Special Series:

The Spirit of India—Buddhism and Hinduism (1)

Daisaku Ikeda
Ved P. Nanda

Daisaku Ikeda, the president of Soka Gakkai International (SGI), and Ved P. Nanda, the renowned scholar of international law and vice provost and professor at the University of Denver, are currently collaborating, via correspondence, on the publication of their dialogues. The dialogues between the two leaders took place during their meetings in 1994, 1996, and 1997. During the professor's 1997 visit to Japan, an agreement was reached to publish the dialogues. Since then, the terrorist attacks on the U.S. in 2001 have plunged the world into a frightening new era, revealing an underlying virulent animosity pushing civilizations toward conflict, and compelling humanity in the 21st century to pursue the well-being of all the world's peoples and build a harmonious global society through dialogue between the civilizations. In their dialogues, President Ikeda and Professor Nanda discuss how to awaken in humanity a vision of hope as they explore the following themes from the viewpoint of Buddhist, Hindu, and Gandhian philosophies: the spiritual foundation of human rights, international law for the people, desirable aims of education, the spiritual wisdom of India, and living a religious life. With the consent of both gentlemen, we will publish portions of the dialogues in serial form in this journal.

The Spiritual Foundation of Human Rights: Toward a Bright New Century for All People

The Firm Foundation of Peace

Ikeda: The major issues confronting humanity in the 21st century are peace, human rights, and education. We must transcend the militaristic and violent history of the 20th century, and strive to create a "century of human rights," characterized by a respect for life. It is my great pleasure to participate in a dialogue to consider these issues with such a world-famous international legal scholar, professor, and U.S. educator as yourself.

Nanda: The pleasure is all mine; indeed, I am deeply honored. Despite

the fact that we have entered the new century, we see that conflicts and struggles continue unabated around the world. The problems of environmental destruction and poverty are also intensifying. It is clear that humankind has no alternative but to join together to build a world that honors national and racial differences.

For many years I have worked through the United Nations, engaging in U.N.-sponsored projects to help create a sense of solidarity among people. You, President Ikeda, have been able to realize this objective on a global scale in your endeavors. The ultimate question is: How are we to build an enduring peace for the future of humankind? President Ikeda, as my esteemed colleague, I am sincerely hopeful that together we will be able to sketch out a blueprint to achieve this goal.

Ikeda: Thank you. I share your hope. I believe that the foundation of true global security in the 21st century must be built on the fundamental values of human happiness and well-being, rather than military might.

Nanda: I agree wholeheartedly. Today, many of the world's leaders tend to be guided by policies that are based on the assumption that war and conflict are acceptable problem-solving mechanisms. What is needed is a vision of security for all of humankind.

Another major issue confronting the world is the spread of an extreme individualism and an excessive appetite for material things devoid of any aspiration for spiritual development. I sense that this growing phenomenon is linked to the advance of globalization. This is precisely the reason why dialogue and education, activities that you engage in, President Ikeda, are all the more important. A look at the world situation indicates that people have lost respect for each other and that intercultural strife and religious conflicts have escalated. The challenge facing us now is how to conceive a vision that inspires hope for humanity amid such dire circumstances.

Ikeda: Effective problem solving requires consideration of diverse perspectives. The suffering of humankind will never be alleviated if we continue to ignore the fundamental issues and simply treat the symptoms of problems. To make a significant impact, it is first essential to sow the seeds among humankind of a principled and resolute humanistic philosophy that establishes an uncompromising respect for human life. This is the firm conviction with which Soka Gakkai International continues to fulfill its global mission in the areas of peace, culture, and educa-

tion based on the teachings of Nichiren who carried on the essential message of Mahayana Buddhism.

Nanda: After meeting you, President Ikeda, I have come to understand more clearly the kind of grass-roots, people-oriented Buddhist movement that you lead.

Ikeda: I am very glad to hear that. I believe the first time I met you, Professor Nanda, was at the Soka University Memorial Hall where we enjoyed a performance of the classic Beethoven's Ninth Symphony together.

Nanda: It was a truly superb performance.

Ikeda: Yes. A total of 400 Soka University and Soka Women's College students, mainly from the New Century Orchestra and Ginrei (Silver Ridge) Choir, put on a spirited choral and orchestral performance of Ode to Joy that resonated throughout the auditorium. The call to live in joyous awe of life expressed in Schiller's poem that Beethoven set to music is even more relevant today in a contemporary society fraught with acrimony and seemingly irreconcilable differences.

Nanda: As the students sang Ode to Joy, their marvelous spirit of openness and appreciation for artistic excellence was readily apparent.

Ikeda: Thank you for your kind words. The second time we had the opportunity to meet was in Denver in June of 1996.

Nanda: Yes. We were honored to invite you to the University of Denver's graduation ceremony to award you the honorary Doctor of Education degree. On that occasion, you said to the graduating students: "The sun shines brightly. The moon also showers you with its radiant light. The sun represents passion, the moon intellect. Against the backdrop of this magnificent natural scene, the majestic Rocky Mountains, with steadfast conviction, stand protectively watching over you."

Your eloquent speech on that occasion, filled with warmth, understanding, compassion, and joy, was poetic and truly moving. As I listened, I sensed your sincere love for humanity and commitment to lasting peace. The students, as well as my colleagues, were also extremely touched. Even now, I recall your voice resounding throughout the cam-

pus. University Chancellor Ritchie expressed his appreciation for your visit to our university, and he asked me to convey to you his very best wishes.

Ikeda: Thank you. I was sincerely honored to receive the honorary doctorate from the University of Denver. The image of that impressive outdoor graduation still remains vividly etched in my heart. It is a memory that I will cherish forever.

The stunningly beautiful city of Denver is true to its moniker, "the Queen City of the Plains." From its highland plateau, it looks out upon the awe-inspiring snow-capped peaks of the Rocky Mountains. I recall the sky as an intense, boundless blue and the sun and moon shining with brilliant intensity. Just as memorable was the picture of the sharp, enthusiastic graduates, their expectant faces glowing with hope for the future. I am truly grateful to Chancellor Ritchie and the many others who made me feel so welcome during my visit.

The University of Denver is among America's leading private universities and has a proud history of 138 years. The student body consists of more than 10,000 students and the graduate school is among the most prestigious in the nation. The university has been active in encouraging international exchange by welcoming nearly a thousand students from 90 countries to study at its campus. In comparison, Soka University, founded a little over 30 years ago, is young and must respectfully look up to the University of Denver and its long and honorable tradition as our predecessor in this great enterprise of education.

Nanda: Yet, in a mere 30 years, Soka University has come to embody its noble founding principles and develop itself as a seat of learning which other universities of the world, including the University of Denver, should emulate. At a time when it is incumbent upon the peoples of the world to stand up for world peace, President Ikeda, you have emphasized personal empowerment and have pointed the way to cultural and spiritual victories in the life of each individual. The mission of an educator is to draw out the full potential of the individual, and that is exactly what you do.

When I had the opportunity to visit the Kansai Soka high school, I discovered that its curriculum focused on understanding environmental issues and the importance of human dignity. As I listened to the eloquent and meaningful lyrics of the school song, ringing with such joyfulness in the students' voices, I was quite impressed that the philosophical principles of the institution's founder had been realized.

Ikeda: I sincerely appreciate the encouragement that you gave our students on the occasion of your visit. They were honored to welcome such an esteemed professor.

Nanda: My fervent wish is that students educated at both the University of Denver and Soka University may develop into leaders who will have a significant influence on our world in the future. Through their endeavors, I hope that they will effect a positive change in the course of world history and create a global social order based on peace and justice. This is possible, President Ikeda, because you have devoted your entire life to these noble causes.

Ikeda: When I contemplate the idea of the graduates of our two universities contributing their talents to world peace, prosperity, and justice, my heart dances with joy.

Nanda: I am so happy that you were able to visit our home on the day before the University of Denver's graduation ceremony. We still recall with such delight when you and Mrs. Ikeda graced us with your visit and especially the gift of your music.

Ikeda: It was very kind of you to invite us. We truly enjoyed meeting your wife Katharine and daughter Anjali. I sensed that the warmth of their hospitality is a reflection of your own warm personality. I also recall fondly that you allowed me to play one of my favorite Japanese songs, "Dainankou," on your piano.

Exchanges Linking People Together

Ikeda: Ideally, the mission of leadership is to uplift the spirits of the people by nurturing an appreciation for the arts, to instill the value of working for the benefit of others, and to direct the nation and its citizens in the path of virtue by encouraging them to live in peace and have respect for all living things. In reality, however, foolish and irresponsible leaders embark upon actions that plunge innocent citizens abruptly into the midst of international disputes and cause them acute and wrenching misery. To say that this is the source of the world's unhappiness would be a glaring understatement.

International relations, as we know it, pits "nation against nation" and "might against might," and this alone will never result in creating a peaceful world. A grass-roots network of solidarity must be built to lead

us toward world peace and progress based on people-to-people exchanges, i.e., relationships between individual human beings, between citizens, and between peoples.

Nanda: I concur completely. The only answer is to promote association and exchanges between people. President Ikeda, in your writing, you discuss the importance of interaction between people that goes beyond ideology. For quite some time, you have urged reconciliation between the former U.S.S.R. and the U.S. and friendly ties between North (The People's Republic of Korea) and South Korea. In this regard, I have high hopes for the role that Japan can play in the international sphere in organizations such as the United Nations.

Ikeda: I share your hope. But to truly make a contribution in international affairs, it is absolutely essential for Japan to have the trust of the Asian countries. Unfortunately, Japanese leaders are not familiar enough with the issues close to the hearts of their Asian neighbors. It is critical that we Japanese build relationships of trust with the people of Asia that will encourage them to gladly join with us as partners in tackling our common problems. The festering wounds of the past must be healed and feelings of bitterness and suspicion must be transformed into a sense of trust and security.

For this to happen, first of all, people must relate to each other openly and honestly, heart to heart. We must spread the warmth of friendship in an ever-widening circle. This is precisely why I have made every effort to engage in exchanges with the people of Asia, including numerous discussions with the top leaders of the various Asian countries.

Nanda: I believe that your vision and much more work such as yours, President Ikeda, inspired by determination and commitment, are necessary to bring about world peace.

One of the activities I am involved in is called the World Jurists Project. The project is part of an international movement that contends that the use of nuclear weapons is a violation of international law.

Ikeda: Yes, I am well aware of this movement. As a result of the efforts made by you and your movement colleagues, an international judicial court ruled that, "In principle, any use of nuclear technology that threatens humankind's right to survival is unlawful." This ruling was an unprecedented advance in the history of the peace movement.

As a scholar and peace activist, you contribute to establishing peace

in the world by participating in activities such as the World Jurist Association and United Nations Association programs. On another occasion, I would like to hear more about your activities, especially from your perspective as an authority on international law.

Nanda: Of course. It would be a pleasure. I see commonalities in the thought of Mahatma Gandhi and in your convictions. Gandhi's activities were based on his belief in Hinduism. President Ikeda, you are a Buddhist, and though these religions offer complementary but varying perspectives, you share the same broadminded spirit of tolerance for others that Gandhi possessed. Another commonality is that just as Gandhi maintained that humankind is one family and lived his life in a way that reflected this belief, you uphold this belief in your own life as well.

During his life, Gandhi was criticized not only for his social activism, but also for the way he lived his personal life. There were even some who faulted him for, as they said, "leading a life devoid of moral standards." Gandhi endured and overcame all that he faced. With the passage of time, Gandhi now stands out as a shining example of greatness and one of the most extraordinary figures in all of human history.

Ikeda: I am inspired by Gandhi's example. He towers above all others as one of the most remarkable individuals in the history of humankind. His illustrious spirit will serve as a timeless model for all of humanity.

