

MY NON VIOLENCE

An Autobiography of a Japanese Buddhist

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• NICHIDATSU FUJII

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Translated by T. Yamaori

by same author

Beating Drum
Buddhism and Peace
My Mission to India
Call in Japan

BEGINNING OF THE MISSION TO INDIA

At the end of February 1930, the same month in which I practiced street preaching in front of Shirokiya, my mother Mina Fujii died at Nihonzan Myoho-ji (= Japan Buddha Sangha) in Atami. For the repose of her soul, I erected a memorial tower on Mt. Minobu.

When I laid the ashes of my mother to rest on Mt. Minobu, I declared before the tomb of my ancestors my vow to propagate the doctrine in India. Saint Nichiren predicted in his *Kangyōhachimanshō* that the Buddhism of Japan would without fail return to India. Inspired by this prediction, I had long considered it my ultimate mission to go to India and propagate the doctrine. Since my mother had died, I thought the time had come for me to put my plan into practice and vowed to do this in front of my ancestors' tomb. With no relative left in this world after I laid the ashes of my mother to rest on Mt. Minobu, I finally embarked on my trip to propagate the faith in

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India.

On September 1, 1930, I left Kobe on board the "Harbin Maru" of O.S.K. Line. In a few days I arrived in Dairen and, based in this memorable city, I travelled to many parts of Manchuria. It was during this period that I performed services to enshrine the Buddha's image at Nihonzan Myoho-ji in Wafang-tien and held an inauguration ceremony for the new monastery of Nihonzan Myoho-ji in Mukden. Between my tours in Manchuria, I went to Tien-chin for a short trip around North China.

I arrived in Hong Kong on December 16 of the same year. After a few days' stay, I left again and reached Singapore on December 27. I stayed there and greeted the New Year 1931.

Departing from Singapore on January 6, I arrived in Calcutta in 10 days, and marked my first step of propagating the faith on the Indian subcontinent. As I said before, my plan was to repropagate in India the doctrine of Buddhism where it was once inaugurated and then lost from sight.

In Chapter XVI, "Revelation of the Eternal Life of the Tathāgata" of the Lotus Sutra is found the "General kike", the episode of a good physician who went abroad and came back to his home to live with his sons. Believing that Buddhism would never fail to return

to India, I went there, and if I failed, Saint Nichiren's prediction would lose its credibility. Since my doctrine is the Buddhism preached by Saint Nichiren, if I did not propagate the *Namu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo*, my trip to India would become meaningless. However, among the different versions of Buddhism practices in Japan, *Namu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo* was created by the Japanese people and as such can not be readily understood by foreigners. If and when Indians understand it, there will be recovered a true religious tie. If this doctrine is a religion truly capable of realizing the ideal of world peace, it will never fail to find believers. Such a religion alone could save India. Not just India but the whole of mankind could be saved. As long as I believe the founder's forecast and have faith in my mission, there is no doubt about it.

Another important motive behind my travel to India was the presence of Mahatma Gandhi, who was leading the movement for the national independence of India. Already on the stage of world politics there had emerged a number of leaders who would readily resort to arms, but Gandhi, turning his charkha, preached non-violence and staged an independence movement in opposition to the British Salt Monopoly.

Apart from the question of whether non-violence would prevail over force of arms, I was very much interested in Gandhi's way of life. I pondered over the problem of India using his way of life as my frame of reference. Apart from my own task of propagating the faith in India, there was an interesting development taking place in that country. The people were trying to reform the government without resorting to violence. If they succeeded in their attempt, theirs would be the ideal form of government. For this reason, I was very interested in what was happening in India. Without understanding Gandhi's principle, Britain was suppressing Indians. They anticipated suppression, but I thought we should help them, even if not overtly.

