

From the Commemorating Symposium “Dissemination and Reception of Major Teachings of the Buddhist Canon”

The Concept of Co-existence as Seen in the *Lotus Sūtra*

Yoichi Kawada

Translated by Shin'ichi Hashimoto

I deeply appreciate so many people coming to attend today's symposium. As one of the organizers, I offer my heartfelt gratitude—in particular to the numerous specialists who have honored us with their presence. It is my sincere hope that the entire day will be filled with lively discussion.

“A House on Fire”: The World Engulfed by the Flames of the Three Poisons

In the Simile and Parable chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the phenomenal world in which we live is referred to as “a house on fire,” and this is the world in which the Buddha appears. The *sūtra* reads:

...his great pity and great compassion constant and unflagging; at all times he seeks what is good and will bring benefit to all.

“He is born into the threefold world, a burning house, rotten and old, in order to save living beings from the fires of birth, aging, sickness, and death, care, suffering, foolishness, misunderstanding, and the three poisons; to teach and convert them and enable them to attain supreme perfect enlightenment.¹

The “threefold world” mentioned above symbolizes the phenomenal world in which people live—a world full of suffering, as represented by birth, aging, sickness and death. This world is engulfed by the flames of the three poisons (greed, anger and foolishness). It is stated that the reason and mission for the Buddha's appearance in this world is to quench the fires of the three poisons and to save all people from suffering through deep compassion.

The first of the three poisons, greed, includes not only materialistic

desires, but also the energy that drives attachment to power and fame. Once consumed by greed, there is constant frustration of being unsatisfied, as the desire for more increases continuously. Greed drives people to do anything to try to fulfill their desire, including sacrificing or exploiting others which leads to severed ties between people, and as a result, may even lead to the destruction of oneself and others.

The second of the three poisons, anger, is the explosion of malice, hatred, resentment and jealousy that occurs when one's selfish desires are not satisfied. When this energy increases, it can cause harm in the form of violence and aggression. Anger is an earthly desire that drives violence to sever ties between people, causing hatred and harm and may also lead to the destruction of oneself and others.

The third poison, foolishness, is the same as fundamental darkness, or the absence of light. "Light" refers to the truth of the universe which shines as brilliant wisdom. Therefore, darkness is the fundamental earthly desire that shrouds and hides this brilliant light.

Śākyamuni Buddha dispelled the darkness, broke through the fundamental earthly desire that hides the light, and discovered and embodied the ultimate truth of the universe, Dharma. This Law (Dharma), is replete with wisdom, shows us the law of dependent origination, and is a working of the Buddha's great compassion. The Law leads people to



Commemorative Symposium in front of UNESCO emblem: approximately 350 scholars and citizens attended

salvation and shows us many paths toward human co-existence, cultural and societal co-existence, and co-existence with nature. All of these multi-dimensional paths of co-existence of humanity become closed at the most basic level when the earthly desire of foolishness, or fundamental darkness, works to cause division between living beings, and leads all to confusion and suffering.

Therefore, it can be said that fundamental darkness is the most profound earthly desire as it is an expression of fundamental egoism that causes anger, greed and all other earthly desires.

In the *Lotus Sūtra*, earthly desires represented by the three poisons are referred to as the flames that envelop the house. These flames originate from the life of individuals, but spread to the family, ethnic groups, nations, humanity as a whole and the entire world in which we live.

In the Expedient Means chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, this world is referred to as “an evil world of the five impurities,”² and Buddhist scholar T’ien-t’ai of China refers to this world as condition of five impurities³ in The Words and Phrases of the *Lotus Sūtra*. The impurities, or defilements, of the phenomenal world are fundamentally the impurities of earthly desire and impurity of thought within human life, and from there the impurity of living beings arise. Furthermore, this becomes the impurity of life span, and these four impurities eventually give rise to the impurity of the age.

The impurity of earthly desire is essentially greed, anger, foolishness, arrogance and doubt, and the impurity of thought distorts thinking, such as views of self-existence and possession, extreme views and erroneous views etc. In other words, extremist ways of thinking that come from prejudice, discrimination, and an adherence to a particular ideology.