Incidentally, Professor Nanda, you were born in Gujranwala in the northwestern region of India, weren't you?

Nanda: That's right. Gujranwala is today located within Pakistani territory.

Ikeda: In 1947, India won her independence from British colonial rule through the non-violent resistance movement led by Gandhi. However, the joy of celebrating this liberation was short-lived. Before long, religious conflicts arose and religious adherents targeted those of other faiths. In the midst of the strife created by Pakistan's drive for independence, Hindus and Sikhs living in the Pakistani region were compelled to migrate to India, and likewise, the Muslims living in Northern India moved to Pakistan.

Gandhi mightily opposed this policy of "independence through partition based on religion" to the very end. I have heard that you, too, Professor Nanda, were forced to leave your homeland and move to India because you are Hindu.

Nanda: Yes. That is correct. I was 12 years of age at the time. I remember walking with my mother for days and days. This crisis was forced upon us merely because we were Hindus. Why was such a thing necessary? At the time, the reasons were incomprehensible to me. Even now, I am at a loss to make sense of it.

Ikeda: According to estimates, 10 to 15 million people were forced to embark on a journey of 400-500 kilometers, all the while in constant fear of being robbed, raped, or murdered. They say that there were over one million victims in this tragic episode.

Nanda: I will never forget this horribly traumatic childhood experience. It is absolutely unpardonable to persecute people in the name of religion. Religion is supposed to be the force that unites people.

Ikeda: Those are my thoughts exactly. Ultimately, the purpose of religion must be to benefit people. When religion is used to divide and alienate people from each other, this is completely contrary to its fundamental aims.

Your childhood experience must have been the source of your drive to pursue research in international law and endeavors in the area of human rights and refugee policy. To begin our dialogue, let us explore the topic of human rights.

Nanda: Excellent.

The Role of Religion in Human Rights

Ikeda: Professor Nanda, in a past issue of the Seikyo Shimbun you expressed the following thoughts on the role that religion should play in protecting human rights. “It is terribly important that people who have religious faith sustain active involvement in social, economic, and cultural life. Thus I have high hopes that international religious organizations like Soka Gakkai, which is very active in society, will play a large part in the struggle to protect human rights.”

Nanda: Yes, I believe this is true. In my homeland of India, long ago Hindu sages would meditate for many years in mountain caves to seek enlightenment. While I believe that attaining enlightenment is important, it is misguided to view the practice of religion as limited to the solitary pursuit of individual enlightenment. How could one justify

seeking one's own enlightenment while ignoring the suffering of others? Such a religious perspective lacking societal consciousness seems rather limited and, I have to say, unenlightened.

Ikeda: If religion exists to advance human happiness and well-being, then it must, of course, participate actively in contributing to the betterment of society. Speaking from a human rights perspective, I believe that religion and the universal philosophy it exemplifies could contribute to a heightened understanding and further development of human rights philosophy. All the traditional wisdom shared by the world's religions, including such principles as "the golden rule," could help make human rights philosophy even more universal and bring the world closer to manifesting the justice it espouses.

Nanda: Likewise, I believe that it is that spiritual foundation that gives human rights an enduring quality. Let me elaborate by delving into Hindu history. Hinduism, as you know, is also called Sanatana Dharma (eternal religion) as well as the Manav-dharma (the religion of humankind), and exhorts everyone to scrupulously practice dharma. The Sanskrit word *dharma* is hard to define. Professor Pandruang Kane, whose multi-volume work is one of the principal sourcebooks on Hindu Dharma, calls it a code of conduct that sustains and regulates a human's "work and activities as a member of society and as an individual and [that is] intended to bring about the gradual development of man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence."

Ikeda: The great King Ashoka of ancient India aimed to institute a government based on the philosophy of dharma. In his decrees he admonished the people to "work for the benefit of the many" (bahujanahitāya) and "work for the happiness and common good of all" (bahujanasukhāya). These phrases are the expressions found in Shakyamuni's declaration regarding his efforts to propagate Buddhism. Shakyamuni sought to spread his teachings of the Law (the Dharma) that he had come to understand through his own enlightenment, for the benefit and happiness of all people. Shortly before his passing, Shakyamuni instructed his followers to, "Rely on the Law." Shakyamuni wanted them, after his death, to seek guidance in the Dharma, which, he taught, is the foundation for eternal happiness.

As is revealed in the Lotus Sutra, the quintessential scripture of Mahayana Buddhism, the realization of a peaceful society and the hap-

piness of all people is the fervent desire of all Buddhas. To this end, the single greatest objective of Buddhas appearing in this world is to teach the fundamental Law for achieving human happiness. In essence, Buddhist teachings are the vehicle for realizing a harmonious and happy society based on Buddhist Law.

Nanda: Yes, that is so well said. A modern jurist, Rama Jois, explains: "Dharma regulated the mutual obligations of the individual and the society. Therefore, it was stressed that protection of Dharma was in the interest of both the individual and the society. The Law of Manu warns, "Do not destroy Dharma, so that you may not be destroyed." A "State of Dharma" was required to be always maintained for peaceful coexistence and prosperity.

Thus, what you have said about Mahayana Buddhism and what you have demonstrated so beautifully in your own life, to wit, that lifelong engagement in civic, cultural and political activities must be "deeply and completely grounded in religious faith," resonates as deeply in Hinduism as well.

Ikeda: They say that Gandhi's political activism, which he engaged in at great risk to his life, was based on his deeply-rooted religious faith. In other words, for Gandhi, political action and religion were completely inseparable activities.

Gandhi explains his convictions in these terms: "I know of no human activity that can be detached from religion. Religion offers the moral foundation for all other activities. Without this moral base, life would degenerate into a state of meaningless clamor and confusion" (translated from Japanese). Gandhi viewed religion as completely integrated into the reality of everyday life. His perspective, in which religion is intimately intertwined with life and is the source of all human activity, can be seen as embodying the essence of Mahayana Buddhism.

The foremost scholar of Gandhian studies in Japan, Professor Tatsuo Morimoto (Professor Emeritus, Meijo University), had this to say in his lecture sponsored by the Soka Gakkai Youth Division. "People tend to think of politics primarily in terms of a macrocosmic framework in which major national issues affecting the populace are considered and addressed. However, according to Gandhi, the work of politics takes place on the individual level and is 'unfinished until happiness is part of every person's life.' In religious terms, his beliefs echo the same desire of the Buddha for the salvation of all living beings."

The realization of Gandhi's dream to bring happiness to every single person has yet to be fulfilled. As Gandhi pointed out, in order to realize his dream, what is needed is a religion that offers a moral compass to guide people in all their activities, including politics, rather than one that is remote and disengaged from human affairs.

Nanda: True. I agree completely.

Conducting Politics and Religion

Ikeda: Speaking as one who is in a position to respond to the need for such a religion, we believe in and practice the principles of Buddhism, particularly as expounded in the Lotus Sutra, the essence of which was taught by Nichiren.

Buddhism is essentially a religion that illuminates the path of Value Creation for all people and is completely devoted to nurturing a humanism that fosters development of autonomy and self-reliance. The Lotus Sutra reveals the infinite possibility inherent in the lives of all people and explains that each person's life is sacred and should be treated with utmost respect. Buddhist Law, according to Nichiren, teaches that we must strive to let dignity flourish in the midst of everyday life and cultivate values that contribute to the benefit of all people.

Nanda: President Ikeda, the vitality and enthusiasm with which you carry out your activities are a clear illustration of these teachings.

Ikeda: In regards to the relationship between religion and politics, the doctrine of separation of church and state seeks to ensure that a government maintains a posture of religious impartiality. This principle is established by the constitutions of both the United States and Japan. Adherence to this principle, however, does not mean that religion must remain remote from governmental or societal endeavors and limited to internal feelings and beliefs. Rather, the objective is to safeguard the freedom of religion, one of the fundamental bases of human rights, from abusive political power.

Religion's higher spirituality and fertile creativity confer a vitality to all aspects of human society, and insofar as they guide society in the right direction, are they not a desirable influence on both politics and religion? I believe that this is the message of Gandhi's legacy to humankind.

Nanda: Yes, you have eloquently captured the essence of Mahatma Gandhi's message. There was a period in Indian history when religion turned inward, and this marked a loss of societal consciousness in Hindu society. As a result, society suffered heavily under foreign domination for a thousand years. But this introverted social perspective is not in harmony with the fundamental teachings of Hinduism. In fact, Hinduism teaches what Mahatma Gandhi so wisely observed, i.e., that religion is the root of all action.

Of course, the principle of the separation of church and state serves a useful purpose. The state should not favor a particular religion over others. The very essence of a multi-cultural, multi-religious, pluralistic society is that all faiths, religions, and cultures must be treated with respect. But this laudable objective is not at all at odds with the role of religion and spirituality to serve as a guiding light for individuals and as the spiritual foundation for enriching all of human society.

Ikeda: That is very true. In the history of Hinduism, I am sure that there are many well-known followers of Hinduism whose social and political activities grew out of their deep-seated religious convictions. Can you share some examples?

Nanda: Surely. One example which comes to mind is Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902). He was a Hindu monk who inspired not only those in India but people in the West as well. Swami Vivekananda visited Chicago and delivered his famous address at the World Parliament of Religions in 1893 and mesmerized audiences in the U.S. and several western countries, including Britain and France as he gave discourses on Hinduism. During those lectures, he often reiterated that to serve one's fellow human beings is to serve God. He said, "If the Lord grants that you can help any one of His children, blessed you are.... Blessed you are that that privilege was given to you when others had it not.... I should see God in the poor, and it is for my salvation that I go and worship them."

Ikeda: I agree that Vivekananda is an eminent example of a Hindu whose social and political activism was based on his profound religious beliefs. I have referred to him several times in my writings. He was one of the most distinguished modern Indian philosophers. Hardly any American had heard of Vivekananda before he delivered his address in Chicago. Apparently, audiences judged him by first impression simply as a peculiar Indian vagabond. But soon after he began speaking, they

were struck with awe. Vivekananda was able to make the spirit of Indian philosophy illuminate the lives of his listeners. The major newspapers of the day such as the New York Herald and the Boston Evening Post all acknowledged the impact Vivekananda had on his audiences.

Nanda: Yes, indeed. His philosophy made a lasting impression on Americans.

Ikeda: The notion that service to one's fellowman is service to God is a principle expounded in the chapters of the Vinaya (rules of monastic discipline). It is written that Shakyamuni displayed compassion to a dying man as he cleansed the patient's body himself, explaining, "Serving the infirm is to serve the Buddha."

In his address at the Chicago convention, Vivekananda also said, "The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth." Vivekananda's words suggest that the delicate balance between adhering to one's own faith and expressing an attitude of tolerance and acceptance of other religions enables religions to coexist harmoniously while enhancing the unique contributions of each. There is no doubt that his statement expresses the fundamental principles of interfaith dialogue.

Nanda: I too believe, President Ikeda, as you say, that Vivekananda's philosophy holds major implications for interfaith dialogue, a critical focus for the 21st century. It is indeed noteworthy that Swami Vivekanand is an inspiration for the youth in India, and the Ramakrishna Missions, which are named after his guru (teacher), Ramakrishna Parmahans, continue to widely disseminate his teachings.

United Nations Leadership and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Ikeda: Next, I would like to proceed to an examination of the state of human rights today. This year marks the 55th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The U.N. designated the years 1995 to 2004 as the "Decade for Human Rights Education" and urged nations and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) to become involved and participate in the campaign to improve human rights.

SGI has also participated in this effort by organizing and sponsoring human rights exhibits and lectures all over the world as part of our educational campaign to spread the principles of human rights. Our exhibit "*Human Rights in Today's World*," which we held in 40 cities around the world in cooperation with governments and NGOs, drew 500,000 people. Also, our "*Human Rights of Children*" exhibition has already attracted 700,000 visitors just within Japan.