Nevertheless Japan, then counted among the Five Big Powers of the world and recently developed economically, culturally, politically and industrially, was indifferent to the Indian independence movement. Not only did she not cooperate with the movement, she even sided with the British rulers because of her ties with Britain since the establishment of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. In those days, bluejackets rebelled in Singapore in response to the anti-British independence movement in India. It was the Japanese Navy that put down the

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rebellion. The alliance compelled it to do so. I keenly felt that it was not good for Japan, with its proximity to India and her traditional ties through Buddhism, to refrain from helping the Indians achieve independence or to suppress their movement. I could not straightforwardly tell the Japanese Government and people, and even if I could, they would not listen. So I decided to cooperate with the independence movement led by Gandhi and pray for its success.

When I landed at Calcutta, I was in such poor health that I weighed less than one hundred pounds. I thought my days were numbered. Wishing to die in India if I had to in the immediate future and to have my ashes buried in the Lumbini-Garden where Shākyamuni was born, I planned to go on a pilgrimage to this sacred place of Buddhism. But the journey was difficult. I had to ride an oxcart through paddies and roadless fields. When crossing streams, the oxcart was sometimes all but carried away. The holy place was so inaccessible that it took me another overnight oxcart ride after getting off the train at the nearest station.

Finally arriving at the Buddha's birthplace, I found bushes all around too thick to tread on. I was very much surprised to find the Buddha's

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TO

INTERVIEWS WITH MAHATMA GANDHI

Returning from a trip to Ceylon late in September 1933, I was scheduled to meet Gandhi in early October. I had asked Mr. Tadao Okitsu, one of my disciples in India then, to see Gandhi who was staying at Poona near Bombay, and convey to him my message that I was soon coming to Bombay from Colombo and would like to meet him on that occasion. Gandhi's answer was that he would be staying at Wardha from about September 20 until October 10 and would prefer to see me there. Eventually my appointment with Gandhi was arranged for October 4.

Wardha, a small town in the middle of the central plateau of India, is located forty to fifty miles west of Nagpur and 4.72 miles east of Bombay. The whole area is an extensive plateau which is the home of Indian cotton, a center of the production of hand-woven cotton cloth.

Getting on a train for Wardha in Bombay, I

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saw many people with wreaths and bouquets coming to see someone off in the adjoining car. I thought some prominent Indian personality was travelling, and found a peaceful atmosphere prevailing throughout the train and no one was fighting for seats. People were rather offering seats and very polite among one another. Usually I experienced much jostling and hustling when travelling by train in India. As the railway cars themselves were not very decent and moreover the Englishmen treated the Indians like beasts, the people getting on trains were acting as if their very lives had been at stake. They would carry more luggage than they seemed to actually need. Fighting one another, they would shout and force their way inside. It made travelling unpleasant, but things were different this time. In the meantime I learned that the personality seen off with wreaths and bouquets had something to do with Gandhi's private school at Wardha. Gandhi's influence was farreaching.

In those days, an Indian millionaire named Bajājī who was living in Wardha, was the most powerful supporter of Gandhi. His family had been engaged in cotton trade on a large scale for generations, and had close contact with Nichimen and Tomen, both major cotton trading firms in Japan. However, Bajājī who sup-

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ported and joined Gandhi's anti-British independence movement was imprisoned, and for that reason, his relations with Japanese companies decreased. He set up an ashram (training center) based on the principle of non-violence at Wardha, invited Gandhi's family and comrades to live there, and devoted himself to the management of the ashram. The people of Nichimen and Tomen knew Bajājī well, and with their introduction I was supposed to call on him when I first arrived in Wardha.

Getting off the train at the Wardha Station, I found Bajājī himself coming to meet me and offer me a ride in his car. The landscape along the road from the station to his house looked like another world, and at his house I was welcomed with tea, milk, oranges and sweets. I felt peaceful and relaxed as if I had come back home to my native village in Japan. Bajājī later passed away, but his children are still continuing his trade on a large scale.

Together with Mr. Okitsu, I called on Gandhi at the Wardha ashram on the appointed day. Bajājī showed me the way to Gandhi's room, which I found filled with many of his followers. I had been beating my drum until I reached the entrance of his room situated upstairs. Going upstairs and entering the room, I found Gandhi spinning his charkha. A

charkha in those days did not have a round wheel, but was a small spinning machine placed on a flat surface. Gandhi was working with it, and when I entered he did not stop doing so. With his hands still busy, he glanced at me entering his room, and I made a deep bow and kept looking at him. Gandhi also smilingly looked at me, but since I did not understand his language, I could not say a word and just continued to look quietly at him spinning with his charkha.

