

## **The Sarin Nerve Gas Attack Affair**

### **— Background Factors in Japan and it's Lesson —**

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#### **I The sarin nerve gas attack affair**

On March 20 '95, the sarin nerve gas attack on Tokyo's subway system killed 12 people and injured over 5500 others. This indiscriminate homicide gave a shock to people at home and abroad. It was a crime by AUM Shinrikyou religious cult. (abbreviation is AUM)

#### **II The crimes of AUM**

In addition to Tokyo's subway affair, AUM committed the following crimes.

- \* The murder, in November '89, of a lawyer who was preparing a case against AUM and his wife and 1 year old son.
- \* The sarin nerve gas attack that killed 7 people and injured 600 others in the residential area in the city of Matsumoto in June '94.
- \* Abducting, confinig and killing of a Tokyo notory public who tried to make his sister leave AUM, in February '95.
- \* Attempted assasination of Director General of the Natinal police agency, in March '95.
- \* Some 300 followers are missing and about a dozen are said to have died during their training for AUM, for instance by overexposure to hot water.

#### **III Background factors in Japan**

##### **1. Absence of a fundamental ethical norm which the nation owns jointly.**

When former German President Richard von Weizsaecker was invited to Japan in August '95, he warned. "A country that denies it's own war past risks the danger of repeating its crimes." He also said, "Japan has completely turned away from militry actions and it has established a market economy as well as a democracy. But religious foundations, the imperial system and the state system were sustained in a farreaching way."

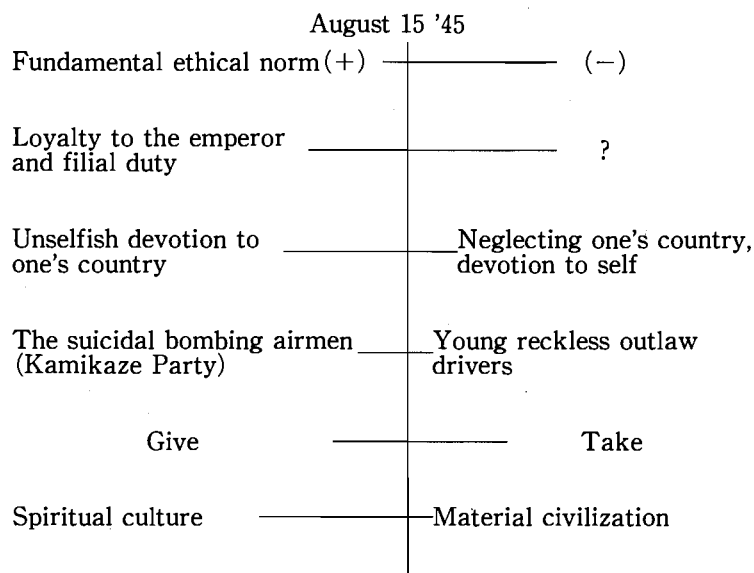
Superficially and formally, the state system and others seem to be consistent, but substantially they are inconsistent.

At the physical level, it was said that the post war age was over, 40 years ago. But at the metaphysical level, the post war age is not over. At this level, Japanese can't pay for their defeat in the war.

From 1890 to 1945, Japanese had to own jointly their fundamental ethical norm. That was loyalty to the emperor and filial duty. The moral imperative of loyalty to the emperor and the moral imperative of filial duty are different in demension. An attempt was made to bring together the two moral imperatives. The duties to one's load and parent are taught to be two aspects of the selfsame moral principle. Soldiers were taught and trained strictly not to hesitate to die for the emperor. So even if the son is killed in the war, parents must think him to be a good son. This is unnatural and absurd. In the name of the country, many young men died in the war. In spite of this precious sarcrifice, Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 15 '45.

So after the defeat of the war, it has been taboo to think of ethical norms. An ethical norm is a basic rule for people to keep on living in society. An ethical norm precedes law. After the defeat of the war, Japanese have not had ethical norms which the nation owned jointly.

The difference between prewar days and postwar days are as follows.



## 2. Poor home discipline

If there is a fundamental ethical norm which the nation owns jointly, home discipline is easy. Because of poor home discipline, Japanese youth are apt to be egocentric and indifferent to others.