Nanda: President Ikeda, I have great admiration for Soka Gakkai International for championing the cause of human rights so tirelessly for all these years. The organizations' activities in promoting human rights and raising global consciousness about the significance of human rights are indeed exemplary.

I know that your earlier dialogues with the late Austregésilo de Athayde, one of the drafters of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and a Brazilian delegate to the U.N., was published in book form in Japanese and Portuguese. Your focus on people as the beneficiaries and repositories of the U.N. human rights movement is most noteworthy. You said that this showed universality and that "the Declaration should apply to every member of the human race." And so it does.

Ikeda: I have very good memories of my talks with Dr. Athayde. He was a champion for human rights who spoke out for justice and stood as a beacon of hope for those who had no voice. His courageous struggle against the abuse of power shines as a brilliant example in the history of humanitarianism. In our discussions, we explored the philosophy of human rights, covering the sources of western philosophy, including the Code of Hammurabi and the teachings of Moses and Aristotle to present day western philosophers, and also touching upon the major streams of eastern thought, including the philosophies of Hinduism, Buddha, and Ashoka to Nichiren and Gandhi. Dr. Athayde also related to me the various difficulties and extremely interesting episodes that occurred in the process of drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Professor Nanda, you discuss the development and significance of the human rights declaration in the following terms: "The concept of human rights is closely tied to the concept of world peace. That connection was made deeper and broader with the founding of the United Nations after the Second World War. One thing that became clear was that when a nation stamps on the human rights of its own people, it is degraded in international society. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was born at a time when the world was very conscious of these relationships.

And so the human rights campaign emerged as an international movement under the leadership of the U.N."

Nanda: The declaration is based on the premise that there are inalienable rights and freedoms that all persons are owed simply by virtue of their being human. The 1993 Vienna Declaration, adopted on the occasion of the U.N. Conference on Human Rights, acknowledged the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as its "source of inspiration" and the basis for advances in standard-setting under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Universal Declaration articulated the importance of basic rights which had come under siege during the Nazi and fascist regimes, such as the rights to life, liberty, and security of person; freedoms of expression, association, peaceful assembly and religious belief; and protection from arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without a fair trial. It also contained provisions for economic, social, and cultural rights. Representatives from many cultures endorsed the rights in the Declaration "as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations."

From National Sovereignty to Human Sovereignty: Development of the Human Rights Movement

Ikeda: The adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was an unprecedented event for humankind.

Nanda: Yes, the credit goes to Eleanor Roosevelt and those who worked on drafting the Declaration. And the Declaration itself reflects the widely held belief by philosophers and statesmen alike at the end of World War II that international peace and human rights are intertwined and those who violate human rights with impunity at home are likely to act lawlessly in the international arena, as well.

Subsequently, the International Bill of Rights became a reality with approval by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights with its Optional Protocols, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which entered into force and effect in 1976.

President Ikeda, you frequently emphasize the need for a shift from the concept of national sovereignty to one of human sovereignty. I think this perspective on the issue is right on the mark. Over the centuries, the nation-state has sought to control and imprison its people within its narrow confines. We must seek to create a world whose peoples share a

broader sense of mutual understanding and communal spirit that transcends the nation-state mentality. Of course, it goes without saying that the nation-state will continue to play an important role. However, the most critical challenge will be to firmly establish human rights for all people. Herein, I believe, lies the primary calling of the NGOs.

Ikeda: Because the United Nations is a gathering of sovereign nations, the tendency has been for nations to stoop to the selfish pursuit of their own national interests rather than rise to fulfill the U.N.'s original mission, which is to create a peaceful global order. The establishment of numerous international treaties related to human rights, including the sections of the International Bill of Rights such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is a huge step forward.

Nanda: Yes, that is true. The International Bill of Rights prescribes the most comprehensive and authoritative set of obligations for nation-states. In addition, over 80 human rights treaties and declarations on various issues ranging from discrimination to religious intolerance, genocide and torture are in existence. Many human rights norms have become accepted as customary international law. And, in a few instances such as the prohibition on genocide and torture, these norms have become jus cogens, or peremptory norms, from which no derogation is permitted under international law.

Ikeda: A jus cogens norm is an irrevocable rule that, by international agreement, would render as void any treaty that violated it. By Article 53 of the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, a jus cogens norm was given the status of substantially effective law for the first time, and this opened up an entirely new dimension in the field of international law.

A question of what constitutes a jus cogens norm is a point for debate. Norms such as the prohibition against genocide, military invasion, and slavery or the sale of slaves, as well as a respect for basic human rights and the right of a people to self-determination are generally considered *jus cogens* norms. The existence of *jus cogens* norms, which invalidate international agreements made among nation-states that commit extreme acts against humanity, indicates that the international legal order is shifting gradually from viewing the nation-state as the primary focus of consideration to also taking into account the rights of individual human beings.

In my conversations (published as *Choose Peace*) with Professor

Johan Galtung, known as "the father of peace studies," we discussed the need to highlight the structural and operational aspects required to increase the visibility of "human faces" over "nations' faces." The evolution of human rights standards, including those in the area of international law, lays the essential groundwork for this development.

Nanda: I agree wholeheartedly with your insight, President Ikeda. In popular parlance, human rights development in the United Nations context has been understood as spanning three generations. In other words, this diversity of perspectives includes civil and political rights (*liberté*), advocated by the West; economic, social and cultural rights (*égalité*) advocated by the Soviets; and solidarity rights (*fraternité*), the rights to peace, to development, and to a healthy environment, advocated by developing countries. A convergence of these perspectives occurred in the 1993 Vienna Declaration, which proclaimed, based on a consensus of the participants, that "All human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent, and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis." The Vienna Declaration reaffirms the principle of universality numerous times.

Ikeda: Buddhism teaches that inherent in all human life is a noble Buddha nature. This is why Buddhists believe that all human beings are equal and are entitled to enjoy the same basic human rights. More specifically, the wisdom of Buddhism also addresses the first-generation rights of liberty and second-generation rights of social equality, together with the third-generation solidarity rights of peace, cultural, political, and economic development, and a safe and sustainable environment. SGI also strives to create a peaceful and sustainable society in which every person on the face of the earth is treated with human dignity. These objectives are in accord with the principles of the Vienna Declaration.

Professor Nanda, do you think that the principles of the Vienna Declaration are steadily becoming an integral part of international society?

Nanda: SGI's teachings and the conduct of SGI members beautifully embody these tenets of fundamental human rights. And, as you know, Hinduism's repeated emphasis on "All humanity is one family" and the mandate to treat every member of the family with dignity and respect embody one of this religion's basic values, as well. Europe stands out as the most progressive on this issue, but regional human rights institu-

tions, norms, and procedures have also developed in Central and South America and in Africa. In Asia, however, a regional movement has yet to develop. Overall, implementation and enforcement of human rights are generally inadequate. Also, in terms of the development of norms, in the African context the emphasis has been not only on individual rights but also on collective rights and duties as well.

Movement efforts must focus on putting appropriate emphases on establishing economic, social, and cultural rights as well as on ensuring their implementation and enforcement. The recognition has grown that these rights ought not be seen as simply aspirational rights, but rather that they must be perceived and exercised as equivalent to civil and political rights.

Eradication of Poverty: North-South Disparities and Human Rights

Ikeda: When we talk about human dignity, one issue that we must not overlook is the problem of poverty. Despite the fact that the world economy has grown exponentially over the past 30 years, poverty has increased dramatically. According to World Bank statistics, the number of people living in abject poverty, who have neither the means to obtain adequate nutrition nor the ability to meet minimum subsistence needs, is estimated to be as high as 1.5 billion.

In my peace proposal made six years ago, I urged the world community to tackle head-on the topic of poverty eradication as a first step toward eliminating the disequilibrium and distortions plaguing world society.

Nanda: President Ikeda, as usual, you have been way ahead of your time in articulating several concepts that have a bearing on humanity's future. The sincerity and passion embodied in your message on eradicating poverty has resonated with policy makers who have the wisdom and vision to appreciate the impact of poverty on a large segment of the Earth's population and how it violates one of the most fundamental human rights. For if people's basic needs are not met, all other rights are illusory.

Ikeda: That is exactly right. Karl Jaspers, the German philosopher, once cautioned against being lulled into complacency by an illusory peace, because the happiness we are permitted to enjoy in the brief moment of

our present existence may be but the calm before the storm.

Indeed, the problem of poverty represents a truly volatile potential, and we must seriously heed its message. SGI has long been deeply concerned about poverty and the problems of refugees and is engaged in efforts to ameliorate these problems.

Nanda: Yes, I agree. SGI's work with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the campaigns to promote literacy in the Third World are indeed praiseworthy.

In August of 2002 at the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, the problem of poverty finally received a measure of the attention it deserves. This seems to be an indication that the international community is becoming increasingly aware that the eradication of poverty is a prerequisite for the enjoyment of human rights, including the right to environmental protection. Nevertheless, the sad truth is that though the resources and know-how exist to alleviate the suffering and hardships facing the world's poor, the leadership and political will are lacking.

Ikeda: That is so true. The leaders of the developed countries must realize and take more seriously the destabilizing threat that poverty poses to the global social order. As Gandhi once stated, true economics "stands for social justice and promotes the good of all equally, including the weakest,..." Indeed, we must recognize that something is terribly out of kilter when the economic system contributes to increasing impoverishment, and the society abandons the weakest who suffer in poverty.

Ultimately, I believe that the key to most effectively overcoming poverty is education. Likewise, Professor Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics who advocates a more people-centered economic policy, claims that development must, first of all, assist the poor, rather than the rich and those of high social status, by fostering human development and expanded access to education.

With these thoughts in mind, I presented a proposal entitled, "The Challenge of Global Empowerment: Education for a Sustainable Future" at the world summit in Johannesburg. SGI also advanced the suggestion to summit participants of making the decade beginning in the year 2005 the United Nations "Decade for Education for Sustainable Development." The idea was adopted and incorporated into the summit's implementation plan, and participants from all quarters voiced their approval and acceptance of it.

Control of Avarice

Nanda: The proposal offers a very important perspective. At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the world community endorsed the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities." The hope was that the industrialized nations would assume their responsibility for improving the plight of the poor. The developed nations pledged to offer 0.7 percent of their GNP (gross national product) to the developing countries for "official development assistance" (ODA). Unfortunately, that goal has not been met. In fact, during the past decade, official development assistance has decreased.

Ikeda: At the Johannesburg world summit, the developing countries demanded that the developed countries clearly indicate their commitment by setting the dead line to reach the United Nations contributions target of 0.7% of GNP for official development assistance. Also sought were changes, for example in the area of trade regulations, which would state clearly the period during which tariffs will be waived for the poorest countries and agricultural subsidies will be abolished in the developed countries.

However, clear language specifying target dates for compliance in making contributions of foreign aid and in abolishing subsidies was absent in the implementation plan.

Nanda: Following on the achievements of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the 2002 Johannesburg summit attracted attention as an historic international gathering, but unfortunately did not produce significant results.

Ikeda: To solve the difficult world problems we face, it is vitally important that we undertake a global transformation in consciousness as well as in behavior. In Buddhism, the scriptures of the "Śrīmālā Sutra" tell of the pledge of Śrīmālā, a royal princess who lived during the Buddha's time. She pledged, "From now on, I will cease to accumulate riches to indulge in enjoyments and pleasure. Instead, I will do my utmost to build my wealth for the sake of those suffering in poverty and to provide relief for those without kin."

The Buddhist Bodhisattvas use their own material possessions to offer relief to those in poverty or who suffer hardship. Accumulating wealth should not be for the purpose of indulging in one's own pleasure or satisfying one's own avarice. It should be employed to relieve the hardships of others. I believe that the people of the developed countries

should look to the Bodhisattva's pledge as a model for themselves.

