The Disconnected Society
無縁社会 Mu-en Shakai

Denial of Suffering
Economism
Materialism
Consumerism

Political Apathy
Moral Apathy

Cultural Clash
Western Individualism vs. Japanese Groupism

Secularism
No role for religion
No Meaning of Life/Death

Lack of Recognition of War Atrocities & Responsibility
Lingering Effects of War Culture
Senpai/Kohai & Ijime
In the hills of Fukushima, still 30 times the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) recommended maximum.
Modern Development Policy in Japan

- The Northeast part of Japan is one of the poorest parts of the country. It provides the role of supplier of agricultural and marine products as well as labor force for Japan’s metropolitan, industrial center of Tokyo. It also provides the role of energy supplier to the latter.

- In order that this top-down centralized strategy of development be accepted by rural areas, two policies were adopted: 1) an economic policy of huge “subsidies” or aid were injected in the latter, in particular, in areas that accepted nuclear plants; 2) a cultural policy of huge propaganda advocating that “nuclear plants are always safe, bringing prosperity and a bright future to a region”.
In 2009, the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) won national elections overthrowing the coalition of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP)-Komeito (based in the Soka Gakkai Buddhist sect) on the platform of: “Emphasis on education rather than cement works”; “Promotion of the New Public Commons (NPC)”; and “Regional Sovereignty.”

In August 2011, Fukushima Prefecture adopted the “Fukushima Vision on Reconstruction”, and in November, the “Fukushima Action Plan” accompanied the former. The documents draw a vision of reconstruction for the sustainable development of the prefecture based on recyclable natural energy.
At the end of 2011, the character kizuna 絆, meaning “ties” or “relations”, was chosen to represent the year 2011. After the horror of the Tohoku Triple Disaster, Kizuna was chosen in contrast to the progressing isolation of individual life in this era of economic globalization.

Buddhist temples became very active in emergency aid and rescue during the Triple Disaster.
Gandhi advocated two wheels for India’s independence: autonomy (*swaraj*) and self-sufficiency (*swadesi*).

This development notion corresponds also to the spirit of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement for village reconstruction led by A.T. Ariyaratne in Sri Lanka. *Sarvodaya*—which means everyone stands by him/herself and awakens to the truth—is based on a Buddhist philosophy. It rejects dependency on greed and encourages a life of middle way (moderation) with self-esteem, compassion, and wisdom.

Ven. P.A. Payutto, a leading scholar monk in Thailand, has interpreted the Thai word for development *pattana*—a transitive verb meaning “to develop from above”—as based on the human tendency toward *tanha* (grasping).
Bhavana—an intransitive verb meaning “to open up oneself to universal truth or enlightenment”—is based on chanda, which means right effort to abandon grasping.

Bhavana is based on autonomy and self-sufficiency, which is the Middle Way of life and knowing how to be fulfilled. This idea corresponds to E.F. Schumacher’s advocacy for “small is beautiful” and “Buddhist economics.”

Prof. Nishikawa has translated bhavana into Japanese as かいほつ・開発 in contrast to the typical reading for economic development かいほつ. 発・ほつ is a Buddhist term for opening the mind of enlightenment.

Now, after the 3/11 disasters, the Buddhist notion of development can provide a good and appropriate reference for the Japanese who are in search of the way of post-economic growth.