## 3. Education which belittles or ignores health

Many people have misunderstood the purpose of education as the matriculation of famous university. So young people must study hard to enter famous university, sacrificing their health.

## 4. Hampered mental development of youth

Because of poor home discipline and education neglecting health, there are many young people lacking both self-control and firm sense of right and wrong. Due to poor mental development, senior cult members of AUM who won places in Japan's best universities and graduate schools behaved in such an unthinkable fashion.

## 5. Time of frantic mammonism

AUM started its group in 1984, and changed its name to AUM in 1987. At that time the Japanese economy began to enjoy its new prosperity which ended in 1991. People were intoxicated with the physical boom. Under such circumstance, some young people were sceptical about mammonism and were disappointed in existing religions.

# IV Marked phases of AUM

## 1. Originality of leader Asahara

At the beginning, a few religious scholars recognized AUM. AUM seemed to be a religion that asked what religion was.

The doctrines of AUM include Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism. But Asahara utilized these religions arbitrarily. In Buddhism, a person becomes a priest with almost no money, but in AUM, with all assets for donation. In the eschatology of Christianity, the value of nonresistance is emphasized, but AUM is not nonresistant but very aggressive. The god of Hinduism, Siva, is a god of both destruction and creation, but in AUM Siva was a god of destruction.

Asahara was misunderstood to be a fresh revolutionist of established religions. He invited young men to join AUM by the practice of yoga or the propaganda of gaining superior powers or recovering from cancer.

## **2. Control by Terrorism**

A Senior cult member killed one follower during the training, one year after AUM started. One follower seeing the scene of homicide, tried to leave the cult. He was also killed to cover up the homicide. Asahara ordered the killing of lawyer who was preparing a case against AUM. Followers were warned that those who quit AUM should go to hell. Even senior cult members were afraid of being killed, so they had to commit crimes to protect themselves.

## **3. Clear manual of training**

A clear manual of training was made to achieve each steps. From Asahara to the new pupil, clear status were determined. Depending upon the quantity and quality of training, the status and holy name was given by Asahara. But sometimes it was given arbitrarily.

## **4. Misuse of psychiatric treatment**

Injections of thiopental were often used for confession. Electric shocks were utilized to erase inconvenient memories of AUM. LSD and mescaline were used for religious ceremonies.

## **5. Personality traits of senior cult members**

Many of them seemed to have narcissistic and obsessive compulsive personality traits. Because of lack of self understanding, their behaviors were simple, dogmatic and unthinking.

## **V The reason for the reckless and unthinkable behavior of AUM - A hypothesis**

Asahara who seems to be narcissistic, sadistic and fanatic, killed two followers before he ordered the killing of the lawyer. He could not allow the existence of those who opposed him.

When he was young, Asahara's dream was to become prime minister. At the general election by which Asahara wanted to enter the political world, all candidates of AUM suffered crushing defeats, in February '90. He was said to be suffering diabetes and hepatic cirrhosis. The shock was so severe that he must have suffered physical discomfort. He must have thought his physical discomfort was due to cancer or malignant disease.

AUM had propagated that AUM followers could get superior powers and the cancer would be cured. If he really suffered cancer, what he had claimed would be proved to be false. So he thought that the cause of his physical discomfort was due to exogenous factors, for instance, attack of the sarin nerve gas or bacterium.

Two months after the defeat of the general election, he predicted a big calamity. He began to predict the coming of Armageddon, end of the world, and pointed to the poison gas attacks on AUM believers.

In order to prove his prophecy of Armageddon, he ordered large production of the sarin nerve gas and planned to arm AUM. By killing many people, he wanted to show that only AUM believers could be saved.

One of the defense mechanisms of Asahara is projective identification. Insisting on the aggression of the outer world, and attacking them, he tried to manipulate the outer world.

## **VI Lessons**

1. Establishment of fundamental ethical norms
2. Improvement of home discipline
3. Education which lays stress on health
4. The promotion of mental health education
5. Clarification of human ability and purpose of life

この小論は、1995年秋、文部省在外研究員(プロジェクト)として出張したさいに、11月8日ドイツの Regensburg 州立病院と Regensburg 大学精神科の合同研究会で、11月9日 Heidelberg 大学精神科で講演したものである。

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