**What did PP21 aim for and what did it leave us?**

Hanasaki Kohei

It has been more than 30 years since the first Peoples' Plan 21st Century International People's Event was held. Thirty years is a long enough time span in which people and events are bound to change. If you ask young people today if they know about PP21, the reply will probably be "What is it?

Society and people's consciousness have changed dramatically in this period. A remarkable feature of today may be that we find it difficult to imagine a bright future.

Let us recall what we were doing and talking about in the Japanese archipelago and in many other parts of Asia 30 years ago. At that time, "hope" was the word and idea we were sharing. The light of "hope" came from the people of Vietnam, who had fought through and finally won the war against America. All over the world, the people were mouthing words of hope, which were shared. From the islands of the Pacific Ocean, voices were raised for a "nuclear-free and independent Pacific. Indigenous peoples around the world called for a rethinking of Western colonial rule on the 500th anniversary of Columbus' so-called discovery, and indigenous peoples' movements around the world gained momentum. These words of hope, and the movements that embodied them, provided the guiding principles of the People's Plan for the 21st Century.

　The 20th century is gone, and the 21st century is now 20 years old. One cannot say that the past 20 years of this century have substantiated PP21’s watchword of hope set forth in the Minamata Declaration. What kind of era are now we living in?

　　**What does the Minamata Declaration show us?**

　The Minamata Declaration is written in a dignified and passionate style. It begins by criticizing the "progress and development" by which the world justified itself at the end of the 20th century, pointing out that the 20th century of development brought more wars, and more atrocious wars, than any other preceding periods in history.

　As a watchword of hope for the next era, it proposed the Minamata dialect phrase "Janakashaba," which means "a world not like the present.” Today, the survival of not only human beings, but all living beings is threatened. We must fight not only for the restoration of the dignity of human life, but also for of all lives on earth.

　The Minamata Declaration also set forth the task of restoring democracy. The drafting committee of the Minamata Declaration had a deep discussion on this issue. This was reflected in the Declaration in the following expression.

One of the words which has been stolen from the people and corrupted is the word "democracy." Originally, democracy meant the autonomy, the self-determination, the empowerment of the people. To many people in the Third World, however, it has come to be the label for a facade of "civilian government," disguising state terror and repression in a ploy to claim legitimacy for the state to serve the interests of the powerful. For indigenous peoples and other minorities, democracy has been the ideology of "majority rule" that has defined them as "minorities" who could be legitimately ignored.

　This wording was the result of discussion in the drafting committee, when a representative of Canada's indigenous peoples raised objections to a "democracy" in which majority rule is the rule. At the PP21 gathering, the participation and voice of indigenous representatives carried a heavy weight to urge us to critically review the status quo-oriented conceptualization.

On the other hand, billions of people in the Asia-Pacific region are fighting for democracy often risking their lives. We must restore democracy as a useful tool in the struggle of the people. We emphasize that the democracy we speak of here is a democracy that recognizes the fundamental human rights and freedoms of indigenous peoples and other minorities.

　The declaration ends with a call for a new people’s right, the right to "transborder participatory democracy," and the right to act beyond the boundaries of the state.

　　**The Ratchadamnoen Pledge**

　In 1992, the second People's Assembly was held in Bangkok, Thailand, and the "Ratchadamnoen Pledge" was drawn up as a summary.

　In the pledge, it was noted that since Minamata, a people-to-people alliances and interactive processes have been realized across borders and cultural differences, at the local, national, regional, and continent-to-continent levels. An important milestone in this process has been the creation of relations with "500 years of indigenous, black, and grassroots resistance" in the Americas and the holding of the PP21 Central America assembly.

　The global political and economic situation is summarized and, referring to the impoverishment of the people and the violence inflicted on them. The non-violent struggle of the Thai people to establish democracy in Thailand seven months before is described as "perhaps the most dramatic display of people's power in the region since Minamata.

　The significance of these struggles in the context of the long-term PP21 goal of alliance of hope in the midst of the reality of this unjust and unequal Asia Pacific, is that they emphasize a deep commitment to life. It is a significant engagement because Asia is the continent that gave birth to the world's major spiritual and moral traditions. At the same time, these struggles also point to the relevance and importance of the traditions, cultures, and values of the indigenous peoples of the Asia-Pacific region. The mainline among these traditions is a sense of life and a way of living that is filled with justice, love, and empathy. In order to make the most of what is important in this tradition, it is necessary to reinterpret it. It is only through such a reinterpretation that the poor and the oppressed will resonate in the struggle to assert their humanity. This is what is being proposed. In the main forum, examples of cross-border actions and events were given.　Finally, it mentioned the formation of coalitions that transcend cultural differences and the mechanisms for the follow-up and promotion of PP21.

