

him it was that simple. Happy people do not make war upon one another. They do not despise, cheat, lie or do harm to each other. Chanting, he said, was the beginning of harmony and sharing.

Suzuki was a monk of the sect known as Japan Buddha Sanga, which studies only ancient Sanskrit and has been involved in nonviolent protest against war for more than half a century. During World War II most of its members were in jail or exile. After the war they built forty peace pagodas throughout Japan.

"Americans remember Pearl Harbor," he said. "Japanese remember Hiroshima. Every year there is International Conference Against Atomic War in Hiroshima. Every August 6, when bomb drop. In Japan spiritual conference not propaganda. Not technique. Very spiritual. We hope to make religious nonviolence against all kinds of war. Peace movement in Japan and the world split so many times like cells in body. But body is whole. We want to make peace whole again."

He said that he and other monks who worked for peace followed the Lotus Flower Sutra. Written as a proclamation of the Buddha, this part was Suzuki's guide and his goal: "Those who are not saved, I will save. Those who are not free, I will set free. Those who are not comforted, I will comfort."

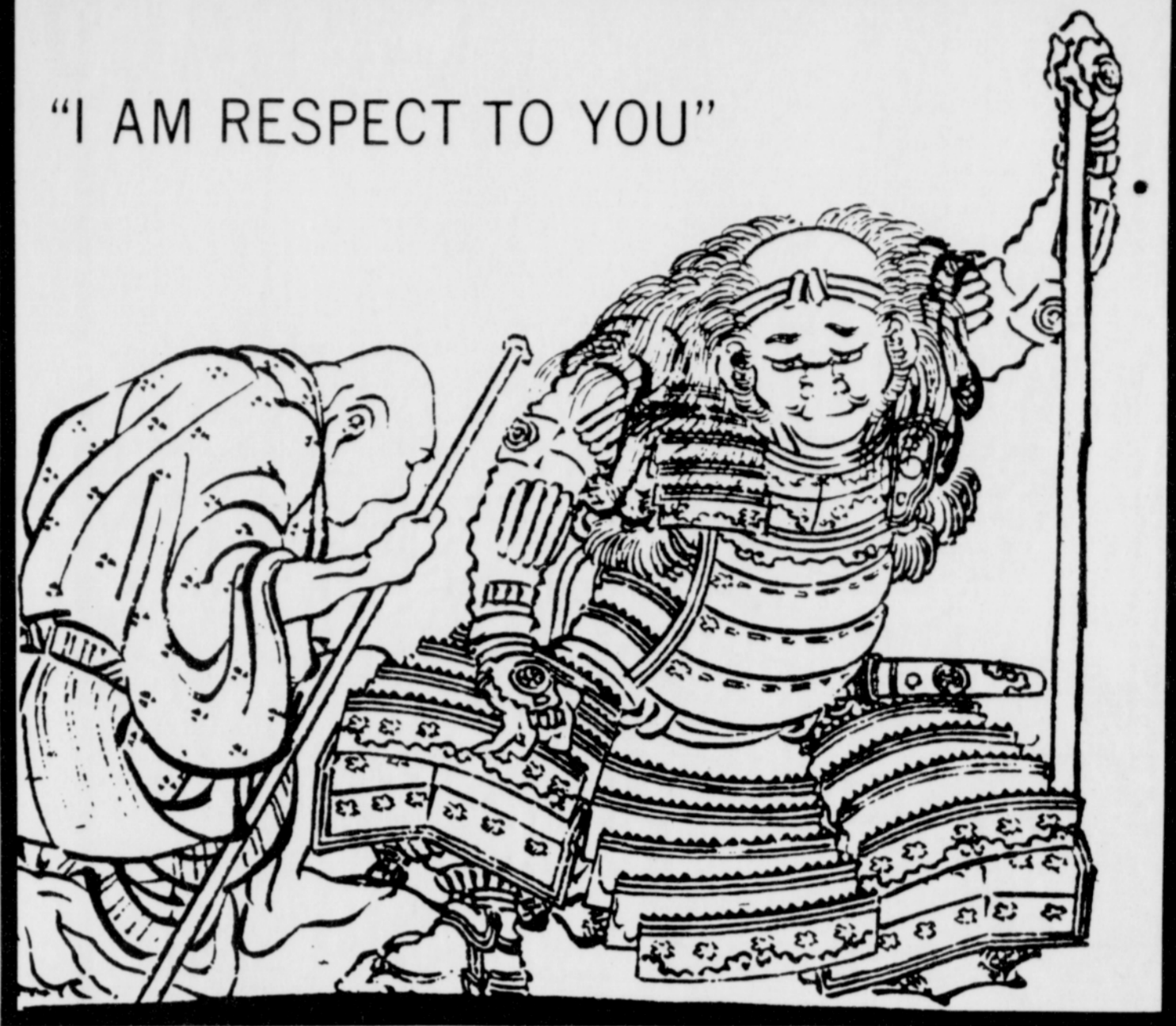
He told the story of another monk, who was his spiritual example. "Long ago one monk not very smart. He is poor in the head. He always do same action. He meet people and he bow and he say, 'I am reverence and respect to you. I never look down on you because someday you practice Buddha's dharma and become Buddha. I am respect to you.' Some people think he crazy monk. Some people throw rocks to him and he run away. But he all the time turn around and bow and he say, 'I am respect to you.' All the time, everywhere he go, he always do same action. This monk, this dumb monk, he smarter than all the rest of the people. He is Buddha before reincarnation. We are following same action. Chanting and beating drum. This how we meet businessman and soldier. We bow and make respect to them. Sometimes they throw rocks to us. But no matter. Somebody punched at me. I was very glad."

