

(Imaginary) interview with Mr. Fukyo

“The heart of the Buddha’s lifetime of teachings is the Lotus Sutra, and the heart of the practice of the Lotus Sutra is found in the “Never Disparaging” chapter. What does Bodhisattva Never Disparaging’s profound respect for people signify? The purpose of the appearance in this world of Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, lies in his behaviour as a human being.” (1)

We attend the appointment with Mr Fukyo at the agreed place and time. We recognize him straight away; he was already waiting for us at the door with a welcoming smile. To be honest, due to his fame and the controversial reactions that he always inspires, wherever he is, when we arrived we were slightly expectant and cautious. However, we have to admit that, from the start, he made us feel very much at ease and yes, the attention with which he listens and the way he looks straight at you, came as a surprise. He showed himself to be fully open to being asked any questions. So we did, without beating about the bush.

Civilization Global: In reality you are better well known as “Never Disparaging”, a name that was given to you because of your unusual behaviour towards other people; but how do you feel about it? Do you feel it was given as an innocent and funny name, or as one poisoned with ironic condescendence? Or, on the contrary, are you convinced that it is because of a much deeper reason, which even the very people who created it might not have realized?

Mr. Fukyo: Probably all the three reasons are valid, depending on each one. However, the last interpretation that you offered comes as a big surprise. This is because I am convinced that, whatever the intention, this name came about as an answer to the promise; better still, I would dare to call it a vow that came from of my heart when I understood the greatness of the human



being. I couldn’t help but proclaim it and, from such an unexpected source, without even intending to do so, they are co-operating with me. Could you have thought of a better slogan? “Never disparaging”, never look down on anyone.

C.G.: According to the writings, you were a simple monk. However, you decided to go around the world telling everybody you met that, without any doubt, they were going to attain Buddhahood . How could you dare predict that people would have been able to attain Buddhahood? We understand that, because of this, people used to insult you. Is that so?

1) “The Three Kinds of Treasure”;The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, Tokyo, Soka Gakkai. p. 851-852
2) Bodhisattva Fukyo, “Never Disparaging”, appears in the 20th

Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, which recounts the story of a monk who lived in ancient times and revered every person he met and was therefore named “Never Disparaging”.



Mr. Fukyo: They were difficult times. The Buddha King Astonishing Sound had passed away and there were only monks, lay people and believers who practised the Law in a very formal way. I wasn't a scholar but I didn't have any doubt about the Buddha's teachings. In my heart, I felt that this wonderful teaching had to be transmitted far and wide. I also felt that it wasn't a question of transmitting the theory, as much as to prove through my behaviour, that all beings are worthy of respect. So, I dedicated myself to practice respect, without half measures.

C.G.: It is well known that your most bitter adversaries didn't always content themselves with mocking you and poking fun at you about your attitude, but that they went as far as venting their anger on you to the point of physically abusing

you. How do you really see yourself: As a martyr, as a hero, or as an idealist?

Mr Fukyo: (Laughing heartily) Well... if I have to choose between a martyr, a hero or an idealist, I would go for idealist. However, what I'd like to be clear about is the ideal that I feel, this ideal that benefits all of us as human beings, love. When you really feel love there are no heroes or martyrs, but there is happiness. I very much like a quote by Walt Whitman that says: "I don't call someone greater and someone else smaller; whoever fills his time and his place is as equal as anyone." Have I answered your question?

C.G.: Listening to you, your attitude doesn't seem to be so eccentric, moreover, one can understand why you have your own sympathizers. So, why do you think that so many people react with such hostility?

Mr. Fukyo: Yes! with regard to those who react with hostility as you so rightly say, it is due to different causes, but mainly because of the great negativity which stops them from being convinced of their potential, due to the resignation that remains in their hearts about not





being able to change and overcome difficulties. I have also realised, for example, that it is very common to find people that suffer hardship because they are victims of false and unscrupulous prophets or teachers that take advantage of them. However, in any case, I, like you, am here to fight and change it, right? - even if we seem eccentric when we carry out our mission of revering Buddhahood inherent in all human beings.

In reality, those arrogant and angry people listened to my words and even if they attacked me then, as time went by, they were able to meet other Buddhas, make other positive causes in their lives and now they are people of pure faith. We should never rule out a person attaining Buddhahood. We clearly have to protect ourselves, because one's life is precious and because the foolish can cause a lot of harm either meaning to or without meaning to do so.

C.G.: Many kalpas after his extinction, a Buddha called Shakyamuni stated that he was Never Disparaging. Do you have something to say about it?

Mr. Fukyo: Well, there is no difference between a bodhisattva, a common mortal and a Buddha. They are all people but their actions, their behaviour, define their characteristics as human beings. Shakyamuni explained that he, himself as Buddha, could not have been able to demonstrate the highest state if he hadn't accepted, read and recited this Sutra and, most of all, if he hadn't preached to others. That's why he said he had been Bodhisattva Never Disparaging in previous lives. Buddhahood is not a solitary practice centred on the mind. It is a matter of devoting

oneself to other people's happiness, whether they are nice or not, or if they support us or reject us.

C.G.: When you listened to the whole of the Lotus Sutra, what was it exactly that changed in you? Is there a before and after?

Mr. Fukyo: As a common mortal, I wasn't aware that my behaviour corresponded so essentially to the Lotus Sutra. My heart guided me, and my commitment to that essential attitude seemed simply unavoidable. After my conscious re-encounter with the Buddha's teachings, in the world of the senses, I understood that the message contained in the Lotus Sutra was inherent in my life from the past and into the future. Talking about a before and an after involves the appearance of something unknown, but the Lotus Sutra didn't sound new to me; that's why I talk about a conscious re-encounter. I am sure that you have briefly experienced something similar in your lives already. Continue to chant and you will see that brevity will give way to certainty.

C.G.: We would love to have the same spirit as you. We find it very difficult to maintain the same respectful attitude toward those who attack us and those who respect us, how did you do it?

Mr. Fukyo: I wish there was a magic formula, which could be applied to allow us to transcend the differences, antipathy and resentments. Look, it is not easy, but the fundamental thing is to feel certain that the condition of Buddhahood lies in every human being, and that all of us, without exception, have the possibility of manifesting it. From that conviction the only thing that matters is our heart, up to what point are we willing to get involved in other people's happiness. It is true that sometimes it is very difficult to feel compassion, we are human beings and we don't have to feel sympathy for everyone, but in those cases we can always use courage.

The interview ends and when Mr. Fukyo leaves, we are left with the great desire to meet this giant of humanism again. But we know that there is only one place to look for him and that is inside oneself. See you soon!