Nanda: The United Nations conference held in Monterey, Mexico, produced the promising "Millennium Declaration," which the wealthy countries endorsed. On another hopeful note, the Plan of Action adopted at the Johannesburg Summit reaffirmed past U.N. pledges (Agenda 21). However, in the final analysis, an enduring and lasting world peace is not possible without humanity's firm commitment, followed by concrete action, to eradicate poverty.

Ikeda: In this sense, it is imperative that we rethink the basic foundation of our civilization and way of life. Nichiren, who had a penetrating insight into the human heart, stated, "Famine occurs as a result of greed, pestilence as a result of foolishness, and war as a result of anger."

This Buddhist perspective holds that the basic human desires are colored by greed, anger, and foolishness. It is taught that greed is the source of poverty in society, anger generates conflict, and foolishness gives rise to all sorts of epidemics. Greed is an extreme form of egotism in which others are sacrificed for the sake of one's own unrestrained desires. Therefore, even though one's own basic needs are met, one is still not satisfied and continues to covet the possessions of others in an insatiable craving for more.

All religions, including Buddhism and Hinduism, teach people how to control their feelings of desire and avarice and allow altruism to blossom in their lives. This sense of morality is the sign of an authentic religion. The essential key to the creation of a peaceful global society that provides for the happiness and well-being of all people is a network of solidarity between global citizens who are awakened to this noble sense of morality.

Professor Nanda, over the years you have been active on the front lines of numerous civic movements, including those under United Nations auspices. In our future discussions, I look forward to hearing in greater detail about your experiences.

INTERNATIONAL LAW FOR THE PEOPLE: TOWARD A GLOBAL SOCIETY

The System of Sovereign States and the Limitations of Modern International Law

Ikeda: At the turn of the 21st century, a succession of crises violently

rocked the international community. Among them were the terrorist attacks of September 11 in the U.S. and the recent U.S. and British-led invasion of Iraq, events which have provoked a growing movement to reassess the role of the United Nations and capacity of international law to maintain global peace and security.

Following on our discussion of human rights, I would like for us to explore the topic of international law, which is your area of expertise.

Nanda: It will be my pleasure.

Ikeda: Professor Nanda, you have served as vice president and honorary vice president of the American Society of International Law, you are a former president and current honorary president of the World Jurists Association, and honorary vice president of the American Branch of the International Law Association, and you continue to play an active role as a scholar in the field of international law. As we touched on briefly in our previous discussion, one of the motivating forces for your study of international law was your traumatic childhood experience during the conflict between India and Pakistan at the time of the 1947 partition of India. This bloody conflict which descended into a circle of violence and retribution produced countless refugees and an estimated one million victims.

Mahatma Gandhi was extremely distressed by the atrocities, and he opposed until the very end the religious partition of the country based on the separation of Hindus and Moslems. It is well known that, despite his long cherished desire for India's independence, Gandhi did not attend the public ceremony celebrating the event. During that period, Gandhi called for harmony and reconciliation among the residents of the slums of Calcutta, an area smoldering with religious conflict. He implored the residents to not kill, but spare the lives of believers of Islam. This infuriated the Hindu religious fanatics and in the end, he was felled by an assassin's bullet.

We must never forget this tragic period over half a century ago and the lessons it poses for our own times. Professor Nanda, you have said that your firsthand experience of this conflict left a deep impression on you. You questioned why people of differing faiths could not live together peacefully. I was deeply moved upon hearing that you pondered this question at such a young age, and that this experience would become the personal stimulus leading you to pursue a career in international law.

Nanda: There is no doubt that my early childhood experiences had a deep and lasting influence on my life. I will remember until my dying day the grief I felt at being forced from my homeland.

Ikeda: I, too, have experienced personal loss and suffering as a result of the violence of war. During World War II, not only was our house burned to the ground in an air raid, but also my older brothers were sent off to the battlefront one after another, and my beloved oldest brother, whom I respected and adored, was killed. I could hardly bear to see the sorrow and anguish reflected in my parents' posture. It was this sense of the tragedy and cruelty of war that etched itself on my heart and became the source of inspiration for all my peace activities. I believe that one of the factors permitting all the tragedies and turmoil that occurred throughout the 20th century, including the two world wars and other numerous conflicts and confrontations, was the lack of a rule of law, in a truly meaningful sense, governing the international sphere. In other words, a systematized body of international law that reflects the will of the people had not been formulated.

Needless to say, it bears repeating that since the beginning of the modern period, the primary entity recognized in the international community has been the sovereign state, and by extension, international institutions composed of sovereign states. International law, which arose primarily to provide rules of engagement managing competing national interests, overemphasizes the traditional principle of exclusive sovereignty, making it difficult to achieve a consensus on issues benefiting all of humankind. And even when a consensus is reached on an issue, implementation has left much to be desired.

Nanda: That is exactly right. The international legal system is founded upon the European model developed over the past four centuries, with sovereign states as its subjects. Thus, traditionally, international law was defined as the body of rules and principles applicable to states in their relations with one another, which meant that states were the sole subjects of international law.

Throughout history, the most important goal of international law has been the maintenance of order in the international system. States have placed a dominant value on security and autonomy, reflected in the prohibition in the UN Charter and under customary international law of the threat or use of force by any state against the territorial integrity or political independence of another. This prohibition is enforceable only through collective action by the Security Council. Regional organiza-

tions, such as the European Union, the Organization of American States, and the African Union, are also empowered under the Charter to use force for the maintenance of peace and security, subject to the authority of the Security Council.

We continue to hear, however, the constant echo of the fundamental notion of "sovereignty"—that states are not subject to any other authority. Even in those cases where they have freely agreed to be bound by international agreements, states often jealously guard their "sovereignty" by invoking the Charter provision that prohibits intervention in "matters essentially within their domestic jurisdiction." It is often only the recognition of common interests in pursuit of which states are prompted to faithfully follow the dictate of international law.

From National to Human Interests and Sovereignty

Ikeda: On the other hand, however, international laws have not only facilitated cooperation related to practical matters in areas such as telecommunications, transportation, and trade, they also have prevented the arbitrary use of force and rampant pursuit of self-interest, thereby greatly contributing to the creation of an international environment encouraging harmony and accommodation rather than conflict. Also, the establishment of numerous indices of international human rights law, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in which the United Nations played a pivotal role after the Second World War, forms the basis for a new consciousness emerging in the global community founded on commonly shared values.

Nanda: Yes. That is very true. In this era of interdependence, countries often find themselves best served by cooperation, as in trade and other economic matters and in the protection of the environment. And they have come together in certain areas of mutual commitment to common values, such as the protection of human rights, within the framework of distinct and often overlapping institutional structures.

Ikeda: In this sense, the most pressing need going forward is to establish a body of international law that reflects the will of the people and sets as its ultimate goal their happiness and well-being. In order to accomplish this task, the world community must reach a consensus on the importance of making the transition to a system that benefits humankind rather than national interests, emphasizes human sovereignty over national sovereignty, and then strives to achieve the fundamental

shift in perspective that is required. Professor Nanda, in your view, what are the major issues that challenge the development of international law today?

Nanda: That is a very important question. Perhaps the most critical issue is the relative importance placed on the individual as opposed to the state. I am in full agreement with your vision of building a global community centered on the goal of serving the interests of humankind rather than national interests. In fact, there is movement toward expanding the scope of international law beyond the nation-state. In other words, the individual person has emerged as a subject of international law, as an independent actor, and not simply as an entity acting through the state. This is especially seen in the various human rights fora such as the courts.

Other actors have emerged in the international legal arena, as well, that are recognized and have an impact on the law. For instance, civil society has begun to assert itself. Thus, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) do some of the most important work in promoting and implementing international law, such as in areas of humanitarian and human rights work. The impact of multinational corporations has been enormous, with power exercised sometimes beyond any state's control, and presenting a real challenge to states' authority. Finally, new international and regional institutions have developed, both complementing the nation-state and competing with it. All these actors are influencing the subject matter and the content of international law, as well as the means of enforcement and implementation. Today, "globalization" has become a major challenge to the traditional system.

How to adapt the existing international norms and how to fashion new ones in international economic law—encompassing international trade and commerce—to bridge the divide between the rich North and the poor South, is an issue requiring urgent and serious attention. Thus, the role of international financial institutions and of the World Trade Organization assumes special importance. There also, NGOs' role is highly significant.

NGO Challenges in the New Era of International Politics

Ikeda: As you pointed out, in the past decade the NGOs have come to play an assertive role in addressing numerous difficult global issues such as in the areas of peace, human rights, and environmental problems. For example, two NGOs that have received much attention in recent years

are the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) which was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for playing a major role in the establishment of the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, and the Coalition for an International Criminal Court (CICC) which advocated the establishment of the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Nanda: The establishment of the International Criminal Court is truly a monumental event. President Ikeda, as you mentioned in your peace proposal, I know that you have always reminded us of the importance of an international court. I, too, have closely followed the development of the court, having been a consultant to the NGO coalition which facilitated its progress from the initial concept to the final product as a functioning court and having been present in Rome, where the Court's statute was adopted.

Two special features highlight the process of the negotiations toward an international criminal court with jurisdiction over the international crimes of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. One was the work of a coalition of several hundred grassroots organizations that was critical in generating the necessary widespread support for the creation of a strong and independent international court. Just as on the issue of landmines, NGOs and grass-roots groups played an important role in the process. The NGO Coalition also deserves credit for the second special feature, the bringing together of over 40 states from all regions of the world. This group of "like-minded states" influenced the outcome; it was highly successful in working toward the establishment of an effective international criminal court.

Ikeda: It is also widely recognized that success in establishing the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines can be attributed to the cooperation of these like-minded NGO groups and states as they looked toward establishing a new legal system. Called the Ottawa Process, the methodology that led to the success of the Convention must be applied in every field for international law to broaden its scope and create a more humane social environment in the 21st century.

Nanda: I could not agree with you more. The momentum for the Landmines Convention was built by a group of dedicated individuals who brought together several NGOs and like-minded countries and succeeded in Ottawa in making the Convention a reality. The Ottawa process and the process of the NGO coalition for the ICC are indeed shining examples of civil society's contribution to the development of international law. They provide good models for the future.

To elaborate on the ICC experience, a United Nations diplomatic conference was held in Rome in 1998 to establish the International Criminal Court. The various like-minded states agreed that for all future discussions, negotiations, and diplomatic conferences they would use the six guiding principles that they had developed in Rome for the International Criminal Court (ICC). These guiding principles were:

1. To maintain the independence of the ICC from the UN Security Council.
2. To maintain the independence of the prosecutor.
3. To extend the inherent jurisdiction of the ICC to cover all severe crimes.
4. To require full cooperation of states with the ICC within its official jurisdiction.
5. To create an independent and effective ICC through a successful diplomatic conference.
6. To acknowledge the ICC as the final decision-maker on questions of admissibility of cases to be considered by the court.

Negotiators at the diplomatic conference in Rome eventually succeeded in adopting the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Again, I was truly fortunate to be able to participate in the diplomatic conference, especially to be present to witness the exceptional work being done by the NGO Coalition to bring the many different interests together to achieve one goal. After the treaty for the Court came into force upon its ratification, the International Criminal Court was established last year. In February 2003, 18 judges, including seven women, were elected to sit on the Court, which is physically located in The Hague, Netherlands. This indeed is the culmination of the long journey that began with the establishment of the Nuremberg Tribunal following the Second World War.

Ikeda: It was a truly significant accomplishment. In the past, I repeatedly called for the prompt establishment of the International Criminal Court in order to systematize a means to resolve conflicts through the rule of law rather than by force in situations gripped by perpetual hostility and vengeance. I believe that in this approach to conflict resolution lies the key to building the foundation for an enduring peace.