While I thought the independence revolution of India should achieve its purpose at all costs, the leader of the revolution was working hard spinning cotton, without arms or without maneuvering, right in front of me. When leaving Japan I had simply thought it was all right for Indians to make their own cotton cloth instead of importing from Britain, and there was nothing wrong with their using modern machinery. However, as I witnessed Gandhi earnestly spinning with his charkha at Wardha, I began to understand that he was trying to give to India something more important than silk or cotton clothes. What he was really trying to show was that, since India had raw materials, Indians should learn to use them. They should freely utilize the raw materials and dress themselves. And since they have vast

stretches of land, they should cultivate it and make their own food. Since their country has a hot climate, complex buildings are not needed but rather simple dwellings for protection from rain and dew drops were sufficient. Therefore the independence of India would involve establishment of no special political mechanism, but could be naturally found in the process of seeking a way to independently live on what they had. The political problem of attaining independence for India could be automatically solved in the course of looking for such a way. This was Gandhi's idea. For this purpose, the conventional sequence of seeking political solutions first and then promoting national industry would be useless. Indians should keep themselves away from such conventional ways of thinking, and instead live in the Indian nature and achieve independence through a natural development of circumstances, without too much thinking about it politically. It was certainly a hard way to go.

Since India in those days was under total political control by Britain, Indians were called up for British military service and exploited both economically and culturally. British exploitation was well organized, and her organizations for exploitation had to be eliminated. Their elimination, however, was not to be done

by violence. As long as the Indian people lived their daily lives, they could simply disobey British rule. They should not resort to warfare, but pursue independence by taking control of their own daily lives.

Although a charkha certainly is a mere machine and cotton a mere substance, the soul which moved these machines and this substance became a miraculous spiritual force which led the Indian people. It was not a matter of competing with the product of Lancashire, Britain, in output or quality, but the point was to seek a self-sufficient way of life in the natural environment of India out of a purely spiritual motive. And the way had to be sought together. It was the essence of the independence of India. In these days when weapons are highly advanced, what could be done to accomplish a political revolution without relying on arms? The spiritual solution to this question was Gandhi's charkha.

I did not use any words, but I was really moved to tears by looking at Gandhi turning his charkha without interruption.

When we saluted Gandhi by bowing with our palms put together at the beginning of our meeting, the Rev. Okitsu introduced me and then we presented Gandhi with a can of rice crackers which we had brought with us as a

souvenir. My gift pleased him very much, and he took it up as a topic of our conversation.

"Japanese goods are all very beautiful and moderately priced, but are still too expensive to us. Is Japan going to conquer India with them?"

Then followed a question-and-answer session with the Rev. Okitsu acting as interpreter. I had only 15 minutes, and could not remain silent. Suddenly asked if Japan was going to conquer India, I could not immediately answer. The Rev. Okitsu asked, "What do you mean by conquer?" Gandhi at once replied, "With her products." Japan was selling India cheap clothes which appeared attractive but easily wore out, and bought Indian cotton for practically nothing. Japan was exploiting India in this way. As a result, India could not rid herself of poverty. Japan also bought Indian farm products at low prices, and sold her own inferior goods, thus earning vast profits. Gandhi referred to this fact. Then I said, "We know nothing about commerce." He told us, "Selling a can of this kind of confectionery is a way of conquest, and taking political power is another, but conquest of true human spirit cannot be done with anything other than religion." Recalling that India once completely conquered Japan with Buddhism, I thought

"conquest" in that sense would be interesting.

When the 15 minutes allocated for me was almost over, Gandhi took up my drum. Saying, "You Japanese men of religion use a very powerful thing in your prayer, don't you?" he began beating the drum for himself. Afterwards, while I was still staying at Wardha, people gathering at the ashram adopted the custom of chanting *Namu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo* at the beginning of their prayer.