When one’s life is invaded by the impurities of earthly desire or thought, the balance between body and mind is lost, and the body’s resistance is divided and weakened. This is where the impurity of living beings builds strength. When the life-force of living beings begins to wane, the continuity of body and mind, i.e., life span, is shortened. This results in the impurity of life span. Thanks to tremendous advances in contemporary science and medicine, we are now able to support the continuation of the body and mind. However, the internal energy to drive life itself, our life-force, is decreasing. Evidence for this is the increasing number of cases of manic depression, schizophrenia, the plethora of anxieties, and suicide as time progresses.

The impurities of earthly desire and thought work to deteriorate the life of living beings, causing life-force to weaken. This affects not only the individual (mind and body) but also spreads to the family,

ethnic group, nation and humanity. The various levels of community (society), and the culture cherished within those communities, is influenced by earthly desire and evil thought. They are divided, allowing confusion to reign. The internal power to hold everyone together wanes, eventually leading toward the destruction of those communities. The earthly desire emanating from individuals intrudes into communities (society), culture and civilization and weakens them. Together with nature's ecosystems, the "age" created by humanity is divided, and this leads to confusion and destruction. This process is what is meant by the impurity of the age.

The contemporary world has been supported by great strides made in scientific technology. Human society in a globalized world currently creates the age of a world civilization. The Century of Violence and War, which was the 20th century, is a prime example of the impurity of the age, where the whole of humanity was bogged down in a quagmire of impurity. Unfortunately, we have not escaped this impurity of the age in the 21st century.

Buddhism Spread on the Path of Co-existence

It is the duty of religions to show a path of change for society and civilization—to create a network of human beings who shine with a spirit of goodness. This is the only way to overcome the ills of the three poisons, and transform the current situation in politics, economics, finance and even the human spirit which have been affected by them.

In Buddhism, practitioners seek to eliminate the earthly desires of the three poisons that give rise to the four sufferings by training themselves in the ways of the Dharma awakened to by Śākyamuni. They also aim to manifest the goodness contained within the life state of Bodhi in the realm of Nirvana. It is religion that revives the human spirit, and with harmony as a starting point, strives to build societies, cultures, and civilizations for altruistic practice.

Over the span of two thousand five hundred years, Buddhism, which originated in India, spread to Sri Lanka in South Asia, to the Thailand and Myanmar of Southeast Asia, and via the Silk Road to the north, spread to China, the Korean Peninsula and Japan in East Asia. It spread to Tibet and Nepal as well, completely encompassing all of Asia. In the regions to which Buddhism spread, there existed a long history of exchange between a wide variety of cultures and civilizations. In other words, Buddhism encountered many unknown civilizations.

In Buddhism, there is a way of teaching beliefs which considers the

time and place where it is being taught. This way is called the precept of adapting to local customs.⁴ This means, as long as the true intent of Buddhism is not lost, the way it is practiced can be adapted according to the customs and traditions of that particular local area. Buddhism was able to maintain the “Truth (Dharma)” to which Śākyamuni was enlightened, while at the same time adapting to local customs and traditions. By doing so, this teaching became accepted by all peoples of Asia, overcoming differences of ethnicity, nation, culture or civilization.

As the Buddhism spread, the texts were translated into numerous languages. Due to characteristic differences in the language, some of the ideas within the philosophical framework were expanded or interpreted in new ways. In addition, as Buddhism encountered different ways of thinking, philosophical views, morals, customs and religions within new cultures and civilizations, there was a mutual influencing of each other. This led to the flowering of a Buddhist civilization that found unique expression in Buddhist statues, art, literature, architecture and landscaping. Furthermore, ideas in politics, social welfare and medicine were also affected. As a matter of course, because of the difference in ways of thinking, Buddhism encounters with new ethnic groups, new cultures, and new civilizations sometimes created tension or fierce conflict—from the individual to the ethnic group level and even to the national level. Earthly desires (three poisons) erupted within these situations, and history records reactions ranging from resistance to Buddhist ideas to exclusion or persecution.