Nanda: I have followed with intense interest your own—and SGI's—support of the International Criminal Court and its promise to "help break the interlocking chain reactions of hatred and retribution that have

brought such suffering to humankind." Without such support, and that of so many NGOs representing the pleas of so many individuals around the world, this groundbreaking step that gives the international community of peace-loving people a new reason to hope would not have been taken.

President Ikeda, as you are so well aware, civil society is finally making its mark in the international arena, increasingly becoming part of the international governance structure. In fact, NGOs play a most important role in both promoting and protecting human rights, and also in challenging the claim of states that a policy of nonintervention should prevail on human rights issues. NGOs watch vigilantly, keeping governments honest by not letting those in power forget or evade their responsibility to comply with international commitments.

To illustrate, the women's rights movement must be credited with initially creating the awareness that women's rights must be recognized not simply as separate rights but as an integral part of the body of international human rights. At the UN Human Rights Conference in Vienna, women's groups played a critical role in shaping the declaration and the action plan for the promotion and protection of human rights. Subsequently, the Beijing Conference reaffirmed the status of women's rights as falling squarely within the mainstream of accepted international human rights norms. Also, to mention another case just briefly, several NGOs working in the sphere of children's rights played a critical role in shaping the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Perhaps the greatest promise we have of genuinely benefiting the future of humankind, as a people, will be realized through the work of these groups whose activities, by and large, consist of real people serving real people of the world. Their contribution in the humanitarian field, in meeting human needs—providing food, shelter, comfort, healthcare, and a better environment—is indeed enormous.

Bodhisattva Character in Mahayana Buddhism

Ikeda: Absolutely. The most praiseworthy characteristic of the NGOs is that they are composed of ordinary citizens who are inspired to participate voluntarily by a sincere and heartfelt desire to make the world a better place. People have an innate wisdom that enables them to see through the deceit and arrogance of power. This is because each person is rooted in the Great Earth of daily life. This fundamental strength of the people is the basis from which all success and prosperity develops. Sincere proponents of Buddhism translate this principle into action and confront power face-to-face. For example, in India, Shakyamuni and

Nāgārjuna, the great teacher of Mahayana Buddhism, joined the people in their struggle.

Nanda: Yes, they did. As one who has close ties to India, I am very proud of this honorable Buddhist lineage of great and courageous teachers.

Ikeda: Nāgārjuna lived during the period from approximately 150 to 250 CE and was active in southern India where he boldly proposed to King Satvahana, in his work entitled *Ratnāvalī*, that the government should be run by the people. In his opening statement, Nāgārjuna stressed the importance of the concept of universal law based on belief transformed into action through understanding and wisdom, and he urged the king to reflect deeply on his life and discipline his body and mind. In addition, in Chapter 4, entitled "The Way of Kings," he encouraged a number of specific practices such as providing food to help the physically and intellectually disabled, refugees, and the poor. His recommendations to abolish the death penalty and provide rehabilitation for prisoners, reduce prison terms, as well as guarantee humane and minimally comfortable accommodations during confinement were, by today's human rights standards, extremely progressive. I believe that this is attributable to Nāgārjuna's belief in Mahayana Buddhism which seeks the happiness and well-being of all people and which imbued him with an intense commitment to human dignity and the best interests of ordinary people.

In this vein, the valuable contributions of NGOs that you previously pointed out have attracted more attention, thanks to NGO participation in numerous UN-sponsored international conferences convened since the post-Cold War era beginning in the 1990s, including the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the Earth Summit) held in Rio de Janeiro.

Nanda: Yes. NGOs were a major stimulus in initiating as well as promoting the various international conferences such as the World Summit for Children held in New York, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, the World Conference on Women in Beijing, the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements in Istanbul, the World Food Summit in Rome, and last year's World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg.

Under your guidance, SGI has enthusiastically engaged in projects and activities to help find solutions to many of the world's problems. SGI is a prime example of the tremendous contributions NGOs can make to the cause of global peace and harmony among people belonging to different religions and cultures.

Ikeda: I appreciate your kind words as well as the depth of your understanding. The problems facing humankind today are truly diverse, and multi-faceted human talent is vitally needed to overcome these problems. Mahayana Buddhism teaches that the suffering borne by people in this world is akin to sand, that is, ubiquitous and of a quantity to equal all the eroded particles of the earth and all the grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges River. The ideal character that Mahayana Buddhism seeks to develop is exemplified in courageous individuals who do battle making full use of their wisdom in order to accurately address human suffering. In other words, this is the character of a Bodhisattva.

Various Bodhisattvas appear in the Lotus Sutra, which has been revered as the "King of the Sutras" from ancient times. These legions of Bodhisattvas who swore to overcome the suffering of humankind include Mañjuśrī, Maitreya, Perceiver of the World's Sounds, Medicine King, Wonderful Sound, and Universal Worthy. Mañjuśrī represents wisdom, Maitreya symbolizes compassion, Perceiver of the World's Sounds personifies insight into worldly matters and the power to apply it freely. The Medicine King possesses knowledge of medicine and pharmacology, Wonderful Sound embodies the arts, including, of course, music, and Universal Worthy epitomizes comprehensive learning. Thus, "Bodhisattva character" refers to personalities who battle on behalf of the people by employing their own special talents.

Examples of these immensely accomplished Bodhisattva figures which appear in the Lotus Sutra, in my opinion, can be found among those active in the various NGOs of today. Our courageous SGI members have also joined forces in the struggle to ensure an enduring future for humanity and, by encouraging each other to rise above the obstacles of race and nationality, they demonstrate the way to create happiness among peoples in every corner of the world.

The Challenges for the World Court Project

Ikeda: I would like for us now to consider specific examples as we discuss the role that the NGOs could play to overcome some of the limitations of modern international law. As we touched on previously, the

1992 Earth Summit provided an opportunity for the NGOs to benefit from the spotlight of world consciousness. Concurrently, a pioneering post-Cold War movement—the World Court Project (WCP)—was developed to involve the International Court of Justice in the issue of illegality of nuclear weapons. Please tell us more about the activities of this organization.

Nanda: Surely. The World Court Project was the original international citizens' initiative. It was officially launched in 1992 by three major international NGOs—the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), the International Peace Bureau (IPB), and the International Association of Lawyers Against Nuclear Arms (IALANA)—who sought an advisory opinion on the legality of the use or threatened use of nuclear weapons from the International Court of Justice. These groups, like all citizens' groups, are prevented by the rules of the Court from invoking its competence in requesting an advisory opinion, so their strategy was to influence member states at the World Health Organization (WHO) and the UN General Assembly to sponsor the necessary resolutions.

Ikeda: What was the spark that initiated this movement?

Nanda: The World Court Project emerged from activities that became increasingly prominent in the early 1980s as the rhetoric and threat of the Cold War intensified. The first step was the dissemination of information by a relatively small group of committed lawyers in response to public opinion opposing deployment of Cruise and SS20 medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe. Those lawyers responded to the increased threat of nuclear war by arguing that any foreseeable use of nuclear weapons would violate international humanitarian law and the laws of war as set forth in The Hague and Geneva Conventions. From 1981 on, conferences were held around the world on the legal status of nuclear weapons to build support among the public, within the legal community, and in the United Nations for the position of illegality before attempting to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice.

Activities of these and other NGOs and individuals around the world grew and snowballed through the next several years until June 1988 when the IPPNW became the first international NGO to officially endorse the initiative. In 1989, IALANA's first world conference at the Hague adopted the Hague Declaration, inviting "lawyers throughout the world to sensitize 'the public conscience' to the incompatibility of

nuclear weapons to international law and to utilize their respective legal processes to build up a body of law dealing with various aspects of the problem." I am proud to have been a participant in these efforts.

Ikeda: At that same time, I was able to meet and hold discussions with the founders of the IPPNW, first with the organization's U.S. president, Professor Bernard Lown (March 1989), and shortly thereafter with the president of the group in the former Soviet Union, Professor Mikhail Kuzin (October 1989). As its name indicates, the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War was formed in 1980 at the peak of the Cold War, mainly by leading U.S. and Soviet physicians' groups, to prevent a nuclear war from incinerating the human race in an instant of diabolical insanity. The physicians of IPPNW transcended the political and ideological differences of their respective countries and formed an international physicians' network to convey as forcefully as possible the message of nuclear disarmament and arms reduction to all the peoples of the world. The group declared that, "Curing patients of illness is the main responsibility of physicians. However, if proliferation of nuclear arms—a single one of which has the capability of decimating millions of people—is allowed to continue, humanity will likely end up being annihilated by this epidemic after having endured constant exposure to the menace and fear that it provokes." IPPNW received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995 for its distinguished service. I was deeply impressed that these physicians, acting on their calling to protect human life, had united around the noble goal of working toward world peace.

Previously, I discussed the various Bodhisattvas who appeared in the Lotus Sutra to address the suffering of the people. The physicians of the IPPNW who possess knowledge of medicine and pharmacology are truly the "Medicine King Bodhisattvas" who are making a contribution to the health and well-being of humankind.

Professor Lown said that every second, the world spends approximately $30,000 on military expenditures. Meanwhile, due to shortages of food and medical supplies, every two seconds a child dies. When I told the professor that I wanted to introduce as many people as possible, including young persons, to the IPPNW movement, he emphasized that young people must acquire a broad vision of humanity as a whole in order to transcend self-interest and the narrow nationalistic consciousness of our cultures. At the same time, the professor expressed apprehension regarding the great difficulty of this task.

Nanda: I can certainly understand his concern.

ICJ's View on Nuclear Weapons

Ikeda: To build a world without war or nuclear weapons—this is the lesson that Josei Toda, my mentor and the second president of Soka Gakkai, wished to leave to youth in his 1957 "Declaration on the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons." He earnestly desired a lasting peace for humanity. He emphatically insisted that, "Anyone who tries to jeopardize the people's right to life is a devil incarnate and a monster.... Even if a country should conquer the world through the use of nuclear weapons, the conquerors must be viewed as devils, as this act must not be allowed. I believe that we must spread the idea throughout the world that nuclear weapons are a threat to human existence and an absolute evil." Ever since hearing his forceful message, my teacher's words have remained foremost in my mind.

Taking his words to heart, I determined to make the pursuit of peace my life's greatest mission and have devoted all my efforts to realizing my teacher's desire. Soka Gakkai and SGI, especially the youth division, have also actively participated in the peace movement. We held a worldwide exhibition entitled, "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World," in 1997 and joined with the Abolition 2000 campaign to gather and deliver over 1.3 million signatures to the United Nations headquarters.

Nanda: I know how interested you are in the nuclear issue and how unique your own leadership has been in combating this menace. I am also very aware of the dedication with which the youth of Soka Gakkai and SGI have engaged in this activity. It is clear that the work of these youth has been a significant force making world peace a recognized objective of the world community.

The previously mentioned Hague Declaration emphasizes the importance of continuing to sound the alarm about the dangers of nuclear weapons. One of its goals, the Declaration states, is "being the voice in the wilderness that reminds people that.... the danger of nuclear holocaust remains alive as long as nuclear weapons are in arsenals of the major, as well as an increasing number of minor, powers."

As part of their campaign to demonstrate to the Court the prevailing trend of world opinion, the representatives of the IPB, IPPNW, and IALANA launched an initiative to gather individual signatures, i.e., "Declarations of Public Conscience," from sympathetic persons around the world, under the Martens Clause of the 1899 and 1907 Hague Conventions. Following this effort, at the WHO World Health Assembly a resolution was proposed asking the International Court of Justice for an

advisory opinion on the legality of the threat or use of nuclear weapons, and the tally of the resulting vote was 78 states in favor, and 43 against.

