three carts' and 'the four carts.' The former sees there are three carts of *śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, and *bodhisattva*, while the latter four carts of

- śrāvaka*, *pratyekabuddha*, *bodhisattva*, and *bodhisattva* that proceeds to Buddhahood separate from the bodhisattva in the third cart.
- 15 T.262. 10b15-16. “舍利弗当知 諸佛法如是 以万億方便 随宜而說法”。
- 16 *Rissho Kosei-kai*. P.6.
- 17 This activity has initiated by Shōroku shintō yamatoyama in Aomori prefecture in 1974 in response to the statement issued at the second conference of the WCRP held in Belgian. Niwano had supported the activity and expanded it to the RK's institutionalized movement in 1975. <http://www.ichijiki.org/about/history/>
- 18 See Donate a Meal Movement, <http://www.rk-world.org/peace/meal.aspx> and Rissho Kosai-kai International of North America <http://www.buddhistcenter-rkina.org/>
- 19 <http://www.ichijiki.org/about/outline/>
- 20 *Rissho Kosei-kai*. P.8.
- 21 *Rissho Kosei-kai*. P.9-14.
- 22 *Rissho Kosei-kai*. P.11-14.
- 23 *Rissho Kosei-kai*. P.8.
- 24 Federation of New Religious Organizations of Japan 新宗連 established in 1951 is also a fruit of the effort that Niwano took initiative.
- 25 Niwano 1977: 68-69.
- 26 Stone (1994) has a detailed description of this propagation form, which the religious schools and groups of Nichiren's tradition have carried.
- 27 In comparison with RK's way to apply the theory into the activities in the real life and society, what is notable is that, unlike '*ichijiki-undō*' of RK, SG does not set in any 'life-style framework,' imposed on each member, such as the way of food-intake. This does not mean that SG does not have the monetary offering system onto the members. However, there seems to be no relationship to any advocacy relating to the members' life-style change to raise individual monetary contribution. Ikeda calls that the donation to the organization should come from the member's faith and the spirit to contribute to *kosenrufu* (expanding the Buddhist Law). Ikeda in his work, *New Human Revolution*, does not mention the donation as 'bodhisattva practice.' The description is read that the donation is neither an obligation nor systematized as a part of the required religious practices. Instead, it is depicted as the privilege of the willing members, which generates the greater benefit. (Ikeda 1996: 106-116) For SG, based on these readings, the prime practices to develop one's own spiritual progress are, as Ikeda clearly mentioned, solely chanting *daimoku* and attending the discussion meeting.
- 28 For peace activity, SG's major focus is nuclear abolition as it carries the second president Toda's declaration mentioned above. It established the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research for the purpose. Cooperating with UN organizations, SG has also created large-scale exhibitions, such as "Nuclear Weapons – Threat to Our World," and holds them in various venues worldwide, such as public official buildings, universities, and local churches. Many of these exhibitions are hosted by public organizations or universities sponsored by the SGI organization in its respective country. For the area of culture, SG established Min-On Concert Association, Fuji Art Museum, and Institute of Oriental Philosophy, among other cultural and academic institutes. In the area of education, as well, various level of schools have been founded as Soka school system from kindergartens to universities in worldwide (Ikeda 1999: 132-136). As a NGO, SG has a formal tie with the UN, ECOSOC, and UNHCR.

- 29 It has to be mentioned, however, that Ikeda oftentimes emphasizes the importance of interfaith dialogue among diverse faith communities. See Ikeda (1997:119-122).
- 30 SG or SGI does not belong to any leagues of religious schools and groups, such as Japanese League of New Religions, Japanese League of Religions, or World Council of Religions for Peace. However, it should be noted as a new development that SGI has joined “Faith Communities Concerned about the Humanitarian Consequences of Nuclear Weapons” with the representatives of other faith traditions, such as the Christian, Jewish, Muslim among others, and submitted the Public Statements to call for nuclear abolition in the high-profile UN conferences since 2015. The latest statement is as follows: <http://www.sgi.org/content/files/resources/ngo-resources/peace-disarmament/ptnw-joint-statement-july-2017.pdf>
- 31 Ikeda 1999: 136-137.
- 32 Ikeda has initiated numerous dialogues with distinguished people from around the world who represent specific nations, cultures, and academics among others. Ikeda’s online site provides the full list of his published dialogues. (<http://www.daisakuikeda.org/sub/books/books-by-category/full-list-of-published-dialogues.html>) In this list, we find no interlocutor who only represents a particular religious community. Nevertheless, in his dialogues, Ikeda has carried out in-depth interfaith dialogue with his interlocutors in cases where they have their own faith backgrounds.
- 33 Ikeda also revitalizes the traditional Buddhist concept of the relationship between mentor and disciple in contemporary democratic discourse and emphasizes it as an impetus to “activate” one’s own potentiality. This point deserves further discussion in future research.
- 34 <http://www.sgi.org/about-us/buddhism-in-daily-life/human-revolution.html>
- 35 For the detail, see footnote 8.