However, for the most part, Buddhism and the new culture were both able to change, and discover a path toward co-existence, symbiosis, harmony and oneness, thereby enabling Buddhism to be accepted in various areas throughout the region. The spread of Buddhism caused stress in the new ethnic groups, cultures and civilizations because of the difference in ways of thinking, but this was not a case of division and fragmentation due to earthly desires. This meeting spurred activation of the spirit of goodness between each other toward symbiosis and creation. Through this process of diversification and spreading throughout Asia, a wealth of wisdom and altruism (compassion) for harmony, symbiosis, unification and creation was developed.

Today, literally, in thinking about the possibility of sustainability for human civilization throughout the entire world, we can seek to learn peace and co-existence from Buddhist teachings as a model. There is much we can gain from the wisdom and passion, i.e., global compassion of Buddhism as it transformed and spread throughout Asia over the course of two thousand five hundred years. I feel this is the significance

of this symposium—to have specialists share their thoughts about this pressing topic.

Three Major Principles in the *Lotus Sūtra*

Among the many Buddhist teachings, the *Lotus Sūtra* has been one of the most popular with East Asian ethnic groups, influencing thought, culture, religion, civilization and many other areas of life. The *Lotus Sūtra* contains precious wisdom to lead the Global Civilization toward peace and co-existence. There are three major principles presented in the *Lotus Sūtra*: 1) attainment of enlightenment for all people, 2) the Eternal Buddha and 3) practicing the bodhisattva way.

Attainment of Enlightenment for All People

The first principle, the attainment of enlightenment for all people, is introduced in the Expedient Means chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, where it states, the single most important reason for the Buddha's appearance in this world lies in creating the cause for people to reach enlightenment. The Buddha "open(s)...show(s)...and...awaken(s) people...to enter the path of Buddha wisdom..."⁵ According to T'ien-t'ai, "Buddha wisdom," as mentioned here, means the same thing as "Buddha nature." It is the goal of the Buddha to open and show the path, to help people to awaken and to enter the path of Buddhist practice, so that they can manifest their Buddha wisdom, which all people inherently possess.

The basis for the dignity of human beings is expressed in this passage in the *Lotus Sūtra*. Since all living beings have a Buddha nature and the capacity to manifest it, this signifies equality of human rights. More specific examples of this equality offered in the *Lotus Sūtra* are the enlightenment of the people of the two vehicles, evil persons, and women (who are said to be incapable of enlightenment in most other teachings). In other words, race, sex, occupation, culture, ethnic group, family status, religion and physical condition cease to be distinguishing factors. All living beings are considered equal as they each possess an equal potential for Buddhahood.

In this way, the earthly desires that dwell within the hearts of human beings—especially evil thought of discrimination and prejudice—can be destroyed. Not only this, but by manifesting their Buddha nature, all human beings can express their individuality and unique characters. Buddha nature is endowed with a bountiful spirit of goodness containing compassion, non-violence, wisdom, love for humanity, courage, trust, hope, control over desires, capability, sensitivity and life energy. From

this perspective, all people can engage with all others on an equal basis, showing mutual respect toward one another. The principle of that all people can attain enlightenment allows everyone to overcome discrimination and prejudice, respect others equally and live harmoniously in society. This serves as a model for human co-existence.

In addition, in the Parable of the Medicinal Herbs chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the co-existence not only for humans but also for all living things, is presented as a model of harmonious society in the parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees.⁶ The three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees that appear in the parable represent all the unique plants that receive equal nourishment from heaven and earth, and serve as a model of symbiosis for all living things. Using this imagery, the relationship between the Buddha and all people is explained.⁷

The Buddha's teachings are like the rain that falls from a great cloud, which falls on all living things equally. However, like the unique plants described in the metaphor, people have different religious capacities to understand the Buddha's teachings. The explanation of this difference is the original intent of this parable.