Ikeda: I believe that in its campaign to seek an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice, the World Court Project focused not only on the WHO, but also on the UN General Assembly.

Nanda: That is correct. This part of the strategy, as I mentioned previously, was to influence member states in these two bodies to sponsor the necessary resolutions for the advisory opinion. In October of 1995 when the International Court of Justice hearings on this subject began, the signature campaign was successful in gathering and presenting nearly 3.7 million Declarations of Public Conscience to the Court. Representatives of the World Court Project were in attendance at the Court to provide legal assistance as well as to observe the proceedings and report to their constituencies throughout the world. The World Court Project provides an excellent example of how citizen action groups working with governments can play an effective role in influencing decision-making at the United Nations.

Ikeda: In its advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice expressed the following view.

> It follows... that the threat or use of nuclear weapons would generally be contrary to the rules of international law applicable in armed conflict, and in particular, the principles and rules of humanitarian law;
>
> However, in view of the current state of international law, and of the elements of fact at its disposal, the Court cannot conclude definitively whether the threat or use of nuclear weapons would be lawful or unlawful in an extreme circumstance of self-defence, in which the very survival of a State would be at stake;...

Therefore, while the Court regarded the use or threat of nuclear weapons as illegal, it did not go so far as to conclude unconditionally that their use would be illegal in all cases.

Nanda: Yes. That is right. Ultimately, the Court determined that international law has not yet developed a basis for ruling nuclear weapons to be illegal. In other words, in the absence of specific customary or conventional prohibitions on the use of nuclear weapons, the Court was not ready to conclude that their use "would necessarily be at variance with the principles and rules of law applicable in armed conflict in any cir-

cumstance." Nonetheless, the Court regarded the use of nuclear weapons as "scarcely reconcilable with respect for such principles."

It is remarkable to consider the tremendous work of this group and what they accomplished simply in bringing to the Court millions of signatures to evidence the world's collective conscience, and the great strides they achieved, even short of their hoped-for ruling of illegality.

Ikeda: Many more such noble efforts are greatly needed in the 21st century. I believe that a plan to construct a better world based on a peace that benefits humankind must be designed by the people, and that we must join together in this common struggle to bring this plan to fruition. I have continuously urged that we consider this task as critical to safeguarding human dignity and ensuring the survival of humanity, and rather than entrust the responsibility to government or the state, we must take an active role in bringing a better world into being. The responsibility and initiative for building a world without nuclear weapons and a world without war belong to each individual. Recent developments seem to be a sure sign that progress is being made. To build a society that permits us to live a truly human existence, I believe we must harness the immense power within people and spread this new "people first" concept of society throughout the world.

Professor Nanda, in your experience, what are the necessary conditions and requirements for NGOs to build and grow a society that puts humanitarian factors first throughout the world?

Nanda: Well, first of all, one of the most severe challenges confronting the NGOs is resistance. Often, the good work that needs to be done and the people willing to give their time to do it are met with oppressive resistance from official agencies and other entities that may, in fact, be threatened by the NGOs' work. Thus, the first challenge is overcoming the obstacle of resistance to change from those in power.

The second challenge is to overcome apathy. Creating general awareness and educating people is a difficult and time-consuming task, and yet an essential prerequisite for success. President Ikeda, I must express my deepest gratitude to you and SGI for undertaking this important work through conferences, symposia, studies, dialogues, and especially through the work of the research centers you have established.

The third is financial, especially in a time when military spending and budget deficits are high. If the money is not available, the work cannot get done. And the last challenge I would mention is the challenge to NGOs to maintain their moral authority. It is essential that they continue

to follow rigorous standards, not compromise their integrity, and remain credible as important actors on the international stage, for their credibility, integrity and moral authority are the pillars of their effectiveness and success.

High Moral Integrity for NGOs

Ikeda: You point to extremely important issues that will determine the future effectiveness of NGOs. First, as you pointed out, power can pose a challenging obstacle, and frequently in the history of the propagation of Buddhism, believers were forced to endure serious trials. Historically, it is unfortunate but true that many Buddhist groups ultimately became part of the power structure after experiencing severe oppression or falling victim to shrewd manipulation. However, we also see examples from the lineage of brave and honorable individuals who sought to protect human dignity at great risk to their own lives, as they fought the oppression of the powerful and the corrupt priests who conspired with them.

As I mentioned previously, among these figures we can point to Shakyamuni of India, Chih-I of China who was later known as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, and in Japan, Saichō, later referred to as the Great Teacher Dengyō, and Nichiren whom we revere. Each of these great men embraced the principles of equality and human dignity for all, without distinction, and sought to plant and allow these principles to flourish in society. They fought with all their might using the power of expression, their greatest spiritual weapon in the battle against unjust political authority that would deny people their basic rights. Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who led America's civil rights movement, all used the power of expression and the spiritual strength of their convictions to combat injustice and malicious slander.

The second point, a strong financial foundation, is most definitely critical in a contemporary society in which economics is a key factor for success. As you mentioned, resolving the earth's problems, including military disarmament, will require an enormous amount of time and effort on the part of the NGOs to draw the public's attention to the issues and to conduct the essential research and studies which will elucidate the problems. As a practical matter, in order to ensure the sustainability of such a movement, a stable source of funding is necessary. To this end, referring to the "Global Compact" promoted by the U.N. the futurist Hazel Henderson, with whom I have published a dialogue, has

asserted the importance of corporate giving to benefit human rights, labor, and environmental issues.

Nanda: These are all exceedingly important efforts.

Ikeda: Your last point about maintaining moral integrity is, I believe, the most important. As I touched on earlier, the strength of the NGOs originates in the people—the Great Earth of their daily lives—and represents the voluntary expression of their will. The passion in the hearts of the people provides the energy. This is why the NGOs must always do their utmost to win the hearts and minds of the people by maintaining the highest moral integrity, striving always to be independent and beyond reproach. Of course, this effort is completely different from slavishly catering to popular opinion. Popular opinion vacillates back and forth and is devoid of principled moral vision, continuity, or consistency. In order to secure long-term, widespread support for major projects, it is essential to present people with clear principles and tangible achievements.

Nanda: Absolutely. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch provide apt illustrations. Credibility is the key, but nothing can be accomplished without broad popular support.

Ikeda: When I contemplate the relationship between ideals and practice, I recall the "Four Universal Vows" that the Bodhisattvas must make in their religious training in Mahayana Buddhism. The first vow is "to save innumerable living beings." It is a pledge to do their utmost to see that all people achieve a sense of happiness and well-being. The second, "to eradicate countless earthly desires," is a vow to continually struggle against the vices of greed, aggressiveness, and inertial indolence that are an integral part of life. In other words, this is an oath to transform evil into goodness, i.e., to vanquish the seductive power of evil with aspirations for virtue. The third vow is "to master immeasurable Buddhist teachings." This vow is a pledge to study the great spiritual legacy of humanity and to embark on a never-ending journey to search for and define the meaning of truth for oneself and one's generation. The fourth vow, "to attain supreme enlightenment," admonishes the believer to pioneer a path for realizing the happiness and well-being of the people. These four vows represent the virtues of noble purpose, vigilant independence, infinite desire for improvement, and promise of positive

results, i.e., the necessary virtues to overcome the oppressiveness of corrupt and depraved power.

The "Soft-Power" Role of the United Nations

Ikeda: Let us move on to a discussion of the United Nations, its role as an important partner of the NGOs, and how it must serve as a focal point in humanity's struggle to resolve the various problems confronting the earth. As stated previously, the sovereign state was a main actor in the recurring conflicts and clashes of the 20th century. The wars and hostilities, engaged in by nations exercising their sovereign rights, forced countless innocent civilians into the tragedy of these events.

The League of Nations and the United Nations were both established in response to the world wars of the 20th century in the hope of preventing further international conflict and to create a system for bringing peace and harmony to the international community. The unfortunate, brief life of the League of Nations provides a backdrop for reflecting on the current state of the United Nations. The important work the United Nations has engaged in for over a half century has been significant, but it has been hindered from fully achieving its initial objectives by the impenetrable wall of national sovereignty. That said, in spite of the numerous trials encountered by the United Nations, it is a fact that today the United Nations is composed of nearly all the countries of the world and serves an indispensable function as a global forum for dealing with the most distressing global problems.

I have had numerous opportunities to meet and engage many of the world's distinguished people in dialogue, and whenever possible, I asked them the question, "What do you think of the United Nations?" Each person answered with a sincere and profound sense of responsibility for the future. Briefly, the answers have included various criticisms and expectations regarding the role of the current United Nations, but overwhelmingly, respondents expressed a belief in the importance of the United Nations and the need to support it. After many years of urging support for the UN, this is a very encouraging endorsement of our view.

Nanda: I, too, have worked to support the UN through the United Nations Association of the USA and the World Federation of United Nations Associations, and have great respect for your consistent statements of support and the activities you have sponsored to support the UN over the years.

Ikeda: The principles of peace, equality, and compassion in the Buddhist teachings are precisely the truths that our generation is seeking, and these are consistent with the goals of the United Nations. Therefore, in our opinion, support for the UN is an absolute necessity. And in this sense, I also think that we must make the primary role of the UN one of providing the "soft power" that fosters cooperation and dialogue.

Even though "hard power," representing military force, customarily compels countries and people to move in a certain way, it is incapable of producing the ultimate resolution to problems. In contrast, the key aspect of "soft power" is its fundamental capacity to encourage the parties to a conflict to reach a mutual and voluntary resolution through dialogue. The task of building a common set of rules for a peaceful international system based on a global perspective is surely the most critical mission that the United Nations—the "assembly of humanity"—must undertake. For this reason, I believe that the UN must vigorously disavow the old view of national security based on military might, and instead seek to strengthen its role as a champion of "soft power" which underscores the need for consensus and understanding through dialogue.

Professor Nanda, what avenues do you think the United Nations should be pursuing in the 21st century?

Nanda: First, let me say that your work on the great potential of "soft power" has inspired so many of us on so many occasions, President Ikeda. I am delighted to have the opportunity to discuss this idea, yet if I may digress for a moment: the term "soft power" reminds me of the international law expression "soft law," referring to non-binding agreements and emerging norms or principles. These are the declarations, guidelines, instruments, and other agreements that bring together the intentions and aspirations of the states involved and, by so stating them, give them effect, if only through the gradual cultivation of a new normative consensus. Many of these principles eventually reach the status of customary international law through state practice combined with what is called *opinio juris*, that is, a general acknowledgement by states that they are obligated to act in compliance with the principle. Some of this effect is, of course, generated through "enlightened self-interest," but some is also due to the desire to be part of a cooperative effort making progress toward greater order and predictability in the international system.

In other ways, too, the power of the United Nations could be described as "soft." The current state-centered system being horizontal and not vertical or hierarchical has its inherent weakness, which is to say that all states are equal, and there is little if any basis for account-

ability between the member states. Without any means for enforcement of the Charter principles, the functioning of the UN depends almost entirely on the will of nations to be bound by these principles.

President Ikeda, reform of the United Nations, especially of the Security Council, as you know, remains a priority item for the world community. However, implementation of the various decisions taken by the UN, primarily the ratification and enforcement by states of the various treaties that they have negotiated under the UN auspices, is of critical importance at present. And there again, a distorted notion of sovereignty is a major hurdle.

Ikeda: Yes. I understand what you mean. Though the United Nations espouses noble objectives, the reality is that its activities do not progress according to plan, and it has great difficulty in achieving its goals.

Nanda: Nevertheless, the UN General Assembly continues to pass declarations and resolutions that enhance the body of international law, as it did at its first session in 1946 when it unanimously adopted resolutions declaring and affirming the Nuremberg Principles. The International Bill of Rights, comprising the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, is a shining example. So are many other human rights instruments, such as the Convention on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention for Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the International Convention on Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the Kyoto Global Warming Pact, and a host of international environmental law treaties such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, and the Convention on Biological Diversity are a few examples of the world community's common interest expressed in international agreements negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations.

