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**Shumei Taiko Ensemble:** [shumeitaiko.org](http://shumeitaiko.org)

**Makoto Taiko:** [makototaiko.org](http://makototaiko.org)

**Shumei Arts Council of America:** [shumeiarts.org](http://shumeiarts.org)

**Natural Agriculture:** [shumei-na.us](http://shumei-na.us)

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# SHUMEI JOURNAL

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# SHUMEI FOSTERS HEALTH, HARMONY, AND HAPPINESS FOR ALL.

Shumei is a spiritual and humanitarian organization committed to furthering the well-being of all humankind. Reflecting this, the editorial stance of this journal is apolitical and nonpartisan. Nor do we support one religious point of view.

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## CONTENTS

<b>A Natural Agriculture Revolution in Africa</b> .....	5.
The women farmers of the Mbabala Cooperative return to their Agricultural Source <i>Barbara Hachipuka-Banda</i>	
<b>Enhancing Your Experience of Jyorei</b> .....	10.
Some Questions and Answers <i>Roy Gibbon</i>	
<b>The Silent Runner</b> .....	14.
<i>Zenshen Lin</i>	
<b>The Hummingbird &amp; The Raven</b> .....	18.
Two Beacons of Light in North America <i>George Bedell</i>	
<b>Beauty in Diversity</b> .....	24.
<i>Sensei Eugene Imai</i>	
<b>Two Teachings from Kannon's Way</b> .....	28.
<i>Mokichi Okada, Meishusama</i>	



# A Natural Agriculture Revolution in Africa

The women farmers of the Mbabala Cooperative return to their Agricultural Source

*Barbara Hachipuka-Banda*

*Barbara Hachipuka, a farmer and activist from Zambia, is Program Coordinator for the Mbabala Women Farmer's Cooperative Union in Zambia's Southern Province. Over a decade ago, she dreamt of carrying on her late mother's work on behalf of the women farmers of Zambia, through the Farmer's Cooperative. In partnership with Shumei, she initiated the beginning of an agricultural and cultural transformation among Zambia's rural poor.*

In 2004 Shumei visited Zambia. This was the start of the Natural Agriculture Revolution in Africa. During the tour, Shumei staff met a group of women from the Mbabala Women Farmers Cooperative Union. This was a group of 2000 small-scale, rural women farmers who were sensitized, organized, and registered into cooperative groups by my late mother, Jessie Brenda Hachipuka. The purpose of mobilizing and organizing these women farmers was to empower and improve their household status and income through agriculture.

You see my mother grew up in rural Zambia. She was a woman who knew what it meant to be a Zambian rural woman with the everyday struggle of being part of the household labor force. She knew what it meant to come from humble beginnings but end her journey with having educated

four children abroad and being a supportive housewife and powerful force behind a politically involved husband. She knew the important role that women needed to play in the development processes of their homes, community, and country. After all, to educate a woman is to educate an entire community.

I was 20 years old when my mother died, a young adult, but a child all the same. So when the women of the cooperative asked my siblings and me to continue our mother's work, we all gracefully declined because we felt we had more important things to do with our lives. Little did I know that my mother's spirit would guide me down a path I was reluctant to follow.

In 2004, I became Zambia's first female Youth Millennium Development Goal Advocate under the United Nations Development Program Youth Leadership Summit, which was organized by the United Nations Development Program in partnership with The Global Peace Initiative of Women. The Millennium Development Goals were the eight international development goals that were established following the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000. All 189 United Nations member states, and at least 23 international organizations committed to helping achieve these goals by 2015.

This youth series allowed me to meet hundreds of young people from all over the world. It was amazing, listening to us tell our stories, singing, laughing, and making our plans for the future. The United Nations Development Program, the Global Peace Initiative of Women, and supporting partners like Shumei International, which hosted the September 2004 Asia-Pacific Summit in Hiroshima, Japan, had created a platform for future presidents, prime ministers, and Nobel prize winners. They had created a unified voice for us to tell the world and our leaders that it was time for us to make a long lasting and sustainable change.

When I left Japan, I was armed with information about Shumei Natural Agriculture,<sup>1</sup> and I was excited about the partnership between Shumei and the Mbabala Women Farmers Cooperative Union. I wanted to give the rural women better lives, and their children a future. I understood and believed in the philosophy of Natural Agriculture, and when I first encountered Shumei and visited Kishima Island,<sup>2</sup> a light lit up in my mind and also in my heart, and I knew then and there that Natural Agriculture was the method and tool I was going to use to achieve the task set before me.

So when I went back to Mbabala to tell the women what I had learned during my visit to Kishima Island and during my Shumei family home stay,<sup>3</sup> and this grand plan that I had to train them about Natural Agriculture and seed saving, I was truly terrified. What I saw at Kishima Island was a simple methodology of agriculture that could be and should be adopted everywhere. So if it was all this simple then why was I afraid?

I was afraid because if you tell someone about Japan and how Natural Agriculture works there, the first thing they will do is laugh. They laugh because the two countries, Japan and Zambia, are worlds apart in ways you cannot even begin to count. Most of us Africans do not look at small things when we think of Japan. We tend to look at grand, materialistic items, such as the economy, the power of currency, car manufacturers, the technology that exists there, and that the

movie *The Last Samurai*, starring Tom Cruise, was filmed in Japan.

Think about it from a Zambian perspective, the minds and hearts of the majority of Zambians, hardened by circumstance and poverty, struggling to make a dollar a day, unemployed, and with a thousand responsibilities to feed and educate the many that live under their roof. With that in mind, now try and tell that Zambian man or woman that you have just come from 10 days in Japan and are here to teach them about Natural Agriculture.

Do you think they would listen? All they wanted to know is—arms wide open and big smiles—are these people from Japan going to bring us more cars and tractors, and buy us fertilizers and seeds?

For the first few years of the project, I was drumming in the message of self-sustainability and simplifying the purpose of the project. I simplified and packaged my message to focus on our rural heritage of agriculture during my parents' and grandparents' time when fertilizers and hybrid seed did not exist. I emphasized the idea of the unaffordability of fertilizers and pesticides, and how it was important for the rural community to be self-reliant and not trapped under the boots of private sector companies looking to make quick money off people's desperation. Simply put, this was a call to return to the source, to return to a simpler and more honest lifestyle such as we had in the distant past at the time of our ancestors. It was also a call to return to nature, the source of all life.

I focused on reminding farmers about a very present danger, such as the continuous and unstable changing climate that was no longer reliable due to the ecological damage caused by humanity. Our message was and still is that Natural Agriculture is the only way to survive and see the future.

Our message centered on the indigenous seed as a key component to crops adapting to climate change, as these seeds created stronger and more resilient root systems. We emphasized natural, healthier, and tastier foods. We repackaged the spiritual philosophy of Natural Agriculture to rep-

*Barbara Hachipuka-Banda speaks at a meeting of the Mbabala Cooperative about Japan's Miho Museum, which Shumei founded. Shumei and Mbabala are partners in promoting Natural Agriculture in Zambia.*

resent the hard work, determination, planning, and management skills a farmer needs to guarantee yields. Lastly, we concentrated on the importance of community participation and going back to old teachings, such as "A problem shared is a problem halved!"

Many of you have seen pictures of Zambia and the progress that has taken place there over the last ten years. When I look at the project today, I have a sense of pride and accomplishment. Yes, I know that there are many years of hard work ahead; my pride is short lived—I snap back to reality and work.

So, when people ask me about the challenges I faced, I always feel like laughing. There have been so many, many challenges.

My first challenge was just being a young woman in Africa. I would call a cooperative meeting, and some members would not be able to attend the meeting because their husbands felt it was a waste of time. The challenge was that the Government, the Private Sector, and big international organizations were promoting fertilizers and hybrid seeds as the way of the future.

And then there was little me shouting at the top of my voice, which I lost sometimes—it became so hoarse that I would make a call and the person on the other end would ask, "Can I help you, sir?" I would shout out "Natural Agriculture is the way of the future."

The lack of infrastructure in the rural areas was another challenge. A 300 mile drive would take us about six hours to complete because the road network was nonexistent. To add to all of that, since we had no meeting places we would meet under trees if the community halls were unavailable. We then had to deal with the problem of going to the bathroom in the bush, which triggered my wild imagination and fear of snakes.

However, the greatest challenges are those that leave you speechless, shocked, and in complete disbelief, such as the time the building team in Mbabala purchased glass panes that did not fit the metal window frames—the hall had natural ventilation on all 48 windows—or the time that the Pemba<sup>4</sup> team did not know how to fit roofing



ridges, so the roof leaked during the rainy season and they thought that was normal, or the times when grown people fight like toddlers, and you have to be the voice of reason, peacemaker, and sounding board to all their problems.

I would have to add, that of the top 10 on my list of challenges was trying to get government support. In the last ten years, Zambia has had four Presidents, two of whom died. And within all this political change we would make headway and be recognized by a Minister or Deputy Minister, and then one year later we would be back at the beginning because a presidential change would also bring with it an entirely new cabinet and people.

Recently, during the opening of a pre-school event in Pemba we were visited by the District Education Officer, who promised to provide us with a qualified teacher and the support of the Ministry of Education. The worst part came the next year when there were elections that ushered in the fifth president in 11 years, and the District Education Office might no longer be in the position to help us. So back to the beginning we go.