The unique characteristics of each plant are analogous to the unique characteristics of human beings. Nichiren expresses this uniqueness as the principle of cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms.⁸ Applying the image of the medicinal herbs and trees to individual human beings, we can view this as a flowering of each person's unique character. If we apply the image of plants to cultures created by various ethnic groups, we can view this as a flourishing multicultural society in which each unique culture is allowed to fully express itself. In accordance with the principle of cherry, plum, peach and damson blossoms, all cultures are able to express their uniqueness and compete to flower more fully. In this model of the co-existence of cultures, people possess pride in their own culture, but also respect the culture of others. There is mutual praise and mutual learning from each other's differences. This forms the basis for the realization of a culture of peace. The parable of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees represent the co-existence of humans and cultures, but can also be extended to represent co-existence with the natural world around us. Symbiosis with nature is a necessary part of building a society of co-existing humanity within the context of the greater universe.

Eternal Buddha

The second major principle, the Eternal Buddha, is expressed in the Life

Span of the Thus Come One chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* as the Buddha of time with no beginning. The principle of the Eternal Buddha is expounded in the *Lotus Sūtra* by perceiving the truth of Śākyamuni's life.⁹ The metaphor of the "five hundred dust particle kalpas" is presented to indicate how long ago in the distant past it was that the Buddha actually achieved enlightenment. It also states that the Buddha's life will extend into the future, twice the amount of time from the distant past to the present. In other words, the lifespan of the Buddha is in fact, eternal. Śākyamuni as the Eternal Buddha is at one with the Eternal Law. Therefore, the Eternal Śākyamuni is the Eternal Savior Buddha.

Śākyamuni Buddha's activities of salvation from the time of his enlightenment in the eternal past have continued as described in the passage:

Ever since then I have been constantly in this saha world, preaching the Law, teaching and converting.¹⁰

Since his enlightenment, Śākyamuni used various techniques to offer guidance, provide for people's needs, and lead them to salvation. Concerning these acts of utter compassion, the Buddha says, "I have never for a moment neglected."¹¹

The Ceremony in the Air, explained in the *Lotus Sūtra*, describes a meeting between the Eternal Buddha and a large group of other buddhas and bodhisattvas from throughout the universe, who were originally dispatched by the Eternal Buddha. Here, the concept of the "unification of diversity" is introduced, which is a convergence of diverse things into one. This is depicted as the buddhas that were dispatched throughout the universe returning to be with the Eternal Buddha and to hear his teachings. Then, they disperse, going back to whence they came. This dispersion symbolizes the opposite concept of diverging from one to the many. After gathering with the Eternal Buddha and the Eternal Law, the buddhas of the ten directions and three existences, the bodhisattvas, and the common people return to their local areas. This imagery further captures an expanded image of the relationships within the universal network of dependent origination, where all beings function in individual ways within a framework of mutual connection with all others.

This is like a dynamic melody of dependent origination played by the symphony of the universe. The many buddhas, and all things that exist, are a part of this symphony of dependent origination of the entire universe—each member having a unique role and each owing its existence to its connection to others. This is the world-view that is illustrated in

the *Lotus Sūtra*. This kind of world view, or view of the cosmos, is what provides the basis for human co-existence, cultural and social co-existence, and co-existence with nature. In addition, the driving force for allowing co-existence on all these levels is the dynamic harmony of our co-existence with the greater cosmos. The metaphor contained in the Life Span of the Thus Come One chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* represents the fact that the Buddha nature in all people is at one with the Eternal Buddha and the Eternal Law.

Practice of the Bodhisattva Way

The third major principle is the practice of the Bodhisattva Way. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, numerous bodhisattvas appear. First of all, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the bodhisattvas who vow to spread the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* after the Buddha's passing. The depiction of their appearance in the Emerging from the Earth chapter states, "The bodies of these bodhisattvas were all golden in hue, with the thirty-two features and an immeasurable brightness."¹² This indicates that their appearance was no different than that of the Buddha.

There are four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Among these bodhisattvas were four leaders. The first was called Superior Practices, the second was called Boundless Practices, the third was called Pure Practices, and the fourth was called Firmly Established Practices.¹³

In the Teacher of the Law chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra*, a passage describes the mission of those who uphold and spread the teachings, "he or she is the envoy of the thus come one. He has been dispatched by the thus come one and carries out the thus come one's work."¹⁴ This is the significance of the existence of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. In other words, they are the envoys of the Buddha after his passing, and dispatched by him to carry on the Buddha's work, which is to help save humanity.