Human Security

Ikeda: The establishment of these international standards as well as

the work of international institutions such as the United Nations has contributed greatly to the spread of "human security" in which a humanitarian dimension is included. The concept of "human security" is advocated primarily by the United Nations Development Project (UNDP), and is based on the notion that in an age in which human dignity is threatened in so many ways, we must address the human rather than the institutional dimension. In a word, we cannot say we have true security if people's welfare and freedoms are ignored, they can not receive equal treatment under the law, or their very survival is at risk.

Just because we are not at war by no means is an indication that we are at peace. In this sense, we live in an age in which human rights and integrity are still threatened on a daily basis. Because national interests have taken priority, undeniably, the basic rights necessary for people to live a truly human existence have taken second place. Also, as environmental problems and poverty issues illustrate, the various problems related to human security cannot be isolated simply by arbitrarily-drawn national borders, but rather are global and multi-faceted in nature. They transcend a national framework and must be approached with the intention of benefiting humanity as a whole. Despite the fact that these problems affect every single human being on the face of the earth, no country has zealously engaged in searching for solutions. Only the United Nations has worked conscientiously to deal with these problems.

Nanda: I could not agree more. The work of the World Health Organization (WHO), World Food Programme (WFP), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and a number of international financial institutions attest to the immense contributions of United Nations agencies.

The other functions of the UN and its specialized agencies have provided the organization with its greatest successes, principally in the areas of human rights, environment, and health and development; perhaps this work will in the long run serve the peace better than all the peacekeeping functions! The large number of conventions and agencies addressing these issues is quite impressive, and the work in these fields has made a tremendous difference in the lives of people around the world.

The problem of Iraq, which has become the focus of attention recently, has cast growing doubt on the role of the United Nations and its effectiveness to address issues of war and peace, issues of primary concern to it when the organization was created. However, it is clear that if the UN did not exist, the world situation would be much more unstable.

Ikeda: I agree completely. During the Cold War era, the United Nations was battered by the ideological conflicts between East and West which left it unable to deal with peace and security issues except on a limited basis. This unfortunate history haunts the UN to this day and can be detected in the overtones of criticism questioning the effectiveness of the world body every time an incident occurs.

Nanda: Yes, I suppose that is a major aspect of the problem. As I mentioned previously, as initially conceived after the Second World War, the UN was primarily concerned with the maintenance of international peace and security. But with the Cold War, it soon became apparent that this goal would not be achieved in the way intended, that is, its accomplishment under the collective security system envisioned under the UN Charter. The plan had been that the nations would come together in the Security Council, which under Chapter 7 could determine if there was a threat to the peace, breach of the peace, or act of aggression and, if so, could conceivably take any action in response. The progression was from diplomatic and economic sanctions to eventually the use of force if needed.

However, as you pointed out, President Ikeda, the East-West ideological clash resulted in a situation in which neither the U.S. nor the Soviet Union exhibited any willingness to allow the UN Security Council to function for the accomplishment of its major objective—maintenance of international peace and security. Neither side was willing to give the UN the necessary means and resources to become effective, for the perception in both camps was that an effective UN could perhaps check their freedom of action in situations in which they might wish to undertake unilateral action in the pursuit of their geopolitical interests.

Ikeda: After the Cold War ended, the East-West ideological conflict faded away, and there was a rapid increase in new expectations for the role the United Nations should play. Even within the UN, desire for reform was growing, and the proposal for a peaceful world, entitled "Agenda for Peace," submitted to the UN Security Council by then UN Secretary-General Boutrous Boutrous-Ghali was symbolic of this growing sentiment. The proposal is composed of four elements—preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peace-building.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Secretary-General several times. On the first occasion in 1993, he was deeply involved, as the champion of the "United Nations renaissance," in making reforms. I made the following suggestion to him at that time. "Most important for

the future of the United Nations is the need to strengthen the character of the international body as a 'Gathering of Representatives of the People' which would complement its role as a 'Gathering of Nations.' In this regard, what would you think about the UN sponsoring an event such as a World NGO Summit or World NGO General Assembly?" I felt that this would provide greater visibility and articulate an expanded role for NGOs.

The Secretary-General replied with words to the effect that, "I am in complete agreement with your point about the importance of the NGOs. The United Nations would be considerably weaker with the participation of governmental representatives alone. The involvement of the NGOs is essential for the UN to make an impact on international opinion. The United Nations Charter begins with the words, 'We the people...' and this signifies that the people must take priority over anything else."

When I saw the Secretary-General for the second time in 1994, I candidly reiterated my view regarding the importance of including direct communication with people of goodwill. I said, "When viewing events from above, only 30% is visible, but when looking at issues from below, 70% can be seen. If we would try to understand situations from the people's perspective, we would know so much more." The Secretary-General acknowledged and expressed his approval of my view. He shared his concerns about the dilemma facing the UN when he told me that, at a time when the world has placed the heaviest expectations on the UN, the world body has received its lowest level of support, and this is clearly insufficient for it to carry out its many responsibilities.

Nanda: President Ikeda, it is high time that your suggestion for an expanded role for NGOs be carried out, as should your many other suggestions aimed at rejuvenating the UN as a more effective organization. I know that both Secretary-General Kofi Annan and his predecessor, Boutros-Ghali, firmly support your viewpoint. As the US representative to the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) and vice chair of WFUNA's executive committee, I have had the opportunity to visit with both of them and witness firsthand the concrete steps each has undertaken toward empowering NGOs. Unfortunately, however, as you so very well know, change in the international arena comes only incrementally and on an issue of this magnitude so very slowly.

However, if we take just a moment to review the "Agenda for Peace" report submitted by the Secretary-General, we understand more clearly the vision of this man for the single institution to which almost all the

countries of the world have entrusted their common future and the efforts he feels are necessary to build peace in the post-Cold War world.

Under preventive diplomacy, he suggested strengthening the UN fact-finding capability, establishing a network of early warning systems, and deploying UN forces "to alleviate suffering and to limit or control violence." His proposals on peacemaking included the use of pacific means for settling disputes as embodied in Chapter 6 of the Charter, with special emphasis on reinforcing the role of the International Court of Justice, and better coordination of all UN resources, including its principal organs, specialized agencies and programs. For strengthening the expanded United Nations peacekeeping operations, Boutros-Ghali focused on the problems of personnel and logistics, to wit, the required numbers of peacekeepers, their adequate training, the needed equipment, and the intelligence and communications capability.

As to the enforcement measures for maintaining or restoring international peace and security, he called for negotiations between member states to bring into being a permanent UN armed force. And under the reconstruction function, or "post-conflict peace-building," he included "advancing efforts to protect human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation."

Ikeda: In accord with this vision, in 1992, for the first time in UN Peace Keeping Operations (PKO) history, a multinational force composed primarily of American troops was dispatched to Somalia as a peacekeeping force. This first attempt to offer primarily humanitarian assistance as part of a PKO mission ended abruptly in failure and served as a major lesson.

From a Culture of Reaction to a Culture of Prevention

Nanda: Yes. Since that episode, the UN has continued to pursue a strategy of trial and error as it attempts to figure out how to deal with the issue of humanitarian intervention, i.e., for protection of persons caught in bloody conflicts within a nation's boundaries or those facing egregious violations of human rights, such as genocide and ethnic cleansing, as in Rwanda, Bosnia, East Timor, the Congo, Sri Lanka, and Kosovo, among others. These situations are stimulating discussion in the area of international law on the need for humanitarian intervention and how to advance the legal basis for it, given the fact that the principles of non-

intervention in the internal matters of a state and territorial integrity remain nearly sacrosanct.

On the use of force in general, it is imperative that states not take unilateral action but instead defer to the Security Council for collective action. Unilateral use of force must be limited to self-defense measures authorized under article 51 of the UN Charter, which itself must be construed in a principled fashion and strictly in compliance with both the letter and spirit of the Charter.

Most importantly, what is needed is not simply after-the-fact responses to the problem, but a strategy to prevent conflict in the first place. I noted with intense appreciation your endorsement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan's appeal that we consider peace and security as goals to achieve by making the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention.

Ikeda: Secretary-General Annan emphasized this point about the transition from a culture of reaction to a culture of prevention in his 1999 Annual Report. Namely, in a culture of prevention, the approach is not one of responding to problems after they have occurred, but rather, to emphasize strategies to limit the damage to the very minimum. By responding to a conflict after it intensifies, not only are the capacity and means to cope with the crisis sorely inadequate, but also the process of reestablishing the peace requires a much greater expenditure of time and effort. Also, with repeated and unrestrained armed conflict, a persistent animosity permeates the social atmosphere, and recurring conflict is difficult to prevent even when a cease-fire is reached. Secretary-General Annan stated the following about the course that the UN should pursue, given the limitations inherent in responding to situations after-the-fact. He emphasized, "On the one hand, we must strengthen our capacity to bring relief to victims. On the other hand, we must devise more effective strategies to prevent emergencies from arising in the first place."

As a means for the UN to establish this culture of prevention in the international community, I proposed that the UN create a conflict prevention committee with the authority to continuously monitor and recommend preventive advisory measures in regions in which mounting tensions or conflicts and internal disputes threaten the peace.

In the past, problems related to conflicts were dealt with primarily in the UN Security Council, but the tendency was for situations to become topics of discussion only after they had severely deteriorated. Furthermore, it was difficult to raise international public awareness about con-

flicts and disputes that were not addressed in the Security Council, and this imposed limitations on the degree of international cooperation that could be marshalled to resolve a crisis.

Our proposal was included in the final document of the NGO Millennium Forum held in 2000 and was also proposed in the United Nations Millennium Summit which followed.

Nanda: This is an extremely important proposal. Rather than try to manage a conflict after it has erupted, it is essential that efforts focus on establishing effective preventive measures to squelch any trouble before it spreads. As the costs of war escalate exponentially, to the point that they far exceed a calculation of lives lost versus benefits gained, we are reaching the point of truthfully wondering for how many generations will the need to retaliate spiral on and on? And in the 21st Century is it not imperative that a new way be found to respond to violence and hatred than with violence and hatred?

President Ikeda, as you so aptly put it in your SGI proposal last year, a lasting resolution is much more likely in an approach that faces the real enemies: "poverty, hatred and, most formidable of all, the dehumanization that exerts a demonic dominion over contemporary society."

Ikeda: An expanded system of international law is absolutely essential to prevent terrorism and conflict. I suggest that if we do not simultaneously cast an inquiring look into the deep dark recesses of the human heart which give birth to these problems, the means to devise the required fundamental solutions will be out of our reach.

In the words of the psychologist Carl Jung, "A million zeros joined together do not, unfortunately, add up to one. Ultimately, everything depends on the quality of the individual, but our fatally short-sighted age thinks only in terms of large numbers and mass organizations."[1] I believe that as long as we do not address the needs of the individual, tragedies will continue to befall society.

Without a sensible approach to the problems of personal development, military responses to terrorism and conflicts will inevitably lead to crises that escalate endlessly, and in a worst case scenario, result in a disastrous clash of civilizations. This is because both terrorism and conflict cannot be eliminated by a simplistic "hard power" solution based primarily on military force. Rather, the international community must adopt a coordinated approach that includes a "soft power" component addressing the broad and idiosyncratic character of these problems.

The Three Elements of "Soft Power"

Nanda: Yes. I believe so too. This brings us back to the question of "soft power." As the United Nations contemplates the excesses of its members or the unimaginable rage of non-state groups taking on established society with horrible violence and anger, perhaps we are seeing the elements of the "soft power" trilogy—diplomacy, language, and moral suasion—in action, after all.