Women gather under the shade of a large tree at a meeting of the Mbabala Cooperative.

and manufacturing industries brought easy access to all goods and services and exposed Zambians to the vast world out there. It also brought with it pieces and snippets of what many Africans would consider the good life. It brought with it shopping malls, cable television, Japanese used cars, and access to the world beyond Zambia's borders, which increased our import industry

In 2010, when the newly refurbished two-story Manda Hill Shopping Mall opened with its brand new escalators, people traveled from all parts of Zambia, not to buy anything, but just

to line up and take a ride up and down the escalator. It was amazing to watch kids, parents, and grandparents who had never seen a moving stairway cry as they refused to jump on the escalator. It was a momentous occasion for Zambia, one that will be written in the history books.

You might ask why we want the American Dream and the fabulous celebrity lifestyle we see on television. It is because we have not reached our peak of development yet. We have neither gone through an industrial revolution nor have we seen the devastating effects of civil wars. Because of this, we are left yearning for more and to be just like you. Both as countries and individuals you have achieved and seen the good side and, unfortunately, the bad side of development. You have seen increased pollution and global warming, the manufacturing industry turn people into slaves, agriculture turn into an industry, and you have seen children become obese, TV-driven robots. And so your experiences have led you to simpler desires. You long to return to the source by being spiritually interconnected to nature and one another.

As a person sitting on both sides of the fence, having experienced both worlds, I desire development for my country and all Africa but not at the cost of losing a good future for this world. So,

It is now ten years down the line, and I am still standing and still pushing forward. I may have grown a few gray hairs that I keep well hidden under my braids, and I feel years older than I should, but I take it all in stride. There are many stories I can share with you about Zambia, but as those who have visited the country will tell you, it is hard to tell someone about it. It is better to experience it for yourself.

I have had many conversations about Africa and its beauty, its fresh air, the vast land and wide-open spaces, the beautiful sunrises and sunsets, the ability to still star gaze at night without having to use a telescope, the colorful traditional clothes the women wear, the wide toothy smiles, the vibrant singing and drumming and dancing, the tasty natural vegetables, roadrunner chickens that are harder than rubber and can pull your teeth out if not well cooked. Eighty percent of our country, its culture and existence, is natural. So why would we want to trade all that for overpopulation, pollution, and materialism? In the age in which we live, prosperous places like America, Japan, Europe, and many more crave what Zambia and the rest of Africa have at their fingertips.


In 1991, the liberalization of the economy and the privatization of the Zambian mines

Coming face to face with Zambia's future.

while we are on our path of development, I am a strong believer in learning from other peoples' mistakes and creating a new strategy. I believe that our strategy must include nature, our ancestors, and our own hearts. I believe that the more we connect with these three sources, the more we will create a beautiful, healthy, and sustainable world for our children and grandchildren.

I have been asked why I became a member of Shumei and how I feel about having my ohikari?<sup>5</sup> My answer is that I became a member because it made good sense.

It is what I believe in. I have been practicing Shumei philosophy for the last ten years, even without realizing it. As a family, my husband and I have been through a lot of losses, and in those moments when my physical being and my soul do not have the strength to keep fighting I have found comfort in my desire to learn more about Mokichi Okada<sup>6</sup> and the history of Shumei's Philosophy. All this is a journey that has just begun for me, and I look forward to traveling down my inner path.

So on behalf of the women farmers of Mbabala, I want to thank Shumei for the support it has provided. Now that our agricultural hubs are better established, we hope that you will take the opportunity to visit Zambia and volunteer to train farmers to develop a variety of skills that will increase their economic well-being. We hope that you will continue to keep us in your thoughts and constant prayers because our spiritual connection and interconnectedness can change this world. 



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1. **Natural Agriculture** is a spiritually based form of food cultivation created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, that does not use chemicals or fertilizers, and pays particular attention to the farmer's relationship to the environment.
  2. **Kishima Island** is located in Japan's Inland Sea. It is one of Shumei's major Centers. A designated nature preserve, the island is used as a retreat, a summer camp for children, and for the practice of Natural Agriculture.
  3. Through the **Home Stay** program, Shumei business travelers to Japan or North America can find accommodations in other Shumei members' and friends' homes.
  4. Located on the Great South Road that runs between Lusaka and Livingston, **Pemba** is a town of about 4,000 people in the Pemba District of Zambia's Southern Province.
  5. An **ohikari** is a small sacred emblem worn by people who give Jyorei. It consists of a parchment square bearing artistic calligraphy by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada and is worn about the neck.
  6. **Mokichi Okada** is Shumei's founder, known to Shumei members as Meishusama, which means Master of Light.

# Enhancing Your Experience of Jyorei

## Some Questions and Answers

Roy Gibbon

*Roy Gibbon works in the Educational Department at Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena, California. He is the co-author of the book "An Offering of Light."*

*The following is based on a Jyorei<sup>1</sup> Intensive workshop<sup>2</sup> held at Shumei's International Institute in Crestone, Colorado.*

**Roy Gibbon:** We usually do Jyorei for just five minutes. However, at times, it is nice to have a longer session. How many of you have shared Jyorei at an Expo? It is great to give Jyorei all day to many people. When I do, I find Jyorei's energy keeps building. I get high on the experience. Does anyone have anything to share about giving people lots of Jyorei at one of our booths?

**Matthew Weinstein:** As the day progressed, I felt more energy, I felt more warmth in my hands and an overall sense of feeling good.

**Roy Gibbon:** The energy seemed to build up?

**Matthew Weinstein:** It did. And people just loved it.

**Roy Gibbon:** Have you noticed that when you feel Jyorei strongly, that the recipient does too?

**Kamila Schertel:** As I gave more and more Jyorei, I felt my energy expanding, as if my heart was opening. There was great communication with those who were receiving Jyorei. It was something that we were sharing, and they could feel it. They tell you what they felt, and sometimes even what colors they saw.

**Roy Gibbon:** You felt a strong communication between you and the person receiving Jyorei. Jyorei is non-verbal communication from spirit to spirit that is beyond words. It is heart-to-heart communication.

**Janna Storino:** It sometimes depends on where you are. For me, the energy of a place makes a difference. Sometimes I feel it very strongly, yet the other person feels nothing. And sometimes I feel nothing, and the other person is crying. So, I decided it does not matter what one feels.

**Roy Gibbon:** There are many factors that influence Jyorei, such as a quiet mind and an open heart. Another factor is the environment one is in. Still, another factor is one's relationship to the person receiving Jyorei. If you are very close to that person receiving Jyorei, it opens up a strong passageway through the Spiritual Cords.<sup>3</sup> If a lot of people are sharing Jyorei at the same time,

there is a cumulative effect. All of these things might influence what is felt during Jyorei.

I think we can give Jyorei even if we are tired and in a bad mood. But I like to bring my best to people when giving Jyorei. I try to quiet my mind and open my heart. To do that I focus on love and gratitude—especially love. To me, when my mind is quiet, it is like an empty space in which energy can move without any blockages. And love is like a wave that carries the Jyorei forward. When doing that, I feel my heart opening up.

In Shumei, we emphasize love and gratitude. Although I can't force my heart to open, at least I can focus on love and gratitude. They appear to be different, but as I go deeper and deeper into either one, they start to merge.

Have you ever felt love and gratitude at the same time?

**Some Attendees:** Yes!

**Roy Gibbon:** Love and gratitude are two sides of the same coin. For some, it is easier to focus on gratitude, for others love is easier. If you are the former, then when giving Jyorei, think of a person, place, or circumstance for which you are grateful. If you are the latter, think of one whom you love. It is not so much what you are thinking about that counts, but how much you can evoke these feelings.

Both love and gratitude open up the heart. But for me, healing is more about love. Why do we bother sharing Jyorei with other people? Ideally, it is for love. We do it because we love and want to help people. Love is based on the recognition of yourself in others. You recognize a timelessness within someone that is also within yourself. Jyorei is communication from spirit to spirit, from heart to heart.

While sharing Jyorei, we may be thinking about paying the rent or going shopping. Afterward, the recipient goes, "Wow!" They feel a lot from the Jyorei. Ultimately, the power of Jyorei is not up to us. It is up to God. Nonetheless, we still have our part to play, to do our best, and surrender the results to God. According to Meishusama,<sup>4</sup> another thing that

affects Jyorei is your level of spirituality. The purer you are, the more likely you will have such qualities as love, peace, harmony, honesty, and humility. These qualities are a reflection of your spiritual level. And according to Meishusama, the higher your level, the stronger your Jyorei.

**Bejai Gillis:** I think that if you are at a high spiritual level, you can uplift the person you are giving Jyorei to. Because you are giving it to their soul, it helps to uplift and get through their stuff.

**Janna Storino:** Yes. And I was just going to say a clearer channel.

**Roy Gibbon:** You are saying it is important to be a clear channel or vehicle. The person is like a clear conduit. It is like a garden hose. If you turn on the water, and the hose is kinked the water still comes out, but not so much. But if the hose is open and clear and nothing is blocking it, the water flows more easily. So, we want to be like a clear garden hose, without the bends and kinks that we call character flaws.