The *Lotus Sūtra* explains the expected actions of a Bodhisattva of the Earth, introducing one of Śākyamuni's past existences, that of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging as an exemplary model of behavior. Nichiren comments on this saying, "The heart of the Buddha's lifetime of teachings is the *Lotus Sūtra*, and the heart of the practice of the *Lotus Sūtra* is found in the 'Never Disparaging' chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Śākyamuni Buddha, the

lord of teachings, lies in his behavior as a human being.”¹⁵

The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging chapter describes the practice of bowing and veneration carried out by a lone bodhisattva named Never Disparaging in an age when arrogant monks wielded great authority. This bodhisattva said to everyone he met, “I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance. Why? Because you all practice the bodhisattva way and will then be able to attain buddhahood.”¹⁶

However, in response to the actions of Never Disparaging, who did not have any official capacity, many people doubted his sincerity and showered him with slander, and sometimes even resorted to violence by trying to hit him with staves and stones. The bodhisattva, while dodging the attacks, would continue saying, “I would never dare treat you with disparagement, as you are certain to attain Buddhahood.” On his deathbed, Never Disparaging heard the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra* coming from the Ceremony in the Air as Awesome Sound King entered nirvana. Hearing the teachings purified his six sense organs, and he was able to extend the length of his life. Seeing this, the arrogant priests and the common people came to believe Never Disparaging’s words, and also listened to the teachings of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

The practice of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging was one of truly respecting the Buddha nature in each and every person. By doing so, he helped nurture the spirit of goodness within people’s lives through non-violence and dialogue. Under all circumstances, he believed in the Buddha nature within each person and responded to them with a spirit of goodness, non-violence and dialogue. In modern terms, Mahatma Gandhi’s non-violent movement against British rule, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.’s civil rights movement, and the actions of Nelson Mandela all share this same spirit.

The Bodhisattva Way taught in the *Lotus Sūtra* takes many practical forms such as Bodhisattva Medicine King, who vowed to free people in “a burning house in the threefold world” from illness. Today, this is the spirit functioning behind the movement to guarantee basic needs such as food, water, medical services, and health—an expression of the right for all people to pursue well-being and longevity. Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound represents the freedom of artistic expression, and symbolizes the workings of artistic creativity. Bodhisattvas Universal Worthy and Manjushri, both vow to protect academic and philosophical freedom, which is the function of creativity in thinking, in academies and in the sciences.

The bodhisattva who turns his or her ear toward the yearnings of the

common people to obtain secular benefits and assists them is Perceiver of the World's Sounds (or the Bestower of Fearlessness). By helping people in this way, people can bring about a fearless state of life nothing. The actions of this bodhisattva to make the earnest wishes of the common people come true in society are the contemporary function of protecting the security of human life. This is done by achieving freedom from violence, freedom from political authoritarianism, freedom from fear of natural disasters and the freedom from fear of poison, to name a few.

Characteristics of Global Citizen Found in Bodhisattva

The bodhisattvas that appear above within the *Lotus Sūtra* help contribute toward human co-existence, cultural and societal co-existence and co-existence with the natural world. These bodhisattvas represent the specific qualities that are necessary in creating a society of symbiosis of humanity. In contemporary terms, these qualities could be listed as the conditions necessary to become global citizens of the 21st century.

Next, I would like to elaborate further on the characteristics of the bodhisattvas who appear in the *Lotus Sūtra* as models of global citizens who can lead the global civilization of today toward peace and co-existence.

The first requirement of a global citizen is a correct view of life and death, as this makes possible the protection of the dignity of human beings and the dignity of life. This view of life and death must be supported by a grand cosmology. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, such a grand cosmology is narrated in the Ceremony in the Air. In the Life Span of the Thus Come One chapter, the metaphor of *kalpas* as dust particles in numberless major world systems expresses a cosmology of eternal time and the Eternal Buddha who is the ultimate manifestation within this cosmology. The Eternal Buddha is at one with the Eternal Law, making the life of the universe itself the Buddha, an Eternal Savior Buddha.

