**Michelle Tooley: Strategic and Principled Nonviolence in Japan**

**Context:**

Voices of Nonviolence, a Religious Studies and Peace Studies course: part practice and strategies in social movements and part grounding in religious traditions. I refer to this course as “More than MLK and Ghandhi” and we read 3 texts: one on college students during the Civil Rights Movement (Christianity and nonviolence), one on Badshah Khan, a Muslim proponent of nonviolence, and a book with reflections from either Thich Nhat Hanh’s Vietnamese Engaged Buddhism or Pema Chodron's interpretation of Tibetan Buddhism. My Infusing Institute project explores the use of nonviolence in contemporary Japan and the understandings of nonviolence in Japanese Buddhism.

Definition

Understood 3 ways: absence of physical violence, avoidance of physical violence as a strategy, and as a powerful method to harmonize relationships among people (and all living things) for the establishment of justice and the ultimate wellbeing of all parties.

Strategic Nonviolence

1. Zenchuro Union Strike (2007) In October, the Japanese Ministry of Defense proposed a cut in the salaries of Japanese workers employed on United States Military installations. Japan was struggling under huge national debt and the Defense Ministry saw the abolition of a workers’ allowance as a way to save a significant amount of money. The allowance was designated to the Japanese workers for working in a different cultural environment and for using English on the base. On Wednesday November 21, thousands of the support workers on United States military installations in Japan went on strike over a plan to cut their pay. Zenchuro Union (Japan Garrison Forces Labor Union) called the strike. The union represented two-thirds of the Japanese workers on U.S. military bases, or about 17,000 of the 26,000 base workers.
2. Anti-nuclear social movements (2012-2013), the Metropolitan Coalition Against Nukes consists of 13 citizen organizations that arrange demonstrations outside the prime minister’s office weekly. "The common thread they share is the concept of 'nonviolence,'” said political scientist Ikuo Gonoi, 33. “Because the (protest) sites are nonviolent, anybody can join. The festival-like atmosphere created by the rhythm of the drums and the like also lowers the hurdles to engaging in a demonstration or protest.” Example: The Sayonara Nukes 100,000 Rally, a gathering of citizens who want to phase out nuclear power, was held in July 2012. Organizers said about 170,000 people from across Japan packed into the site at Tokyo's Yoyogi Park. Grown after massive volume of radioactive contaminated air and water from the Fukushima reactors over the whole globe since 3･11, 2011). Methods: art, drama, prayers, denunciations, protests, festivals, education, advocacy in Japan and at UN.

Principled Nonviolence

1. Soka Gakkai International is a global association of lay Buddhists, promoting a philosophy of character development and social engagement for peace. As an NGO in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, it cooperates with the UN in a variety of humanitarian and public information programs. It claims to be the most diverse Buddhist organization in Japan. Membership: ten million members in Japan. Founder: 1930 Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, a geographer, educational theorist and religious reformer who lived and worked during the tumultuous early decades of Japan's modern era. His opposition to Japan's militarism and nationalism led to his imprisonment and death during World War II. Makiguchi embraced Nichiren Buddhism, grounded in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the laws of cause and effect.

Resources

Shinichi Yamamuro, “The Source and Development of Japan’s Philosophies of Non-Violence”, Tokyo, 2009.

Koichi Miyata, “Nonviolence and Japanese Buddhism”, 2004, <http://hw001.spaaqs.ne.jp/miya33x/paper7-3.html>.

Hiroo Sato, “Nichiren Thought in Modern Japan:Two Perspectives”

Koichi Miyata, ed., “Ideas and Influence of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi”, *The Journal of Oriental Studies,* vol. 10, (2000). (volume at [http://www.iop.or.jp](http://www.iop.or.jp/)).

Brian Daizen Victoria, “Engaged Buddhism: A Skeleton in the Closet?” *The Journal of Global Buddhism*, vol. 2. , <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/2/victoria011.html>. (Koichi Miyata and others respond: <http://www.globalbuddhism.org/3/miyata021.htm>)

Robert Kisala, *Prophets of Peace: Pacifism and Cultural Identity in Japan's New Religions*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1999.

Christopher Queen, “The Peace Wheel: Nonviolent Activism in the Buddhist Tradition”, in Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, ed. *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Religion in Religious Traditions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 14-37.

Tam Wai Lun, “Subverting Hatred: Peace and Nonviolence in Confucianism and Shintoism”, in Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, ed. *Subverting Hatred: The Challenge of Religion in Religious Traditions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2007), 38-56.

Gene Sharp, *The Politics of Nonviolent Action*, 3 vols. (Extending Horizons Books, Porter Sargent Publishers Inc. 1973).

Scott Appleby, *The Ambivalence of the Sacred: Religion, Violence, and Reconciliation* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2000).

Douglas Johnston *Religion, The Missing Dimension of Statecraft* (Oxford, 1995).