**Sonia Aguila:** Some of us are a bit more aware of the connections, our spiritual connections. So, we just embrace it. For others, it might take longer. Each has their own level. Overall, I see the Universe interacting and directing everything. When I say Universe, of course, it is God. So, none of this is by coincidence. Regardless of how cloudy our spirits are, we are on a path, and as we tune in the clarity becomes greater, the Jyorei is greater.

**Roy Gibbon:** So, the more you refine your spirit, the more you can help others?

**Kamila Schertel:** I think that is true. But also, even if someone is clouded, if there is a clear intention to help another person, the energy may open up, and the spiritual clouds<sup>5</sup> will not matter.

**Roy Gibbon:** If you can bring love and peace to your mind, you might bypass the clouds. And sometimes



healing happens despite anything we do or don't do. We can call this grace. We can't depend on it, as grace is unpredictable. So, if you want to do your best for someone, work on purifying yourself.

Janna mentioned that the space you are in affects Jyorei. Why should it matter where you are when giving Jyorei?

**Linda Tan:** If you are in a beautiful space, you are prone to be in a better mood.

**Roy Gibbon:** Physics tells us that the walls of the room in Crestone that we are in right now are 99.9999% empty space with what seem to be particles vibrating within them. All the particles are bits of vibrating information. Everything is energy. Nothing is solid. But physical things store vibrations. Even empty space stores vibration.

So, if you go to a house where people are angry, arguing, and fighting, the energy will be very dark. The bad vibration stays there. If you go a place, such as the Crestone's Sanctuary up there

on the mountain slope, the vibration will be high. Crestone is a power spot. Just coming here feels wonderful. There is great energy here. Nature feels very pure. Do you agree?

**Kamila Schertel:** 100 percent!

**Roy Gibbon:** What is so pure about nature?

**Bill Dobson:** It comes directly from the Source.

**Roy Gibbon:** And we humans do not come from Source?

**Bill Dobson:** Humans are part of nature, but our works are not always natural.

**Susan Coddling:** Nature is here and now. It is in the present. It is not in the future or the past.

**Roy Gibbon:** And what causes past and future?

**Susan Coddling:** The mind. As humans, we worry, and we add all our stuff to it.

**Roy Gibbon:** Studies show that most of our thoughts, about 80% or more, are negative. We are always complaining, "Oh, I'm much too hot." "I'm tired." "I'm hungry!" "When will Roy stop talking?" All that negativity inside of us creates spiritual clouds.

What happens if you have a city of ten million people and all of them thinking this way? It creates an atmosphere, a dense atmosphere of negativity. And the more you are thinking, whether positive or negative, the less you are in the ever present now. If your mind is very pure, you tend to be tranquil and living in the now. The natural world may think in a rudimentary way, but it does

not jabber on the way we do. I don't think nature complains too much.

So, we are in nature, and it is very pure and peaceful. Also, nature is beautiful. What does beauty do to us?

**Bejai Gillis:** It elevates us and makes us happy.

**Roy Gibbon:** It opens our hearts and makes us peaceful and relaxed. Nature is healing.

What happens to the beam of a flashlight when you shine it into smoke?

**Kamila Schertel:** You see much less of what you are looking for.

**Roy Gibbon:** Yes, less light gets to the objects you are aiming at. The light is diffused by all of the smoke in the room. On the other hand, if the air is pristine and you turn on the light, what happens?

**Kamila Schertel:** It's brighter.

**Roy Gibbon:** You can see clearly. The spiritual clouds within us are like the smoke blocking the light.

What if you know a couple that is fighting all of the time? They need Jyorei badly. Is it better to go to their house and give them Jyorei, because they really need clear light in their home, or is it better to give them Jyorei in the sanctuary of a Shumei Center?

**Bejai Gillis:** The sanctuary.

**Susan Coddling:** Either.

**Roy Gibbon:** The energy is much cleaner in the sanctuary, so probably the Jyorei will be stronger there. But either way is good.

Try to do your best to benefit the people around you, and see what happens. But don't worry about it. Just enjoy the light. Light makes no effort to shine, so neither should we.

To improve your Jyorei, you want to find a pure space in which to share it. Do what you can

to purify your heart. Work at raising your consciousness. If many people within a large group share Jyorei alongside you, then it will be stronger. And if you have a strong connection with the recipient, that will help as well. But most importantly, focus on love and gratitude. /

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1. **Jyorei** is the spiritual practice of sharing divine light that was created by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, and is administered to people by Shumei members. Those who share Jyorei, either as givers or receivers, often feel relief from afflictions, and a sense of contentment. Repeated sessions of Jyorei might bring improvement in physical and emotional health, and foster spiritual refinement and growth. In Japanese, Jyorei means *Purification of the Soul*.

2. **Jyorei Intensives** are group activities in which Shumei members exchange Jyorei with each other in five-minute intervals within a rotating double circle. The intensives usually last for at least an hour.

3. The term **spiritual cords** was used by Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, to describe the invisible bonds of spiritual energy formed by relationships between people, places, and things, as well as with God.

4. **Meishusama** is an honorific often used by Shumei members when referring to Mokichi Okada, Shumei's founder. Meishusama means *Master of Light*.

5. Mokichi Okada used the term **spiritual clouds** to describe the impurities that obscure people's spirit and distort their awareness. Such clouds are the source of all human misery.

# The Silent Runner

Zenshen Lin

*Zenshen Lin lives in Taiwan. He became a member of Shumei in January of 2015.*

I have been deaf since birth. When I was one year old, my younger brother was born. When I was five, my twin sisters came into the world. Three of us four brothers and sisters have hearing impairments. Only one of us children was born with normal hearing. My poor mother did not have the strength to stand up against the pressures of living in a household with three disabled children and a demanding husband. She finally left us when I was in the sixth grade.

From the time that she left, I had to take my mother's place. I did all the chores around the house and took care of my younger brother and sisters. My father was burdened with the many expenses of caring for us, including buying medicine for my grandmother, who had a severe heart condition. He was under a lot of stress. The stress was made worse because he had trouble communicating with his own children because of our hearing problems. If my younger brother and sisters did not obey him, he would become enraged and beat them. Seeing that broke my heart.

When I entered junior high school, I found that I liked running. I enjoyed running very much and felt that I had found a purpose in my life. At times I was bullied and teased by people because I could not hear or understand them. Once, because of this harassing, I almost quit track and field for good. Luckily, my dear grandmother encouraged and supported me. She gave

me the courage to continue. So, I was determined to keep running until I graduated from high school. After graduating, I entered the Taipei Physical Education College.

While in my second year of College, I experienced Jyorei for the first time. It was at a friend's restaurant. When I closed my eyes to receive the blessing, I felt my head become warm and my body light. This got me interested. So, I went to the local Shumei Center. It was there that I met Shunichi Matsumoto, who was visiting from Misono as part of a study group. It was he who introduced me to Shumei's teachings. And a little later I received my ohikari. I am thankful to Shunichi for that.

Soon after becoming a member, I participated in a race meet. Most of the other competitors were people with the ability to hear normally. I ran a 400-meter race and beat the national record for the hearing impaired. With that, I was qualified to run in the Hearing Impaired Asian Track and Field Competition, which was to be held in October of that year.

While preparing for the race at a training camp set up for the competition, my fellow team members and I had to practice, sleep, and eat together. I had no time for myself or anything else but the upcoming meet. So, I could not go to the Center and perform hoshi. However, in what little time I had, I was able to read Meishusama's teachings.<sup>1</sup> I have come to feel that my reading of these teachings had in some way a profound effect on our team. At first, my fellow runners had problems communicating with one another. This had nothing





to do with hearing problems. It had more to do with being very eager, very competitive, and very guarded. It had nothing to do with verbal skills. But, gradually, as I continued my reading of our founder's texts, I saw that we all began to act more like a team. We began to talk with each other and work together more closely. We all came to realize that we could trust and rely on each other.

One day, I fell during training and pulled a muscle in my thigh. I had been careless. Afterward, I had to confine myself to doing only light exercises. My Shumei Group Leader told our Sensei at the Shumei Center about my mishap. The sensei advised me to put holy water<sup>2</sup> on my thigh every day. And my muscles recovered quickly during the upcoming days.

October came, the games began, and I was under a good deal of pressure. After all, I was representing my birthplace, Taiwan. I did my very best and tried hard to relax. I prayed a lot during that time. I came to realize that my real goal, my true goal was to overcome my own limitations. I knew that Meishusama would always be with me. I also knew that all I had to do was to trust in him and leave everything in his hands.

I injured both of my legs while running in the games. But I applied holy water to them as my Shumei Sensei suggested and the pain was eased. I seemed blessed. It was an important competition. In the end, I won two gold medals, one silver medal, and a bronze medal.

One day, I felt very sick. So, I went to the Shumei Center. While receiving Jyorei, in my mind's eye I saw Meishusama sitting on a bench in a garden that was at the entrance of the Center. In my daydream, I knelt before him. And even though I am deaf, I could hear his voice clearly telling me that I should work for God. In this reverie, Meishusama asked me to give him my hand. When I did, he started to write on my arm. The writing told me that I should leave all my worries to God and do the best I could. If I did that, I would do well. He said I should look at the world from a God-

centered perspective, and that I should not let other people influence me too much. He told me to share Jyorei with ten people every day. He also wrote that I should read his teachings regularly and that I should do whatever kind of work is needed at the Shumei Center. Meishusama gave me detailed guidance for doing God's work. After that, I went to the Center every day and practiced Shumei's essential spiritual disciplines.