From my point of view, the fact that Gandhi beat the round fan-shaped drum when I met him seemed to suggest a close relationship between my faith and the religious reformation in India. In present-day India, there are few believers in Buddhism as a religion; most Indians are Hindus. Hinduism is the national religion of India, older than Buddhism, and has as its objects of worship many war gods, such as Rāma and Krishna. Hindus often chant the name of Rāma in their prayer as we do *Namu-myo-ho-ren-ge-kyo*.

However, out of the tradition of Hinduism, there emerged Buddhism which embodies the idea of non-violence in its most complete form. It was indeed an important development. Buddhism is not only necessary for promoting a peaceful revolution in today's India but also is a tool of spiritual guidance with which to save

all the human race who are involved in acts of violence and wars; it encourages abolition of all means of violence. Generally people in India find Buddhism, based on the principle of absolute non-violence, something alien and do not accept it as their own. Buddhism has long been forsaken in India, and its holy places have been left to fall into ruin. Many historically important places have completely disappeared. My wish for "*Genrai kike*" and the non-violent revolution which Gandhi advocated came from the same origin, the doctrine of Buddhism. It should not be forgotten that Buddhism in its earliest days stressed non-violence (*Ahimsa*).

As long as a revolution is accomplished with violence, one act of violence will call forth another and there will be no end to it. There will only be changes in the class which carries out the revolution, in other words, shifts in leadership. My revolution, in the true sense of the word, is a leap for human beings to a society above human beings and of course above animals in general. This concept cannot be fully expressed in the term "revolution", and in Buddhism it is referred to as "attainment of Buddhahood". The ultimate revolutionary aim of Buddhism consists in having both man and the world attain Buddhahood. Completely detached from things like political

power, the human race should leap above all such conflicts. This is the true essence of Buddhist revolution.

THE ANTI-MILITARY STRUGGLE AT SUNAGAWA AND THE JAPAN BUDDHA SANGHA

One of the major postwar political issues in Japan was the struggle against the planned expansion of the U.S. military base at Sunagawa, and the Japan Buddha Sangha was deeply involved in it. As readers may be well aware, the United States concluded the so-called Security Treaty with Japan, which enabled her to station her armed forces in the mainland Japan as bases for her invasion of Asia, and to use Japanese railways as well as ports and harbours. As part of her aggressive program, America planned to extend the runway at the Tachikawa airfield and thereby make it possible to send more ammunition to Korea. Told by America to extend the runway, the Japanese Government submissively complied with the demand.

The vast airfield site had been taken away from the local inhabitants virtually without compensation. During the war, the Japanese Army had used it; then it was directly taken

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over by the U.S. Air Force. They expanded the air-field overnight by bulldozing mulberry fields. They would not pay for the newly taken land. In the present day Okinawa, they do pay, but in Tachikawa they didn't. The local farmers had no other alternative than to negotiate with governmental authorities after they were deprived of their lands. But there were frequent personnel reshuffles in the government offices and they were unable to get any responsible answer or promise. Officials claimed ignorance, as they continued to appropriate the farmers' lands. Reaching the limit of their patience, the farmers finally rose to their feet and launched a protest campaign.

We at the Japan Buddha Sangha felt that we should object to this presence of the military base and try to discourage the belligerent U.S. occupation policy in Asia, so we went to Tachikawa to express our opposition, and joined the protest campaign. The main forces of the campaign were people of the progressive camp including students, workers, Communists and Socialists led by Members of the Diet, and we associated ourselves with them.

When the protesters gathered and became agitated, the authorities permitted the police to use their clubs. Allowed to strike anyone in their way, the policemen used atrocious vio-

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lence. As many as 1,000 people were injured at Sunagawa. Some of the Japan Buddha Sangha priests who were beating their drums in the front row were also hit and suffered head injuries and serious bruising. It happened to be raining, and the blood flowing from their heads dyed their white robes. Press photographers who were taking pictures of the scene were also beaten or had their cameras broken; the police presumably did not want to have their pictures published. Hitting the demonstrators in the belly or kicking them hard, the police committed horrible atrocities, and some of my disciples as a result were unable to stand.