It is interesting that, while there is not much of an enforcement mechanism to ensure that states cooperate, there is instead the powerful force of world public opinion. Even at the height of the Cold War, this fragile world public opinion was powerful enough to influence the conduct of the Soviet Union. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, I led a group of judges, lawyers and law professors to that country. In company with some of them, I met "refuseniks" in Moscow, Kiev and St. Petersburg. These were professionals who were dismissed from their jobs and punished for following the Jewish faith. Each one of them had anecdotes to share which proved beyond doubt that when human rights advocates in the West criticized visiting Soviet authorities for violating the civil and political rights of these "refuseniks," it had considerable impact; and on their return to the Soviet Union, they tried to effect change in the Soviet policy on human rights and emigration issues.

Similarly, it was the persistent condemnation of South Africa by its peers among civilized nations, more than sanctions, that caused it ultimately to abandon the apartheid regime. So today, even though so much conflict and potential for conflict exist in the world, there is a strong voice for peace at even the highest levels of power.

Ikeda: A major task for the 21st century will be for socially aware people acting in solidarity to increase the efficacy of the three elements of "soft power", i.e., diplomacy, language, and moral suasion. The year 2001, which ushered in the 21st century, was named the "United Nations Year of Dialogue Among Civilizations." The proposal was offered by President Seyed Mohammad Khatami of Iran who warned that listening is not simply a passive act. Rather, he explained, the listener exposes himself to the world created, discovered, and experienced by the speaker. If the listener does not maintain a stance of active listening, the dialogue is doomed to failure

President Khatami observed that the objective of dialogue is not to present and push one's own views, but rather to empathize with the

other person's perspective and engage in an open and honest dialogue. I would venture to say, at the risk of being misunderstood, that he means to say that the true value of dialogue surpasses the results obtained through the dialogue. This is because the process itself provides a forum for human beings and civilizations to come together to participate in lively interactions fostering self-restraint and humanistic sentiments.

Nanda: How curious to find the words of President Seyed Mohammad Khatami of Iran—recently called one of the "axis of evil" countries—forming the basis of your thoughts on dialogue. I believe that in your consideration of his words you display the truly open and honest receptivity that is essential to achieve global peace and harmony. And yet how clear it is that we are involved today in an implosion of non-listening and non-dialogue—both we and those who would destroy us. In addition to the heavenly harmony that can be achieved through right use of dialogue, it is abundantly manifest that the wrong use of language has the power to inflame and exacerbate problems.

Ikeda: This is why I believe that our age cries out for dialogue among civilizations based on a sense of responsibility to the future that transcends national, racial, religious, and ethnic differences. In the age in which Shakyamuni lived, clusters of city-states were progressing toward unification into kingdoms, as was the case in the kingdom of Magadha. For better or for worse, the framework of the past gave way to a new system of active social and economic exchange. During his lifetime, Shakyamuni traversed a vast territory, encountered a wide variety of people, and engaged them in discussion. Through this dialogue, he established a philosophy based on a foundation of universal spiritual principles by which human beings could live a fulfilled and dignified human life. Shakyamuni went to great lengths to pursue his quest for the eternal truths of the universe and the meaning of human life. He maintained a strict austerity regarding principles of truth and right living, but was unfettered by religious doctrine in his conversations with others. His aim was to discover and share eternal human truths that every person could understand and honor.

Dialogue with a Spirit of Compassion

Ikeda: In the scriptures of the Saṃyutta-nikāya Sutra, Shakyamuni's approach is discussed as follows:

"Monks, I don't dispute with the world, but the world disputes with

me. Monks, no preacher of the Laws disputes with anyone in the world. Monks, about what is agreed upon by sages in the world as "It doesn't exist," I also say, "It doesn't exist." Monks, about what is agreed upon by sages in the world as "It exists," I also say, "It exists."

Dialogue is supported not by logic based on the power of strongmen, but rather on the reasoning of sages who seek true human happiness and well-being.

Nanda: Indeed, the Buddha lived in a time of great societal upheaval. And this is surely why his discourse conveys a fresh and vibrant message that resonates with the current times. And, as you know, Hindu sages and seers have from time immemorial lived and taught the value of dialogue, reasoning and logic.

Ikeda: The legacy of Shakyamuni was very much alive on the great continent of India when it encountered the culture of Hellenism. The historical record contains a famous dialogue from this era between King Menander and the monk Nāgasena in which they engage in a serious discussion on the eternal truths of the universe and human life.

The previously mentioned Nāgārjuna was also an earnest seeker of truth who traveled throughout India. He met with sages and learned individuals in every region to acquire an understanding of diverse philosophies as he sought to deepen his own meditations. Then, Nāgārjuna went on to author many Mahayana texts such as one of his most important, *The Middle Doctrine*, and through the centuries his writings have exerted an enormous influence on people in every age.

Nichiren also undertook the task of evaluating the Buddhist teachings of the past by visiting the various Buddhist schools in each region and studying their major teachings. It was then that he realized that the original insights of Shakyamuni and the fundamental spirit of Buddhism lie within the Lotus Sutra, and so he expounded on its essence in his teachings. During these endeavors, he produced his major work, *On Establishing the Correct Teaching for the Peace of the Land* (Risshō-ankoku-ron) which is structured in a dialogue format. In examining the questions and answers in his works, it is clear that Nichiren had an insightful understanding of views different from his own, he was able to accurately grasp the main points of these assertions, and he boldly and meticulously articulated the relevant issues while guiding individuals toward the truth.

In any case, these sages and learned individuals shared a profound and comprehensive understanding of people. This understanding was

inspired by their genuine trust and boundless concern for others and was expressed in a love and respect for humanity. This love of humanity was certainly not an unquestioning sentimentalism, but rather was a combination of a perceptive sensibility growing out of the struggle against evil integral to human life and a simultaneous rigorous striving to achieve the highest good.

A dialogue entered into with a spirit of compassion and love of humanity, forged from the tensions inherent in the struggles of the human experience, holds the most hope as a means to shape a sustainable future for humankind.

Nanda: President Ikeda, we are, indeed, in a mortal struggle for hope. We have accumulated to ourselves every means imaginable to end the world tomorrow. But the human heart cannot bear that thought. So why, then, do our governments persist in putting their energies into confrontation rather than dialogue and purporting to work for peace by balancing opposing military powers rather than encouraging people to coexist in harmony and dignity?

Ikeda: My main objective in founding institutions devoted to peace such as the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century and the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, to which you and others often provide valuable support, as well as the Institute of Oriental Philosophy, a Buddhist-based academic institution, was simply to provide a central base for unifying people of conscience from around the world and encouraging them to create a new grand design from which to build a century without war and a global society based on peaceful coexistence and harmony. My intent was to assemble and combine the heretofore separate and isolated efforts of individuals and focus their collective power on developing solutions to a variety of problems to benefit the people.

Nanda: I firmly believe that we two feel that the international political setting of today is not the best that mankind deserves. It seems at times lower than the lowest common denominator of humankind's potential. But as you very powerfully demonstrate, the efforts of individuals working in respect and honor for their fellow men and women, looking beyond differences of race, gender, creed, politics, or wealth, do lend a ray of hope to the situation.

Ikeda: An overview of history reveals that people of good intent are

always divided and rendered incapable of exercising their power and determination to reform society, and thus many seem to become discouraged and frustrated. We would like to do our utmost to overcome the obstacles to positive reform. The answer lies in one's approach to one's fellow human beings. It is no easy task to truly trust and respect others. One must maintain one's belief despite repeated betrayal by the same person, or when one's trust has been maliciously abused.

No matter what situation we are confronted with, most importantly, we must have a resolute spirit and unyielding courage to persist in the fight. It is profoundly significant that the Buddha, who desired and fought to bring happiness to all people, was given the title, Nōnin, the Chinese name for Shakyamuni which means "one who endures with patience."

The god Brahma's request at the time of Shakyamuni's enlightenment as well as the pledge Nichiren made when he established Nichiren Buddhism were both declarations of spiritual resistance against the forces of evil. The determination to resist the tendency to regress exemplifies the essential meaning at the heart of the enlightenment experience.

In a world enveloped in infinite darkness, a resolute faith unsoiled by worldly things, as pure as the lotus flower, is essential to avoid the taint of evil, grapple mightily with it, and strive to lead the way toward goodness. Our steadfast belief vanquishes every shred of doubt and is the banner with which we bear witness to the humanism of the Lotus Sutra.

One of my close friends, the late Norman Cousins, once warned that "the main characteristic of pessimism, like cynicism, is that it sets the stage for its own omens. It shuns hope for the future in the act of denying it. It narrows the field of vision, obscuring the relationship between the necessary and the possible."[2] In his stern admonishment, Cousins sought to encourage people to take heart, and make an earnest effort toward their objectives. I agree that this is the way to accomplish one's goals.

I firmly believe that the success of humanity's struggle lies in maintaining the unflagging optimism and sense of responsibility for our common future that empowers us to accomplish what is required with courage and determination.

Notes

[1] Jung, Carl, *The Undiscovered Self: Civilization in Transition*, 2nd ed., Trans. R. F. C. Hull, New York: Mentor Books, 1959, pp. 245–305.

[2] Norman Cousins, *Human Options*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1981, p. 48.

Daisaku Ikeda
Born in 1928 in Tokyo. Honorary president of Soka Gakkai. President of Soka Gakkai International (SGI). As a Buddhist, philosopher, educator, author, and poet, has launched numerous initiatives in areas such as peace, the environment and education, lectured at universities on these topics, always with an underlying theme of "humanism" in Buddhism, and engaged in dialogue with many national and cultural leaders and academics worldwide. Founded numerous educational institutions, including Soka University, academic research institutions and peace organizations such as the Toda Institute for Global Peace and Policy Research, Institute of Oriental Philosophy, and Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, and cultural institutions such as the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum and Min-on Concert Association. Author of over 100 publications including the novel, *The Human Revolution* (in 12 volumes), and collected dialogues including *Choose Life: A Dialogue* (with Arnold Toynbee), *Humanity at the Crossroads* (with Karan Singh), *Spiritual Lessons of the Twentieth Century* (with Mikhail Gorbachev), *Human Rights in the Twenty-First Century* (with Austregésilo de Athayde), *Dialogues on Eastern Wisdom* (with Ji Xianlin, Jiang Zhongxin), and *A Dialogue on Philosophies of the Orient* (with Lokesh Chandra). Awarded United Nations Peace Medal in 1983. Recipient of over 140 honorary professorship doctorates from many universities around the world including the University of Moscow and Delhi University.

Ved P. Nanda
Born in 1934 in Gujranwala, India (currently Pakistan). Vice provost and professor of the University of Denver, director of the International Legal Studies Program in the University of Denver College of Law. Earned the Bachelor's and Master's degree in Economics from Punjab University, and the Bachelor's (LL.B.) and Master's degree (LL.M.) in Law from Delhi University. Earned the Master's degree in Law (LL.M.) from Northwestern University. Graduate Fellow at Yale Law School. Awarded honorary doctorate degrees from Soka University and Bundelkhand University. Professor Nanda has been active in his field of expertise, serving as a counselor for the American Society of International Law, past vice president and current honorary vice president of the U.S. chapter of the International Law Association (ILA), member of the American Law Institute, associate member of the International Academy of Comparative Law, member of the Advisory Committee of the Human Rights Institute of America, and former president and current honorary president of the World Jurist Association. Among his many publications are: *Law of Transnational Business Transactions*, *Litigation of International Disputes in U.S. Courts*, *Nuclear Weapons and the World Court*, *Hindu Law and Legal Theory*, *Human Rights and Development*, and *International Environmental Law and Policy*. Recipient of numerous awards including the United Nations Association's Human Rights Award, Anti-Defamation League's Civil Rights Award, and the World Legal Scholar Award.