My mother, Jinrien Lin has lived alone in Taichung City in the central western part of Taiwan ever since she left our family and she and my father divorced. She was a sad and lonely woman. I thought that if she received an ohikari, it would make her happier. I suggested that she go to the Shumei Taipei Center. She did. And eventually, she received her own ohikari.

Before my mother became a Shumei Member, my kid brother was constantly out joyriding on his motorcycle. He was careless and prone to accidents. Each time an accident occurred, I felt obliged to pay compensations for the damage that he caused. The funds I paid out were part of the money I won in the races. Winning those races was hard work and I planned to save the money for years to come. My biggest fear was that my brother would cause me to lose all my savings. However, after my mother received her ohikari, my brother was never in another accident.

While preparing for the races, I made a friend named Tsuaoyan Tsuen. Like me, he is hearing impaired and had problems communicating. I introduced him to Shumei. After he received his ohikari, his relationships with other people improved dramatically.

In early 2017, as part of my hoshi service, I started sewing many ohikari pouches<sup>3</sup> for my fellow members. Being assigned this volunteer work was something that was very special. Usually, women with delicate hands and fine needle skills sew the silk pouches. Yet, Sensei Yoshihiro Okada, who once was assigned to the same task himself, trusted in my skills enough to allow me to do this


holy work. It was quite a privilege. I was deeply honored. A little before that time I began to experience occasional pain on the right side of my abdomen. I could especially feel it when training. However, since the day I began sewing the pouches, the pain disappeared. Whenever I sew pouches, my body becomes warm, and a calmness comes over my mind. People have told me that I smile more often since I began sewing. I believe that this is due to the spiritual light I receive when doing this hoshi.

Since becoming a Shumei member, I have tried to visit the Shumei Center daily to share Jyorei. I also try to introduce other people to Shumei when I can. Last February, something extraordinary happened to me at my Center. I was cleaning a room on the second story and as I did, I could hear people speaking in the kitchen on the floor below. Their voices were bright and pleasant. My right ear is totally deaf. Yet, I could hear voices entering it. I began to hear a conversation in another room with a completely soundless ear. I rushed down the stairs, ran into the kitchen, and shouted to the people there that I could hear them. Words now fail me. I cannot express the joy I felt at the time. Since then, my hearing has been improving.

Other things changed as well. My parents are divorced, and my brothers and sisters and I live with my father, who was very angry with my mother for leaving. I rarely got a chance to see her. If my father found out that any of us visited her, he became furious. However, last April, I was with my father and brother at a shrine in Taiwan, and my father told me that it would be alright with him if we visited our mother. I was very happy. Later, he approved of my mother attending my brother's wedding. We were blessed. We have more time to spend with our mother, and our family dynamics dramatically changed for the better. I am relieved and very grateful.

This year, I became a Group Leader within the Shumei organization. I still want to learn even

more about Meishusama and what he has to teach all of us. I want to care for my fellow group members within the Shumei family. And I want to help all of mankind through practicing Shumei's three primary activities: sharing Jyorei, Natural Agriculture, and the appreciation of Art and Beauty.

And so, with much gratitude and a deep sense of Makoto,<sup>4</sup> I offer my thanks to our founder, Meishusama. 

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1. Many of **Meishusama's teachings** are available in translation. They are based on the written and oral teaching of Shumei's founder. Within Shumei, it is an important spiritual practice to read his writings.

2. This **holy water** is drawn from a fountain in Misono called *Kumo Ga Taki*. It is considered sacred and thought to have healing properties.

3. The **silk pouch** in which the ohikari is held must be kept clean and changed regularly. Shumei Centers usually have special rooms for changing these pouches. Making these pouches is an honor.

4. **Makoto** is a word often used by Shumei's founder. It means to practice sincerity and truth in all thoughts, words, and deeds. Meishusama used it for such things as honesty, faithfulness, integrity, compassion, gratitude, and dedication to principle. Its meaning might vary by circumstance.

# The Hummingbird & The Raven

## Two Beacons of Light in North America

George Bedell

*George Bedell has worked as an editor, writer, and spokesman for Shumei for the past 20 years. He retires this year to devote himself to his first loves, the visual arts, time with loved ones, food, and plentiful rest.*

Shumei has two major Centers in America, the National Center in Pasadena and the Shumei International Institute in Crestone, Colorado. Their settings are very different. The Pasadena Center sits on the edge of a city where the climate is usually bright and balmy. The Crestone Center is in a wilderness, prone to dramatic changes of weather and night skies where more stars are seen than in a city dweller's lifetime. Whereas our National Center is the hub of Shumei's New World activities that touch people far beyond it, Crestone draws people from around the world to itself. Both are busy places. One is energetically extroverted as a media center that binds Shumei's friends together; the other is introverted, providing a serene environment for conferences and spiritual endeavors. Together, they form two beacons of Light in North America.

One similarity between the two Centers is the design of their sanctuaries. The oval shape, the roof that fans upward from the hall's front to where the Scroll of Light<sup>1</sup> hangs. Both are airy and serene places. Crestone's Sanctuary was modeled after

Pasadena's Shumei Hall. Another similarity is that both Centers are on grounds hallowed by previous occupants. The National Center's site stands on what once was a Pasadena landmark, a 19<sup>th</sup> century brownstone Methodist Church irreparably damaged in an earthquake. The only remnant of the old church that is left is an old battered upright piano that stands in the Center's community room, usually played by youngsters amazed by the loud sounds their stubby fingers make. Crestone's Center was also founded on holy ground. It was built on land sacred to the bands of First Americans that for millennia had moved through the area.

One more similarity is shared by the Centers, how they came into being. Their makings at first seemed random and unplanned. Only later did the process of their creation make perfect sense.

### The Unseen Hand

This year marks the Pasadena Center's twenty-fifth anniversary. While under construction, as the iron roof beams of Shumei Hall were being raised, it was noted that the girders were shaped like an outstretched human hand that looked as if it were giving Jyorei. This was not intentional—it was one of many happy accidents. The hand's palm seems to hover caringly over a place people would celebrate



*As the girders were raised, it was noticed that skeletal structure of Shumei Hall resembled a human hand, outstretched as if to give a blessing.*

Meishusama's legacy. But, its fingers also appeared to spread out, as if to touch the world beyond.

The sanctuary, known as Shumei Hall, is now a landmark in Pasadena's cultural life. On one side of Shumei Hall stands a handmade Petrof grand piano, at the other a taiko drum crafted by Asano Taiko. The instruments are each an example of excellence in eastern and western traditions. Together they embody the harmony of diverse cultural expressions.

Shumei Hall is luminous and airy, a perfect environment for Shumei's spiritual practices. It also has acoustical qualities that rival the best concert venues in the Los Angeles area. Like the hand-shaped girders, this was unintended. The building was designed with no acoustical pretensions. It was built to depend entirely on electronically amplified sound. Not fully understanding what makes the sound so fine, any alteration to the interior is carefully considered, lest the happy accident of good sound is ruined. Ironically, the amplified sound for which the hall was designed has been a thorn in the side of the National Center for over twenty years. Hardly a Monthly Sampai<sup>2</sup> passes without grating feedback from the microphones or the sound dropping dead.

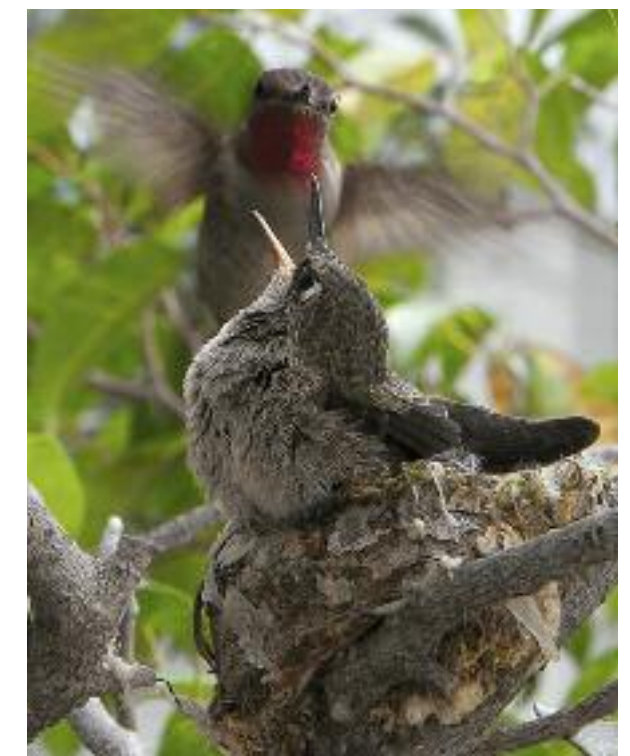
The clear, crisp acoustics is ideally suited for brass and percussion—perfect for drums. And by good fortune, the Makoto Taiko Ensemble<sup>3</sup> had its birth there. Since then, Makoto Taiko's fame has soared, and it has given rise to drumming corps throughout the United States. A little after the first taiko was struck in Shumei Hall, it became a setting for fine musicians to perform for youngsters as part of the Children's Concert Series and for gifted young musicians to play in public through the Clyde Montgomery Concerts. Both Shumei Hall's vestibule and the administration building's upstairs gallery are ample spaces for art exhibitions.