　**Sagarmatha Declaration - Celebrating Diversity, Celebrating Life**

　At the third People's Plan for the 21st Century convergence, we gathered in Kathmandu, Nepal, in March 1998 to share our experiences, dreams, and plans. The Sagarmatha Declaration states. "We are strengthened as we share the diversity of our struggles and celebrate the plurality of our resistance, of our hopes and earnest desires. It is significant that this stance and attitude is expressed at the beginning of the declaration, stating that there is a creative alternative to the dominant system already there.

　This declaration describes that alternative, first of all, from the standpoint of a woman. It says that "we, as women, have shown courage and action against trafficking and all forms of open and covert violence against women in the struggle for gender justice, equality, dignity and other human rights," and that we will "fight alongside men" for our own liberation. We strive to practice alternative paths of development that create life-centered relationships and life support systems based on values such as caring, sharing, parenting, and caring in both public and private life. This is in opposition to the military, self-centered, competitive male thinking of the dominant modern model of development and the values that characterize the violence that permeates our culture and society.

　This process requires a serious effort, especially on the part of men, because the dominant values that have been established throughout history assume that production is supreme and reproduction secondary, and the effort to conquer destiny means the pursuit of conquering nature and other human beings through competition, destructive techniques, military action, and institutionalized violence in the name of government, politics, ethnicity, economics, and religion. This is the first item on the list.

　This is the first item on the list, followed by opposition to militarization and war, and then the importance of the struggle to protect children, youth and the environment. It goes on to look at indigenous peoples and development, fisheries, agriculture, workers, the right to work where they choose, cultural and religious issues.

　It concludes with a summary section on "drawing a viable vision," which argues that only with a dynamic vision can we approach, confront, and transform the political, economic, social, and cultural systems that currently dominate.

　　In this section, an expression, maybe characteristic of South Asian popular culture, is frequently used. That is the use of "for too long" to introduce a narrative, referring to negative situations that must be overcome. This style draws the listeners into the issues being discussed and encourages them to come to an agreement. After thus describing the various situations that need to be overcome, a vision of "a society based on life-centered values - empathy, care, nurturing, and symbiosis" is proposed, and "these values must be accepted by all people, men and women alike, and must be incorporated into social relationships. Our vision is a society based on values of production, care, nurturing, and symbiosis," and "these values should be accepted by all people, men and women alike, should permeate social relations, and bring about a relationship of dialogue between human life and nature. Our vision aims at a process in which the activities of production and reproduction - our pursuit of eating, feeding, bearing, nurturing, enjoying, grieving, and reproducing ourselves and the next generation in social relations - are integrated in the totality of living.

　After stating that this process requires serious effort, especially on the part of men, it emphasizes that it is energized by the views raised by our fellow feminists. Alliance of hope for a global democracy, an alliance to renew our relations with each other, is eagerly awaited. Regarding the sustainability of the global environment, there is a wealth of experience and wisdom of indigenous peoples, women and farmers in Asia and the Pacific who have developed a nature-friendly attitude and outlook on life. It is hoped that such wisdom will be synthesized and fully developed with the positive aspects of our modern era heritage.

　In the last section, "Our own practical participation and coalition building" is recommended, and various necessary activities are mentioned.

**PP21 - A Personal View of Our Vision – in the midst of the Japanese realities**

　　Based on the aftermath of PP21 movement and the subsequent political and social movements in Japan, we need to examine where Japanese society is currently located. First, it faces a gradual decline in population and an increase in the number of elderly people. As stated in the Sagarmatha Declaration, we should not continue with the development of the existing economic system, but move towards the transformation and internal enrichment of society, life and culture. In this case, I think it is necessary to reaffirm the importance of ethical visions that question the purpose and value of life.

(1) Determine where we should stand in the sense of ethical basis.

First, in the relationship between nature and human beings, we must respect a dialogical relationship with nature and maintain the spiritual relationship with nature that the inhabitants of the Japanese archipelago have maintained since ancient times. This is especially important at a time when the global environment is in crisis.

(2) Adhere to the position of peace and respect for human rights, based on the non-war, non-violent stance acquired as the result of the Japanese empire’s defeat in the 15-year Asia-Pacific War.

(3) To memorize and protect the ethical and cultural heritage of modern times. The levelers’ declaration, the declarations for the abolition of nuclear weapons, the Peace Constitution, the Sanrizuka declarations, the Minamata Declaration, the Ratchadamnoen pledge, the Sagarmatha Declaration, declarations on abolition of nuclear power plants, and other declarations should not be taken as separate proclamations, but as vital faces of our way of life.

(4) And to recall and strengthen the thought traditions of popular resistance. In modern Japan, "traditional values" are often associated with the state-oriented ideology of conservative political parties, but it is necessary to reinterpret tradition and to understand it in a variety of selective ways. As for myself, I would like to follow and absorb the thought-tradition and lifestyle of Nakae Chomin, Uchimura Kanzo, Kawakami Hajime, and Tanaka Shozo.