He even seemed pleased that some Americans called him a "Jap."

"'Jappa' in Sanskrit mean 'Chant', he said. "'Jappa Mara' is holy necklace for chanting. So they call to me 'Jap'. Is what I am and what I do. I am laughing when I am called 'Jap'."

Like many others he felt the immediate future would be one of catastrophe. Almost everything was coming to crisis at once: overpopulation and worldwide food shortages; pollution of the skies, the seas, rivers and lakes that sickened and killed in ever increasing numbers; energy shortages that, combined with the rest, might conceivably drive desperate nations into a series of wars culminating in a war more horrifying than any the world has experienced. He also believed that natural disasters would increase and add millions

"I AM RESPECT TO YOU"



DRAWING BY HOKUSAI

more to the casualty lists. But unlike other doom prophets Suzuki believed that the disasters were only a prologue to a new age greater than any other. The human race would come to full fruit; the brain and soul would finally be united. Already he saw glimmerings. The political uprisings throughout the world the previous decades were not radical, he said. They were simple demands that humanity reverse its headlong rush to oblivion.

Though he accused the industrial nations of over-consumption and waste, within his own country and the United States he saw examples of lifestyles that were based on conservation and sharing, and the use of natural energy sources. These he called the New Age. They were New Age ideas, New Age people — his eyes were fixed past the rubble of this century. He said that everywhere he went he looked for the New Age. And because he believed so strongly in the New Age, he did not fear the time of troubles ahead.

His life was the mirror of his beliefs. It might be said that he walked his talk. His ministry was the road.

"I am hippy monk," he said. "No home. No temple. No money. Just walking. Sometimes hungry, sometimes cold. Sometimes doubt. Sometimes jail. Jesus say, 'Don't keep food, money, clothes. Keep walking and believe in God.' New Age people don't need heroes. We already have Jesus, Mary and Buddha. The Jones Family, Charles Manson, Sun Moon and Billy Graham all imitation."

Before he went back on the road he said that the United States was a mandala, that every ingredient for the future was within its borders, the people, the ideas and the strengths to endure and ultimately prevail over the hard times ahead. But he said that all the hateful isms that cripple humanity must be ruthlessly exorcized; racism, sexism — these had to be eliminated if the human race was to pull together and create the New Age.

Until then. "Each moment is a miracle," he said.

— MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER



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