Walking through the entrance gates, one enters a courtyard abundant with plants. At the

courtyard's far end stands a fountain for visitors to ritually wash their hands and mouths before entering the Hall. This ablution is performed to cleanse one's spirit. On the northeast side of the compound is an intimate garden of shrubbery and flowers with a dry stream of pebbles wending through it. Southern California is a chaparral on the edge of the Senora Desert. During the summers, harsh sunlight is filtered through diaphanous, white awnings hanging over the courtyard. In winter, the canopy is removed, and the wind, rain, and low light are given free range over the ambiance of the grounds. The display of plants has changed over the years. California has suffered its worst drought in history. Our National Center has embraced this change of climate by planting hardy, drought-resistant plants. The new landscaping has its own austere beauty.

Few ever see the Center's roofs, where rows of solar panels take in the warmth of California's sun and send energy into the world beyond. The Center's involvement with sustainable energy has turned our Pasadena Center into a model for both our neighbors and for Shumei Centers throughout the world. Yet, beyond sustainability and conservation, the Center's goal has been to spread another kind of Light.

The full extent of the Center's potential was not fully understood when the blueprints were made—or if understood, that understanding rested with one woman. Mihoko Koyama,<sup>4</sup> Shumei's Spiri-



*The annual appearance of a nesting hummingbird is an awaited event at Shumei's National Center in Pasadena.*

tual leader, had the foresight to envision what the Pasadena Center could become a quarter-century after completion. She concerned herself with every aspect of the design, particularly the hall. Initially, our National Center was to be much smaller, just enough to meet immediate needs. But Mrs. Koyama overrode those plans in preference for a site more spacious and aesthetically pleasing. Yet, she insisted that the new Center not be too imposing. She did not want it to dominate its surroundings. A fine line between stateliness and modesty was maintained. Her foresight was providential. Throughout an exasperatingly slow growing process of a quarter century, we never felt cramped or limited by our accommodations. More often, we were overwhelmed by it. The Center's capaciousness challenged us to fulfill a promise to do good in a big way. There were hope and foresight in Mrs. Koyama's guidance: build for a better future. Today, the Pasadena Center is fulfilling its promise by living up to its spiritual leader's aspirations.

Every year a Hummingbird flies into the Pasadena Center's courtyard and with an iridescent flourish begins building a nest in one of the courtyard's potted ficus. This has been going on for years, way past any one hummingbird's lifespan. The bird's appearance each year is much anticipated. The bird, eggs, and chicks are watched, fawned over, and photographed until the fledglings



After each Monthly Sampai, the National Center bustles with activities. In between a community luncheon, various meetings, and other events, attendees stroll amongst stalls displaying Natural Agriculture products and other items related to Shumei in the Center's courtyard.

leave their nests. The mother does not seem to mind all the fuss, nor does she seem to mind her chick's final farewells. The empty nests are like hopeful prayers for the future.

Most people only visit our National Center for anniversaries, conferences, and other brief events. Some never visit it at all. Yet, all members and friends are touched by it. Endeavors such as the Shumei Arts Council, Makoto Taiko, and our solar project have set an example for other Centers throughout America. It is the nucleus of a vast network that reaches out to America and the world. The National Center's bustling Administration Building contains offices and conference rooms, equipped with Internet and audio/visual equipment. The building also houses a social hall, a children's room, and a professional kitchen. With healthy food being a concern of Shumei, cooking classes are offered. From British Columbia to New York State, from Saskatchewan to Southern California, our National Center is the heart of Natural Agriculture in North America. It was the birthplace of Wholesome Essence, the first Natural Agriculture Company in North America. Our Senseis and staff help people throughout the Americas and the world. They officiate at anniversaries and enshrinements. They facilitate conferences, meetings, classes, and workshops. The Center's Media and Education Departments produce books, videos, and websites that reach every corner of the earth. We even hold web meetings called Shumei Now to discuss current Shumei affairs and share personal experiences. And every summer the Komyo conference is held for those with an advanced ohikari. Each spring, the Green Life Food Festival is hosted, drawing from around the globe people interested in sustainable food cultivation. Shumei America's National Center reaches out to help make a brighter future for all. Looking back over 25 years, it seems as if we are growing into Mrs. Koyama's vision.

On New Year's Eve, a bonfire is lit in the Center's courtyard. Each guest is given a block of wood on which to write the bonds of the past they want to loosen and their hopes for the coming year. As each block is thrown into the flames and the smoke billows far up into the cold night sky hopes



Every New Year's Eve, a fire ceremony is held in the courtyard of the Pasadena Center, at which participant's thoughts and prayers for the coming year ascend to the heaven accompanied by smoke and heat.

and dreams ascend to heaven. Our fondest hope is that our National Center will flourish and continue its good work.

### The Weaving of Destiny

Perched on the foothills of Colorado's Sangre de Cristo Mountains, the Crestone Center overlooks an expanse of flatland known as the San Luis Valley. The Center sits over 7,500 feet above sea level, on the highest Alpine ecosystem on Earth. The vast 5,000 square-mile San Luis Valley hosts one of the world's largest freshwater aquifers. The terrain is a fusion of mountains and high desert, ringed by massifs that insulate its unique climate. The weather can be dramatic, with extremes of temperature, intense sunlight, heavy snows, lashing winds, dust storms, hard rains, lightning, and sudden wildfires. Yet, the Valley boasts a stunning 330 days of sunshine a year. The air is pure. The soil is a mixture of sand, clay, and rock. There are pristine streams and greenbelts of aspen, cottonwood, juniper, and ponderosa pine. Despite a building boom, the area is still a wilderness. It is the breeding, birthing, and feeding grounds for elk, deer, bobcat, black bear, coyote, and a variety of fish and small animals. The sky is a global flyway for waterfowl, songbirds, eagles, hawks, and owls. Because of bears and mountain lions, caution is advised. The beauty of the valley and its high, wild places has spellbound people for millennia. But there are serious challenges to wildlife and its home grounds. Fortunately, those living in the area are

keen to preserve the natural habitat. And Shumei is committed to the area's preservation.

The Crestone Center opened 15 years ago and, like its sister Center in Pasadena, it at times seemed as if unseen hands were silently guiding its destiny, gently nudging Shumei from the other-world. Its history is like a fabric woven of random threads that came together in an unexpected pattern, which none of its weavers at the loom completely foresaw.

The first strands of the tapestry began far from the Colorado mountains. The beginning strands of the story were put down in Kyoto, Japan during the 1980s, when the weaver Polly Barton visited an exhibition of hand-woven kimonos made by Jane Imai. Polly was impressed, and she and Jane became good friends. As a token of their rapport, Jane gave Polly a kimono. After Polly left Japan and married, the kimono was prominently placed in Polly's living room in New York City. A little later, Jane also moved to the USA and married Sensei Eugene Imai, who was establishing Shumei in Los Angeles. Although at opposite ends of the continent, Polly and Jane remained friends.

Years later, in 1997, the Very Reverend James Park Morton, the distinguished Dean Emeritus of St. John the Divine and founder of the Interfaith Center of New York, visited Shumei's International Center in Misono,<sup>5</sup> Japan. Shumei charmed him, and he charmed Shumei. It turned out that Rev. Morton was Polly Barton's father. Three months later, Eugene and Jane visited the Interfaith Center of New York. While there, Jane told Rev. Morton that she was a friend of his daughter. Morton recalled Jane's



The abrupt appearance of a raven during Ms. Hiroko Koyama's first visit to Crestone presaged the creation of Shumei's Crestone Center.



A view from Shumei's Crestone Center, looking out toward the broad expanse of the Baca Grande Valley, a range of land considered sacred to roving bands of First Americans for millennia.

Kimono hanging in Polly's home. This connection seemed to cement Rev. Morton's bond with Shumei. Morton became a good friend of Eugene Imai and a cherished mentor to Shumei America. Later, Shumei became an associate of the Interfaith Center of New York.

In 1998, Shumei's president, Ms. Hiroko Koyama,<sup>6</sup> attended a United Nations Prayer Service at St. Bartholomew Church in New York City. While there, Rev. Morton introduced her to Hanne and Maurice Strong.<sup>7</sup> Ms. Koyama gave Jyorei to Hanne, and a friendship was sparked between them. The next year, Ms. Koyama presided over the dedication of a photograph of Mokichi Okada in the Jyorei Room of the Interfaith Center. Believed to be one of the last photos taken of Shumei's founder, it shows Meishusama seated in front of a hanging scroll. The scroll's Chinese characters announce, "God is now appearing to the world." The word used for God was 'Miroku.' Within Buddhism, Miroku is the future Buddha who will usher in a new world of all-encompassing love. According to Mokichi Okada, Miroku's name embodies the three sacred elements of Fire, Water, and Earth. When God appears in the world, these three elements will be in harmony, and a bright new age will arise. In Shumei, this future world is known as 'Heaven on Earth,' a world free of sickness, poverty, and strife—a world of peace and joy. At that time, Shumei only had two major sacred Centers, Misono and Kishima Island, both in Japan. Misono represented the spiritual element of Fire and Kishima that of Water. As yet there was no Center that embodied Earth.