The second requirement of a global citizen is an understanding of the principle contained within the Expedient Means chapter which states that all living beings have the potential for Buddhahood. The Eternal Savior Buddha is an important basis for this principle. The Buddha nature inside each individual has equal potential to manifest, no matter what the person's race, sex, ethnic group, culture, religion or standing at birth might be. This equality of the potential for Buddhahood serves as a basis for the dignity of all human life. This view overcomes all prejudice and discrimination, and becomes the driving force for manifesting a spirit of goodness such as compassion, wisdom and control of desires.

The third requirement of a global citizen is to be aware of one's mission to contribute to the creation of a sustainable global civilization that brings peace and happiness to humanity as a whole. In the *Lotus Sūtra*, this is expressed as the mission of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who carry on the Buddha's work as his envoys after his passing.

The fourth requirement of a global citizen is to be a model of non-violence, as embodied by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging's practice of venerating others. A peaceful co-existence needs to be created through appropriate non-violent means. This requires the use of much wisdom and compassion, such as dialogue, interaction, participation, education, culture, and awareness-raising activities.

The fifth requirement of a global citizen is the ability to realize a culture of peace. This is symbolized in the Parable of the Medicinal Herbs chapter, as the metaphor of the three kinds of medicinal herbs and two kinds of trees illustrates. Having a view of a culture of peace and a view of the co-existence of many cultures is brought about by realizing the principle of "many becoming one" and "one diversifying into many." These principles of symbiosis are needed in order to co-exist with nature. The flowering of unique abilities must be made possible and strengthened as only within this dynamic harmony can the unity of the whole be kept. In order to create a society of peace that allows the co-existence of many different cultures, individuals must contribute in their own unique way.

The sixth requirement of a global citizen is the ability to aim for self-realization of both oneself and others. Living with a spirit of altruism helps overcome one's own egoism, and as one contributes toward the peace of humanity as a whole, self-realization is attained. Working for the happiness of oneself and others is the path to self-realization.

The seventh requirement of a global citizen is the ability to aim for a "self" that can balance diversity and unity. This can be done by learning from the construction of a bodhisattvic "self" which is based on the "larger self" (as Bodhisattva Superior Practices exemplifies). In the *Lotus Sūtra*, one of the abilities of a bodhisattva is to adapt to different circumstances in order to save a particular person. For example, it is said that Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound can take on thirty-four different forms, and Perceiver of the World's Sounds can take on thirty-three.

The eighth requirement of a global citizen is the ability to dedicate their efforts in a local area or a specific field, while keeping the bigger global picture in mind. Being at the forefront of activities is important, but doing so with an awareness of how that contributes to the whole.

The ninth requirement of a global citizen is the ability to harmonize

the various levels of the self. This means, dynamically managing your ethnic self, your national identity, and your awareness as a member of a global civilization. While accumulating experiences on a local level, one should expand and globalize the area of action and broadness of mind. Then, the self carries out one's vow to continue working concretely to help others and to contribute to humanity as a whole.

The tenth requirement of a global citizen is to continue tackling problems that face humanity. The issues symbolized by "a burning house in the threefold world" are issues such as conflict, terrorism, nuclear armament, weapons of mass destruction, global mammonism and structural violence. These result in situations of inequity, suppression of human rights, refugee problems, and bioethics. To continue challenging these issues, global citizens have to pursue inter-civilizational and inter-religious dialogue, and to expand the network of goodness in the image of the net of dependent origination. Through dialogues and cooperation between civilizations and religions, people can deepen their own civilizations or cultures, while respecting the spiritual legacies created over time from the beginning of humanity and learning the wisdom each other. The focus of the dialogue should revolve around how to overcome the issues that continue to perplex humanity and how to create a civilization of co-existence. The most impending questions that all religions must try to answer are the questions of how to achieve peace within humankind and how to achieve symbiosis with nature.