But, however harshly they were treated, my disciples did nothing but pray, and this fact attracted public attention. The press criticized the government severely, and reported that the policemen had acted like savage beasts. Soon after, the forcible surveying of the farmers' land ended. The farmers wanted the priests of Japan Buddha Sangha to stay there and pray, and built a hut beside a tomb nearby for the priests to pray in. The farmers also erected, outside the hut, a tower on which *Namu-myoho-renge-kyo* was inscribed. The stone tower was barely three meters tall. It was prohibited by law to set up anything taller than three meters, and they observed the limitation.

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The Defense Agency told us not to build anything there because it intended to use the site in the future and if we did we would later be ordered to destroy it at our own expense. They sent us written notices to that effect. We couldn't help acknowledging their notices, but continued praying every day. Strangely enough, it so happened that airplanes would fly directly above the tower. Flying over our hut they made tremendous noises. However, about the time the tower was built, a plane made a faulty landing and burnt. A similar incident was later repeated.

In the meantime, a legal suit was filed over the issue of the constitutionality of the military base at Sunagawa, and the Tokyo District Court, in March 1959, judged, in what is known as the Mr. Date verdict, that the Constitution of Japan allowed the presence of no military base and that military bases were unconstitutional. In December of that year, however, the Supreme Court reversed that verdict and declared that the issue of military bases was not a constitutional problem but a political matter. The highest court concluded, it was a matter to be negotiated and decided upon between the leaders of the two nations concerned and had nothing to do with the constitution, thereby, upholding the mainte-

nance of military bases. No further legal suit would be useful if the Supreme Court adhered to this position. An expropriation committee was set up, and the farmers' lands was to be taken away.

Things went on like that, and it was exactly thirteen years since the dispute had broken out. The lands were about to be taken away. The government had patiently persuaded the nearby farmers, and purchased the surrounding farmlands at whatever prices asked. To buy wheat fields which it had earlier taken away for virtually nothing, the government was now spending hundreds of millions of yen. Eventually it purchased all the lands around the tomb and our hut.

The runway of the airfield was at last to be extended, and our tower was standing in the way. It was nevertheless indecent to forcibly remove our tower. Destroying a religious structure might invite unforeseeable repercussions. Perhaps out of such consideration, they changed their plan to lay the runway slightly off to the side of our hut. All the land in that area had of course been purchased by the government, which happened to contain a cemetery for those who had no relatives. Their families were extinct. The Japan Buddha Sangha had erected a wooden post and prayed for the

repose of their souls, but the participants of the anti-military campaign proposed to replace the wooden post with a stone tower since it was years old and rotting. Soon a mason came from Tokyo, and quickly built a stone tower. About that time, another plane crashed. The authorities began to feel uneasy.

The government, however, demanded removal of the new tower, claiming that it had purchased the cemetery site. But whatever the government might claim, the owners of the cemetery had long been dead and could not have sold it to the government. The government nevertheless sent bailiffs to obstruct the construction of the tower in the cemetery.

We were determined to erect the stone tower at all costs. It turned out that there was a farmer who had a small farm still unsold to the government, beside the cemetery. He was an unusual man, who said if the government refused to let the tower be built in the cemetery for the repose of the deceased he would let us build it in his land. This circumstance preceded the aforementioned construction of the stone tower by the mason from Tokyo.

Probably out of his pride as a farmer, he would not yield to the pressure from the government, and adhered to his determination to let us build the tower. Once the tower was

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built, the U.S. Air Force ceased flying planes. A month later it announced that it would no longer use the airfield at Sunagawa and gave up the runway. Then taking that opportunity which they were presumably waiting for, the Japanese Self-Defense Forces declared they would use the airfield. Tokyo Governor Minobe, however, rejected their demand on the grounds that there was a plan to build a new town in the airfield site, which therefore could not be offered for use by military forces. Thus the dispute of Sunagawa came to end — at least for the time being.