In 1999, Hiroko Koyama made her first trip to Crestone. Hanne and Maurice Strong were building a community there made up of various spiritual groups on a large tract of land in the foothills. The rugged mountains and majestic vistas were a visual feast that shifted colors and textures throughout the day. The land is magical. The craggy terrain has inspired awe for millennia. The spectacle of thunderstorms and crimson sunsets captivated Ms. Koyama. Before the Spanish and Anglos came, it had been sacred to Native Americans. Hanne told Hiroko that there was an ancient Native American prophecy that a new civilization would bud forth from this landscape. A little after they spoke, a lone raven appeared. The sudden arrival of a raven can be startling. The bird's demeanor is unearthly, its color an iridescent black, its angular form and quirky movements seem ethereal. Ms. Koyama felt that the bird was an omen. Ravens are considered a mystical presage among many world cultures. Among Native Americans, Raven was the world's creator. Raven brought light to humankind and was a great teacher. And he could heal from far distances. Ms. Koyama felt that the bird's presage, together with the words on the scroll in the photo she had dedicated, foretold the advent of a new world—Heaven on Earth. So, when Hanne offered land on which to build a Center, Shumei accepted, and Crestone became Shumei's third major sacred site, embodying the spirit of Earth. The three sacred elements inherent in Miroku were manifested in three Centers, and the arrival of Heaven on Earth could begin in earnest.


The property allotted to Shumei by the Strong's was wild and commanded a stunning view. On its site were an abandoned gold mine and an old stone wall. Some claim that the wall had been built by Italian—others say, Mexican—migrants. To honor the heritage and integrity of the land and the people who once toiled there, the 'Immigrant Wall' was restored and expanded. It became an essential part of the new Center's structure. Volunteers from all over the globe came to collect rocks. Japanese stonemasons put the rocks in place. The stones used to renovate the wall came from the surrounding grounds, making the wall an integral part of the land on which it stood. For those gath-

Ribbon cutting at the Shumei Crestone Center's opening. Cutting ribbon, from left to right, are Hanne Strong, Maurice Strong, and Hiroko Koyama. Behind Ms. Koyama, from left to right, are The Very Rev. James Parks Morton, Jane Imai, and Sensei Eugene Imai. Behind all is the Crestone Center's restored and expanded stone wall.



ering the rocks, it seemed as if with each stone collected and put in place, each volunteer was putting part of his or her soul into the new Center. Those who helped build the wall have a spiritual cord connecting them to the place where it stands. The wall came together like a mosaic of souls, cemented with devotion, hope, and love.

During the Crestone Center's opening in 2002, Maurice Strong, who had served as Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, told Hiroko Koyama that Mokichi Okada's philosophy should be shared with the world, and becoming a U.N. nongovernmental organization would help. Eventually, Shumei was granted NGO status with the U.N., and today is an exemplar of enlightenment and compassion.

Our Pasadena and Crestone Centers are twin presences in North America, blessed by Mihoko Koyama's great vision. Together they help Shumei meet its destiny. A place's soul is not only found in physical edifices or the land on which it rests. Buildings and places never come to life until people move through them. In the end, it is people that give our two Centers their vitality and a reason to exist, which is to fulfill Shumei's mission of creating a world of Health, Harmony, and Happiness. 

1. A **Scroll of Light** is a revered scroll usually placed above an offering table in a Shumei Center or home. The Chinese characters depicted on it vary in significance but the central character always signifies Divine Light.

2. **Monthly Sampais** are celebrations held once each month at local Shumei Centers. They might involve special presentations and lectures, music and art events, luncheons, and other social activities.

3. In Japanese the word **taiko** simply means **drum**, but in recent years it has come to signify a particular style of modern ensemble performance involving traditional Japanese drums, flutes, song, poetry, and a good deal of modern stagecraft and performance practices. Of late, this art form has found great popularity not only in Japan but also throughout the world.

Founded in 1999, **Makoto Taiko** has become one of California's premiere taiko ensembles and has performed throughout America. Makoto Taiko is strongly committed to

teaching the young the art and discipline of taiko. Classes for people of all ages are offered throughout the year. Please visit their website for more information: makototaiko.org.

4. **Mrs. Mihoko Koyama** was Shumei's first president and spiritual leader. She is known to Shumei members as *Kaishusama*. Kaishusama passed away in November of 2003.

5. **Misono** is Shumei's International Headquarters and Spiritual Center in the Shigaraki Mountains of Shiga Prefecture, Japan. The name 'Misono' means 'Sacred Garden.'

6. **Ms. Hiroko Koyama** is the current president of Shumei, who is often referred to by the title *Kaicho-Sensei* by Shumei members.

7. **Hanne Marstrand Strong** is the president of the Manitou Foundation, a non-profit founded to assist in her philanthropic interests. Mrs. Strong has established numerous non-profit organizations to help Native Americans, the disabled, and homeless children. For over twenty years, her vision has been to establish a comprehensive ecumenical, spiritually based, and self-sustainable community in Crestone, Colorado.

**Maurice F. Strong** (1929–2015) was the Secretary-General of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, and the First Executive Director of UNEP from 1973-75. Mr. Strong had served as the Under-Secretary General and Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of the UN, the Senior Advisor to the World Bank, the Chairman of the Council for University for Peace, and the Co-Founder and first Co-Chair of the Canada-China Business Council.

## WORDS FROM SHUMEI AMERICA'S DIRECTOR

# Beauty in Diversity

*Sensei Eugene Imai*

*Sensei Eugene Imai was the first Shumei Sensei to live and work in North America. He is the Director of Shumei America and former Director of Shumei's International Department. As a citizen of the USA, he is Shumei's first American Sensei.*

Look at this extraordinary drawing by Yasushi Fujimoto. It is of Shumei's founder, Mokichi Okada, tending his favorite flower, the camellia. Mokichi Okada is known as Meishusama, which means Master of Light. At Shumei America's National Center in Pasadena, we display this drawing in our hall to honor Meishusama on February 10, the day he passed away.

Meishusama loved nature. From childhood on, he enjoyed cultivating and arranging flowers. He planted them whenever he could. He believed society would come closer to paradise if we all cherished flowers. He cultivated and distributed them widely, and he encouraged people to display them in their homes and public places. His aspiration was to uplift and refresh all people by encouraging them to create a society that had beauty at its core. Meishusama once wrote a poem about beauty.

*When looking at a flower, I cannot but marvel at God's skill.*

—Page 104, Miakarishu<sup>1</sup>

And, he also wrote:

*Decorating my alcove with a camellia  
from the garden, I know the world's joy.*

*God's craft—mountain vistas, rivers, grass,  
and trees—give people pleasure.*

*Heaven is a world of beauty. The hearts of  
those living there are beautiful as well.*

—Page 105, Miakarishu

Nature is a perfect example of diversity, and it is beautiful. Think of all the colorful flowers, green trees, blue oceans, white clouds, and majestic mountains. Meishusama tells us that Nature is God's artwork.

What about our human world? Is there beauty in diversity? Often, it does not seem so. There is conflict and turmoil. Think about your local community, your work environment, and the organizations to which you belong? Is there any tension and strife there? What about your family? Does everyone get along beautifully with each other? Perhaps not.

Yet, I believe that we can make our world more harmonious and beautiful by adjusting our minds and attitudes. I would like to share some of the wisdom I learned from Meishusama. I invite you to return to the Source: Our Ancestors, Nature and the Divine.

Consider our origin. From where did we all come? Biologically, human beings originated in Africa. Black, brown, yellow, and white people all came from the same source. We all have the same ancestors, and we are all of the same family. Meishusama wrote a Poem entitled Peace on Earth:

*Faces vary in color or shape, yet in God's  
eyes, they are of the same land.*

—Page 103, second stanza, Miakarishu

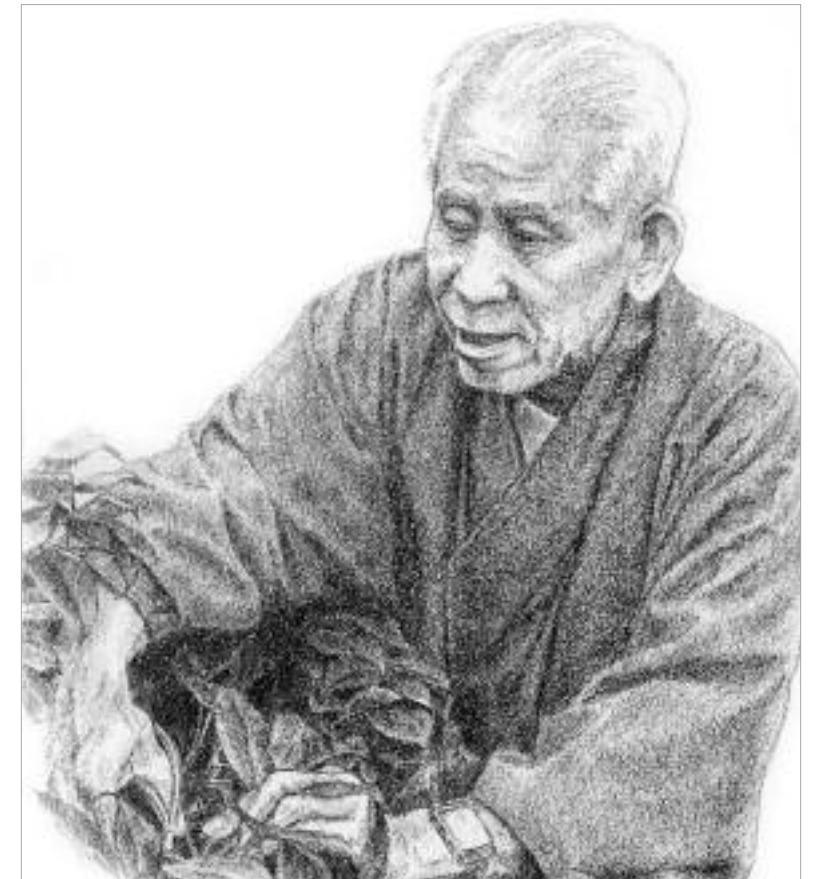
We were created by God and are children of God. God is our ultimate father and mother. We all came from the same source. Each of us is related to each other. Understanding this, we should treat each other as family.