The three major principles within the *Lotus Sūtra* and the other teachings within it were transmitted along with other Buddhist teachings throughout Asia and its ethnic groups, cultures and civilizations. Some ideas underwent considerable transformation within this process of dissemination, but overall or partially, became the fabric of the region. The spread of the *Lotus Sūtra* for the most part was not a cause of division and confrontation. It took place within a context of goodness that allowed for differences to be appreciated, and mutual assistance was given in evolving and developing new cultures, ways of thinking, religions and civilizations. These took expression in the form of the copying of manuscripts of the *Lotus Sūtra*, translation into different languages, philosophy, religion, ethics, morals, custom, ceremony, literature, art, architecture, politics and welfare. This process of the global acceptance, transformation and co-creation of the *Lotus Sūtra* and other Buddhist teachings can perhaps provide insightful wisdom and serve as a model for a sustainable global civilization and human co-existence. In addition, this process also contains suggestions about how to nurture the qualities of global citizens who can give life to this new civilization.

Finally, it is my hope that this symposium will help spur the experts who have joined us to share with us their insights and wisdom about the *Lotus Sūtra* and other Buddhist teachings from a historical change perspective.

Notes

¹ *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, trans. by Burton Watson (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2009), p. 94.

² *Ibid.*, p. 66.

“...the buddhas appear in the evil worlds of the five impurities. These are the so-called impurity of the age, impurity of desire, impurity of living beings, impurity of view, and impurity of life span.”

³ T no. 1718, 34. 53a18–19: *The Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra*.

⁴ *Zuihō-bini* [precept of adapting to local customs] from the definition in *The Soka Gakkai Dictionary of Buddhism*, ed. by The English Buddhist Dictionary Committee (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2002), p. 516.

“A Buddhist precept indicating that, in matters the Buddha did not expressly either permit or forbid, one may act in accordance with local custom so long as the fundamental principles of Buddhism are not violated. The precept of adapting to local customs was employed when Buddhism made its way to various regions that differed in culture, tradition, manners and customs, climate, and other natural and human aspects. While this guidance does not prohibit or prescribe any specific behavior, it is described as a precept.”

⁵ *The Lotus Sutra.*, p. 64.

“The buddhas, the world-honored ones, wish to open the door of buddha wisdom to all living beings, to allow them to attain purity. That is why they appear in the world. They wish to show the buddha wisdom to living beings, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to cause living beings to awaken to the buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. They wish to induce living beings to enter the path of buddha wisdom, and therefore they appear in the world. Shariputra, this is the one great reason for which the buddhas appear in the world.”

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 134–5.

“Kashyapa, it is like the plants and trees, thickets and groves, and the medicinal herbs, widely ranging in variety, each with its own name and hue, that grow in the hills and streams, the valleys and different soils of the major world system. Dense clouds spread over them, covering the entire major world system and in one moment saturating it all... Each of the trees big and small, depending upon whether it is superior, middling, or inferior in nature, receives its allotment. The rain falling from one blanket of cloud accords with each particular species and nature, causing it to sprout and mature, to blossom and bear fruit.”

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

“Though all these plants and trees grow in the same earth and are moistened by the same rain, each has its differences and particulars./Kashyapa, you should understand that the thus come one is like this. He appears in the world like a great cloud rising up. With a loud voice he penetrates to all the heavenly and human beings and the asuras of the entire world, like a great cloud spreading over the lands of the major world system.”

⁸ Nichiren, *The Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings*, translated by Burton Watson

(Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 2004), p. 200.

⁹ *The Lotus Sutra*, pp. 265–6.

“In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of enlightenment not far from the city of Gaya and there attained supreme perfect enlightenment. But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained buddhahood.”

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 266.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 252.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

¹⁵ Nichiren, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, trans. and ed. by the Goshō Translation Committee (Tokyo: Soka Gakkai, 1999), pp. 851–2.

¹⁶ *The Lotus Sutra*, p. 308.

Author Biography

Yoichi Kawada is an advisor of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. Born in Kagawa in 1937, he graduated from Kyoto University in 1962 and received his Ph.D. in immunology in 1968. He is also a recognized authority in Buddhist history and philosophy, bringing the insights of Buddhism to bear on contemporary issues of bioethics, medical and clinical practice. He has served as a director of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy. His recent publications include *Contemporary Civilization and the Lotus Sutra* (2012), *The New Humanism for World Peace* (2011), *The Buddhist Perspective of Life and the Idea of Human Rights* (2011), and *Buddhist Thoughts on Symbiosis—And its Contemporary Implications* (2010).