(5) The vision of controlling life at one’s foot promoted by South Asian feminists is stated in the Minamata Declaration: "the practice of cultural alternatives that develop life-centered relationships and life-supporting system based on values such as caring, sharing, parenting, and caring in both public and private life." This vision should be the vision of men also.

This idea is different from the-catch-up-with-men feminism grown in the male-centered culture, politics, and society, a trend women in the U.S. and other developed countries have developed. In this vision, the idea is to make men critically reflect on male-dominated culture and to involve them in the process of living together. It incorporates the subsistence-centered feminist idea that Maria Mies of Germany and Vandana Shiva of India have advocated.

(6) Another vision is that of a lifestyle and culture that respects spirituality and the value of coexistence with nature, which has been lost in secularism. This vision is based on our learning from PP21 World Conference of Indigenous Peoples. With such a vision, we are aiming for a life and culture that is distinctly different from the traditional culture featured by development, profit, competition, and egocentrism. The road is a long, long way, and so it will not be accomplished in a short time. Therefore, it is important that we are prepared to move slowly along this long path toward the distant goal, learning from each other and encouraging each other.

(7) Our vision, energized and enriched by the views raised by our fellow feminists, will emancipate us from the trap of binary divides, body and mind, nature and human (man), public and private, traditional and modern, worthless unpaid work and valued paid work. Similarly, it will free us from the trap of gender dualism, which attributes women to nature and men to civilization.

(8) Our vision goes far beyond the current representative democracy. We strive for systems of governance and their attending structures which are democratic and participatory. Democracy must be implemented in day-to-day relations, between men and women in the home, between adults and children as well as at the municipal, national and global levels. The functioning of institutions and bureaucracies must also include mechanisms of participation. Municipal control of natural resources and a multipolar system of social organization are key elements of our vision. The concepts that reinforce human rights - indigenous rights, women's reproductive and social rights, and other collective rights - represent the best legacy of popular struggle and will be further promoted and strengthened in the process of realizing this democracy.

(9) Our vision is for a global democracy - a transborder participatory democracy as emphasized in the PP21 Minamata Declaration. This democracy opposes itself to global power centers with the objective of eventually dismantling them and overcoming the North-South divide of the world people, which is the overriding challenge of contemporary human society.

　We work to create a new relationship between each other, between men and women, between producers and consumers, between urban and rural, between North and South, between human existence and nature. The process of democratization at all these levels will be practised through an alliance of the people of the world – an alliance of hope. It will be shaped by vibrant and interactive activities in the spirit of peace, tolerance, ecological care, and peaceful coexistence. People's governance would be grounded in this kind of alliance.

　Sustainability, in our vision, means that the human economic and social systems of the planet will be re-organized on the principle that human activity is integrated with nature through eco-cycles, and not based on the unilateral exploitation of nature. This calls for a fundamental transformation of culture and values. The Asia-Pacific region is rich in the experience and wisdom of indigenous peoples, women, and farmers who have developed attitudes and perspectives on life that are friendly to nature. The wisdom of the peoples points to a completely different paradigm and norm for human society. Of course, we are not suggesting that we should go back to the pre-modern era, but that such wisdom should be synthesized and fully developed with the positive aspects of the heritage of modernity. We refuse to be trapped in the ethnical and religious self-absolutism that cries out for the exclusion of the other. We will increase our capacity to begin to create an alternative system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services under popular control. We will support the gradual creation of an economic, social and cultural system based on the people. (Sagarmatha declaration)

(10) When we ask what the PP21 movement has left in Japan and what it is doing in each region, we can mention the Sapporo Freedom School "Yu" in Hokkaido. For the past thirty years, "Yu" has been maintained and developed as a place for the people to learn independently, and it is our pride and stronghold. It is a unique place to learn about Ainu culture and history, and it also plays a role in encouraging the Ainu national movement. It is also a starting point for the emergence and development of civil movements that fight against human rights and discrimination.

　There is one more school that is not directly connected to PP21, but has been operating since the same time. This school has been a catalyst for the establishment of public night junior high schools. There are also freedom schools in Tokyo and Fukuoka, and a new one has recently been established in Hachioji. There are many more of this type of independent study organization in other parts of the world, with different names and origins. I am reminded of the fact that in the Edo period (1603-1867), each feuddal clan had its own school, which produced people who were capable of change.

　PP21 has been working continuously in the field of farmer exchange in Asia. In the future, it will be necessary to strengthen the exchange of people in Asia. The exchange of social activists and intellectuals should also be maintained and developed.

(The original Hanasaki text is written in Japanese. Some of the quotations from PP21 declarations are translated from Japanese texts and may not be identical with the original English wordings)