By returning to the source, returning to nature, we recognize how unique each one of us is. Although created equal, we are different from each other.

Though each of us is uniquely beautiful, we are constantly conditioned by the wrong kind of education, which encourages us to compare ourselves with others and to try to become *better* than them. The spirit of competition encourages us to study and work hard, and it has powered our industrial progress. But unfortunately, the world's religions also tend to compare themselves with each other, saying our religion or our God is better than yours. Many wars and much carnage have come about because of this narrow-minded way of thinking.

We need to observe nature closely and to try to live more harmoniously with each other, as well as with other species. I strongly suggest that you watch, a wonderful video called *How Wolves Change Rivers*.<sup>2</sup> It shows how wolves, after being reintroduced to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming after an absence of 70 years became once again a part of the great web of life that connects all species with each other. In nature, all animals and plants support each other, including predators and their prey. We need to know that all is interconnected. Because each one is dependent on the other, we cannot say which animal or plant is superior or inferior. All are equal.

Do you know about intestinal flora? It is a complex community of microorganisms that live in our digestive tracts. The human body carries about 100 trillion microorganisms in the intes-



tines. There are all kinds. Some of them are good, and some of them are bad for humans, but they usually exist in flawless balance. It is said that the best ratio for the human body is 80% good microorganisms to 20% bad. This tells us that nature is so complex that it is almost impossible to know exactly how everything relates to each other. It is not wise to try to eliminate all bad microorganisms. If we were to succeed, it would create a new imbalance, one possibly worse than the previous one. Again, it is important to remember that everything is interconnected.

In the human world, to create a good society, people think we should simply purge wicked people. Some people do that with a destructive force as we did with Iraq's former dictator, Saddam Hussein. Do you really think that worked? Just look at poor Iraq today, with its suffering people. It's a disaster. Hatred and fear cannot bring peace and

happiness. Love and compassion are what bring people together.

Let me share something from the book *An Offering of Light*.<sup>3</sup>

We are conditioned to view conflict as a struggle between two opposing sides where one must win, and the other must lose. We make distinctions between good and evil, and then project these judgments onto others.

If we look closely at nature, we see that opposites are mutually dependent. Sun and moon, mountain and valley, day and night, man and woman, right hand and left hand, and so on. *An Offering of Light* states:

Neither one is right or wrong, nor better or worse. Together they create a natural balance and an integrated whole. Understanding this principle of the co-dependency of opposites and non-dualism helps to reduce feelings of hostility towards our opponents because we begin to recognize their necessity within the larger scheme of things.

Do you have enemies in your workplace or troublemakers in your family? You can find balance in your relationship with someone difficult if you consider that God is keeping him or her alive on this earth for some reason that you do not see. We are all God's children. Respect everyone regardless of your personal feelings. If you do so, you will find peace.

So, rather than judge and criticize others, understand that in God's eyes, all of us are as we are supposed to be—although we can all use some improving. This wisdom of interconnectedness, co-dependency, and nondualism is a part of Kannon's Way.<sup>4</sup> Please, practice this wisdom. It will make your life run more smoothly and is a lot more fun.

Let us consider why God created such a diversity of creatures. There must be a reason. I believe diversity is beautiful. It makes us stronger and increases our survival skills. God wants all of us to live harmoniously.

The Massachusetts Institute of Technology conducted an experiment that tried to find what things made groups more efficient. The researchers teamed up hundreds of volunteers into many groups and gave a problem to each group to solve. They compared the speed of solving a problem between different groups. They found three factors that make a group more efficient. One: a high degree of social sensitivity to each other, which means each member cares for the other members of their group. Two: equal time for each other. No one dominates by talking too loud or too long. Three: more women in a group.

When there is social connectedness with each other that cause ideas to flow and grow more freely, the group becomes more efficient. We can apply this principle to our family, company, country, and the world. If we do, they will flourish. What we need is not super bright people to make a company or country succeed. We need to build a culture that embraces everyone in the group. If each person is respected and motivated to contribute to the whole, the group becomes united, and the collaborated energy becomes super strong.

The Royal Academy of Dramatic Art does not seek great actors. They seek great collaborators who can help bring out the best in each person. A star actor who cares only about him or herself does not last long.

So, what is it about diversity that is beautiful? When the individual is unrelated to the others, there is conflict, especially if that individual goes against the will or needs of the group. However, if the individual considers the needs of others and works in harmony with them, then diversity becomes beautiful. Meishusama writes:

Whatever you do, if your actions do not originate from a core of love and respect, they are almost devoid of value. It is like a body missing a backbone.

— Izunome: The Movement of the Universe, Kannon's Way

In other words, harmony in our society can only occur when we treat everyone with love and respect.

A good example of beauty in diversity is found in great works of art. What makes a work of art beautiful? If the various elements in a painting relate well to each other, as well as to the overall composition, then there is beauty. Whereas if the elements are scattered chaotically, not only is there lack of relationship between them, there is also a lack of beauty. Relationship and harmony are the keys to beauty. Art can teach us how to make diversity beautiful by expressing this. So can our hearts, if we keep them open.

Remember that we all come from the same source, all of us are related to each other. Recognize that each of us is uniquely beautiful and necessary. God would not have put us here if we served no purpose. We are all interconnected and interdependent. Learn to value and respect one another. When we do, diversity becomes beautiful. Art can teach us how to do this. /

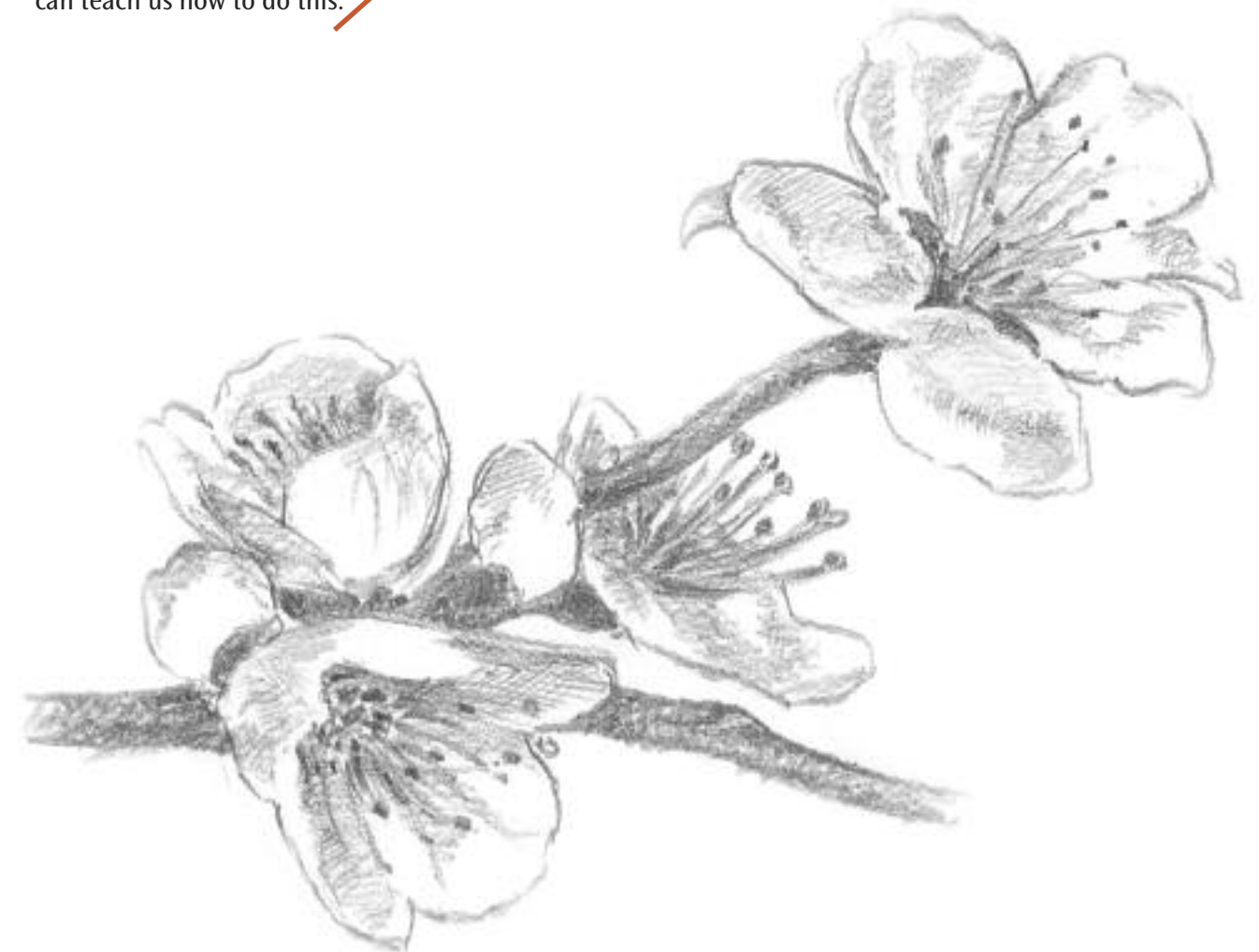
1. The **Miakarishu** is a collection of poems by Shumei's founder Mokichi Okada (Meishusama) that are chanted daily throughout the year during Shumei Sampais. It also contains poems for special occasions, such as marriages and memorials, as well as the three major chants used by Shumei.

2. **How Wolves Change Rivers** can be seen on the Internet at [filmsforaction.org/watch/how-wolves-change-rivers/](http://filmsforaction.org/watch/how-wolves-change-rivers/) or at [youtube.com/embed/ysa50BhXz-Q](https://www.youtube.com/embed/ysa50BhXz-Q).

3. **Offering of Light** by Roy Gibbon and Atsushi Fujimaki is considered the most comprehensive portrayal in the English language of Shumei's mission and philosophy. Running 300 pages with illustrations, photos, and diagrams, it is available for \$15, plus shipping. To order, call the Shumei America Gift Shop at 1-626-584-8841 between 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. PST (USA).

4. **Kannon's Way**, referred to as *Izunome*, is the point at which the spirit of water intersects with that of fire. The term denotes following an unbiased, middle path, a moderate course of action.

Kannon's Way is also the title of a book, a collection of Meishusama's teachings that was published by Shumei America in 2005.



## WORDS FROM OUR FOUNDER

# Two Teachings from Kannon's Way

*Mokichi Okada, Meishusama*

### The Izunome Principle and Love

To explain Izunome, I use the terms *daijo* and *shojo*. The former represents the horizontal principle and the latter the vertical. *Izunome* represents a midpoint that unites the two. However, many people lean towards either one or the other and get stuck. They do not unite *daijo* and *shojo*. And so, they cannot apply them in a balanced way. Many members belong to one group or the other. But, Izunome is the principle you must attain.

When dealing with problems, we should unite *daijo* and *shojo*, and find a middle ground between them. We have to get to that ground and approach our problems from there. Today, most people seem unable to grasp this point.

Recently, I listened to a radio program reporting on current Japanese politics, during which leaders of the Liberal Democratic Party, the Democratic Party, and the Socialist Party talked about their own party's agendas. After listening to them, I was convinced that each party leaned unreasonably towards either *daijo* or *shojo*. None of them knew how to see things from a proper perspective.

They only stuck to and defended their own ideology. They argued about the superiority of capitalism over socialism or vice-versa. This is wrong. The world cannot be solely capitalist or solely socialist. Both are required. This is obvious, but most find it difficult because most are accustomed to

seeing things from a one-sided perspective. It is very challenging for them to broaden their horizons and find a balanced perspective amidst different points of views that seem to conflict with each other. Yet, I think practicing a balanced approach is easier than most think.

When eating meals someone has prepared for me, I often find the food either too salty or too sweet. Whenever I feel this way, I make the cook aware of my preference by telling them, "I like a flavor that is neither too sweet nor too salty—sweet and salty in moderation, please." Often, they tell me that is too difficult. And I tell them that adjusting taste is not hard, but easy. People complain about the weather. They say that it alternates so much between hot and cold on the same day that they cannot decide how to dress. But I think this kind of weather is best. To my way of thinking, people have trouble adapting to ideas and customs that keep changing because they are too one-sided in their attitudes.

In our organization, some people are too flexible in their beliefs, and they seem to be having fun doing so. But there is also a group that practices their faith in the opposite way. The latter group expresses its criticism of the more flexible members by asking, "Do they actually belong to the same group as I?" This is an example of how people tend to be extreme and lose their balance. What is important is to reconcile one's inner conflicts and harmonize

the opposite aspects of one's character. This is very important for your spiritual growth.

Generally, people believe that there can be no spiritual pursuit without a painful effort. I disagree with putting too much emphasis on severity. The purpose of spiritual practice is not harshness, but to find a way to make life easier. It aims to improve one's spiritual condition. This is the essential thing I would like you to understand, and with this understanding, continue in your spiritual pursuits.

Another point that I want you to consider is the need to find a path that benefits both you and others at the same time. During the recent war, the ideal of self-annihilation for the sake of country was strongly promoted. This was too extreme, and therefore wrong. If self-annihilation had been truly practiced, there would have been no one left to do work essential to the cause. Of course, this ideology's intention was for people to put aside narrow self-interest. But it still was extremism.

Contrary to this, the principle of Izunome helps us find the best way to benefit everyone, including ourselves. If you lack this all-inclusive attitude, you will not be able to get the ball rolling in the right direction. It is not right for one to be a sacrificial victim for the benefit of others, but it is also wrong for one to seek personal advantage by shoving others aside. Everyone's well-being should be taken into account. You may wonder how this is possible. And it is possible. Although ironic, pursuing one's own satisfaction can help others. This is not difficult, so long as one remains considerate of others. People just have not noticed this fact yet.

I recall a saying from Ōmoto's<sup>1</sup> scriptures, "If a faith does not make others well, it is not up to God's standards." The phrase, "makes others well" are choice words. From the same text comes the following: "In our present society, people's hearts are so cold that they do not care if others are well." Also, the phrase "faith only for the sake of receiving favors" is used in Oomoto. One should avoid this kind of faith. As I wrote in my book *A Collection of Writings on Faith*, if you want to be happy, you have to make others happy. What is essential here is love. You must never forget about helping others attain happiness. Once you get this point, you can practice Izunome.

### A Balanced Approach

All treatments of illness are of two types: those that focus on the physical and those that focus on the spiritual. However, I know of no single approach that is right for every illness. Nowadays, everything is out of balance. This not only includes the state of the world but that of individuals. Once balance is lost, the situation quickly leads to a dead end. However, if you remain balanced, you will do well.

When eating a persimmon, I always reflect on how a perfectly sweet one is neither too soft nor too hard. This exemplifies Kannon's Way. Similarly, spring and fall, with their mild weather, are the most pleasant seasons. And food that is not too sweet, too hot, or too spicy is ideal. Often when dining, someone from the kitchen will ask me about my preferences. I tell them that I would like my food to taste "just right." Since I always give that response, I have not been asked this question lately. As with food, verbal communication in daily life should not be too complicated or too simple. Language that is neither too wordy nor simplistic is just right.

If you are flexible enough to adapt to different situations, people, and times, you will avoid dead ends. This attitude has not been sufficiently cultivated in the past because Kannon's power did not manifest itself in the same way it does today. Faith in Amitābha<sup>2</sup> [Pure Land Buddhism or Amidism] follows a power beyond one's self, and faith in the Buddha embodies self-power. Faiths such as these rely exclusively on either one kind of power or the other. A faith that lies between these two types has not been emphasized until now. A faith that advises one to find a balance between these two extremes is closer to the truth and will greatly improve one's situation.

When people try to solve a problem, they usually get lost either in emotion or in reasoning. We should care about both the emotional and rational aspects of problem-solving. If we seek a solution that involves both, there is a greater chance of gaining freedom and assurance. When things are not going well, or money is scarce, you are probably stuck on only one side of the issue. However,

*At sunrise on June 15, 1931, Mokichi Okada, known as Meishusama, ascended Mt. Nokogiri with some of his followers. It was there that he received his revelation that the long age of night was ending and that mankind would undergo a great transformation as the age of day began.*

by maintaining a balanced path between emotion and reason, you can avoid this trap. But, if you cling to one at the expense of the other, you will find yourself at a dead end. The Kannon movement that I advocate is no more than the promotion of a flexible middle position. So, I encourage you to nurture and practice Kannon's middle path.

It is wrong to be too passionate in practicing a faith. Do not be a fanatic. But, you should not be an idler, either. There are those who quickly become overheated, and just as easily become cold in their faith. This is not good. What is important is to apply your faith diligently and steadily. This is the essence of Kannon's Way.

Kannon Bodhisattva is neither male nor female, but both simultaneously. This aspect of both genders is inherent in Kannon's nature and is indicative of how Kannon's power manifests itself. After adopting this type of balance as the foundation of faith, we can proceed with our work. /

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1. **Ōmoto** is the Shinto-related faith that Meishusama adopted in 1920. After achieving executive status in 1929, he headed the Ōmoto organization's Hanzomon center in Tokyo until his resignation in 1934. The word *Ōmoto*, means *great origin*. The organization was founded by Deguchi Nao (1837-1918). Today, it is headquartered in Kyoto Prefecture and, with a membership of close to 170,000. It is a strong advocate for world peace.

2. The **Pure Land Buddhist** sect of East Asia teaches that one can be reborn in a state of enlightenment in a *pure land* simply through devotion to **Amitābha**, the primary Buddha of this sect. Some believe that rebirth into the Pure Land can be accomplished just by uttering the Bodhisattva's name at the moment of death. This reliance on a power beyond oneself is what Meishusama was eluding to here.

