

## **Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra 17** **One's Life Is Itself the Treasure Tower**

*This is the seventeenth installment in a series of discussions on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and Vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the June 1996 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.*

*In this installment, they discuss the appearance of the Treasure Tower in the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (eleventh) chapter, the Ceremony in the Air and its relation to the Gohonzon, the two principles of reality and wisdom, the significance of the seven treasures that adorn the Treasure Tower, and Buddhism's concordance with the spirit of democracy.*

**Saito:** Thank you, President Ikeda, for inviting us to sit in on your discussion the other day (April 24, 1996, Tokyo) with Dr. David W. Chappell.<sup>1</sup>

Just as in your meeting with Dr. Margarita I. Vorobyova-Desyatovskaya (of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences), the discussion brimmed with rich jewels of insight for studying the wisdom of the Lotus Sutra.

**Suda:** Moreover, because the dialogue was filled with such brilliant humor, the three-and-a-half hours seemed to pass in an instant. Though I imagine that keeping up a discussion for such a long time must have been rather exhausting for you both.

**Endo:** From the moment you welcomed Dr. Chappell at the Seikyo Shimbun building, I felt an indescribable warmth between the two of you.

A picture accompanying the article in the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper shows you relieving Dr. Chappell of the bag he was carrying. That bag had in fact contained a photo album about Hawaii and other books that Dr. Chappell had brought as gifts for you. When he later presented them to you, he remarked, "I'm sorry they're so heavy." Thanking him, you replied: "I know. I was carrying them around earlier."

**Ikeda:** You've quite a memory for detail. But it seems to me we must have talked about other things that were more important.

For instance, Dr. Chappell suggested that dialogue based on the spirit of the Lotus Sutra—on a sense of respect and appreciation for the infinite worth of each person's life—would hold the key to the future of humankind. Such respect for life is in fact the message of the Lotus Sutra and of "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower" chapter. The rich soil of such mutual respect can sustain fruitful dialogue and friendship, and the flourishing of peace. He also expressed the belief that military force is no match for the strength of human friendship.

**Saito:** As you suggest, the Lotus Sutra—Buddhism—is certainly not remote or far removed from our daily lives. For it to have any real meaning, it has to become manifest in our immediate actions.

**Endo:** The American mythologist Joseph Campbell writes, "I think of compassion as the fundamental religious experience and, unless that is there, you have nothing."<sup>2</sup>

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)  
Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20  
Author:  
Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

**Suda:** Now you, President Ikeda, are always showing us this through your actions. Still, I find myself hard pressed to do more than just marvel at your example.

**Ikeda:** Buddhism lies close at hand, in the here and now. It exists in daily life, in human existence, in society. To present Buddhism as belonging to some realm removed from life and reality is a deception.

**Saito:** Priests of later times often shrouded Buddhism in mystical terms in order to appropriate authority for themselves. So in the minds of many, Buddhism has an aura of the esoteric hanging over it.

**Endo:** They've taken what the Buddha went to great lengths to explain as clearly and simply as possible, and added layers of obfuscation and obscurity.

**Ikeda:** Since ancient times, a great many interpretations have been given to the chapter we are to begin studying this time, "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower." In some cases, such interpretations meant a great deal to the people to whom they were articulated. However, Nichiren Daishonin points to its ultimate significance when he plainly says that the teaching of the Treasure Tower "refers to our individual bodies" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 740). In the same vein, comparing the appearance of the Treasure Tower to one's emergence in birth, he says, "The Treasure Purity world is the mother's womb" (GZ, 740); and, "the process of emerging from this womb is called 'coming forth and appearing'" (GZ, 797).

Our lives are dignified Treasure Towers. Yet it is a truth that eludes us. To realize that such a truth is indeed our lives is, in fact, "seeing the Treasure Tower." The ceremony that takes place in the "Treasure Tower" chapter is a mirror that reveals the true entity of our lives. The Gohonzon that Nichiren Daishonin established, based on the ceremony in the "Treasure Tower" chapter, is the "clear mirror" in which we can perceive our true selves.

Buddhism is concerned with the reality of our lives. This should be our basic stance as we try to come to terms with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

### **The Appearance of the Treasure Tower**

At that time in the Buddha's presence, there was a tower adorned with the seven treasures, five hundred *yojanas* in height and two hundred and fifty *yojanas* in width and depth, that rose up out of the earth and stood suspended in the air. Various kinds of precious objects adorned it. It had five thousand railings, a thousand, ten thousand rooms, and numberless streamers and banners decorated it. Festoons of jewels hung down and ten thousand million jeweled bells were suspended from it. All four sides emitted a fragrance of tamalapatra and sandalwood that pervaded the whole world. Its banners and canopies were made of the seven treasures, namely, gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, pearl, and carnelian, and it was so high it reached to the heavenly palaces of the Four Heavenly Kings. (*The Lotus Sutra*, ch. 11, pp. 170–71)

**Endo:** This chapter opens with the appearance of the Treasure Tower, an enormous tower that suddenly emerges from the earth and comes to a rest suspended in mid-air.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

Then, quite without warning a great voice is heard issuing from within the tower:

“Excellent, excellent! Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, that you can take ... the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law, and preach it for the sake of the great assembly! It is as you say, as you say. Shakyamuni, World-Honored One, all that you have expounded is the truth!” (LS11, 171)

Hearing such words of praise left those in the assembly with great doubt. Someone asks: “World-Honored One, for what reason has this Treasure Tower risen up out of the earth? And why does this voice issue from its midst?” (LS11, 171)

Shakyamuni explains that in the Treasure Tower there is a Buddha named Many Treasures (Jp. Taho), and that this Buddha once made the following great vow:

“If, after I have become a Buddha and entered extinction, in the lands in the ten directions there is any place where the Lotus Sutra is preached, then my funerary tower . . . will come forth and appear in that spot to testify to the sutra and praise its excellence.” (LS11, 171)

**Suda:** The bodhisattva questioning Shakyamuni persists: “World-Honored One, we wish to see the body of this Buddha” (LS11, 172).

**Endo:** But there is a condition. In order for Many Treasures Buddha to show himself, Shakyamuni must first gather together all of the Buddhas who, as his emanations, are expounding the Law in the ten directions of the universe. To cause these Buddhas to gather, Shakyamuni purifies the *saha* world three times, enlarges it by the addition of many other worlds, and combines all of these worlds into one magnificent Buddha land. This is what is known as the “three transformations of the land.”

When Shakyamuni opens the Treasure Tower after all the Buddhas have gathered, Many Treasures Buddha is seen solemnly seated within.

**Suda:** Reading the description in the sutra, you can almost hear the people catch their breath at the incredible sight before them.

**Endo:** Many Treasures Buddha then reiterates his praise for Shakyamuni’s preaching of the Lotus Sutra, saying, “Excellent, Excellent, Shakyamuni Buddha!” (LS11, 175). He then moves over and invites Shakyamuni to join him on his seat.

**Suda:** Shakyamuni and Many Treasures Buddha thus seated together within the Treasure Tower is the origin of the term *the two Buddhas seated side by side*.

**Endo:** Now the people are gazing up at the Buddhas in the tower high above them. It was at this point that Shakyamuni lifted the entire assembly of beings into the air. That is the beginning of the Ceremony in the Air.

Shakyamuni then calls to them: “Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this *saha* world? Now is the time to do so, for before long the Thus Come One will enter nirvana. The Buddha wishes to entrust this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law to someone so that it may be preserved” (LS11, 176). Next he explains that the tower of Many Treasures Buddha has appeared and the Buddhas from

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

the ten directions have gathered in this place, at this time, in order “to make certain the Law will long endure” (LS11, 177).

**Suda:** In other words, this is the vow they make to ensure that the Law will never perish.

**Endo:** Shakyamuni then explains (through describing the “six difficult and nine easy acts” [see box p. 24]) just how difficult it will be to embrace and spread the Lotus Sutra in the world after his passing, compared to the difficulty of embracing and spreading other sutras. He urges those in the assembly to arouse a strong desire and vow to accomplish this very difficult task, saying that those who do will attain the unsurpassed Way of the Buddha. That’s the basic outline of the “Treasure Tower” chapter.

**Saito:** I guess the high point would be the appearance of the magnificent and grand Treasure Tower, beautifully adorned with the seven treasures, which include gold, silver, lapis lazuli and agate.

**Ikeda:** The appearance of the great tower dramatically marks the beginning of the Ceremony in the Air. The Daishonin quite appropriately says that what then takes place is “no ordinary ceremony” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 57).

**Endo:** It certainly was by no means ordinary. The appearance of the Treasure Tower, the testimony of Many Treasures Buddha, the three transformations of the land, the gathering of Shakyamuni’s emanations from throughout the universe, the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures sitting side by side—here we have a succession of extraordinary and entirely unprecedented events.

**Suda:** The extraordinary size of the Treasure Tower is itself remarkable. Measuring five hundred *yojanas* in height and two hundred-fifty *yojanas* in width and depth, it is absolutely enormous.

A *yojana* was a unit of measure used in ancient India. It indicated the distance that the royal army could travel in a day. According to one explanation, it corresponds to forty Chinese *ri*.<sup>3</sup> There are a number of other definitions, but even calculated conservatively five hundred *yojanas* would be equal to one-third the diameter of the earth. It was a distance so great as to have been all but incomprehensible to the people of the day.

**Ikeda:** They’re not the only ones who would have difficulty imagining something that enormous. We cannot fathom a tower of such dimensions without thinking in astronomical terms. The fact that it is adorned with seven kinds of treasures is also extraordinary.

**Endo:** Several points are hard to visualize. For example, the sutra says that Many Treasures Buddha is within the Treasure Tower, but where would he have been within such an enormous edifice? Shakyamuni opens the Treasure Tower with his right hand and sits down alongside Many Treasures, but was the door large or small? And where in the body of the Treasure Tower is the door located?

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

**Ikeda:** That's why there is nothing surprising about Abutsu-bo<sup>4</sup> asking Nichiren Daishonin to explain the meaning of the Treasure Tower

**Saito:** The shape of the Treasure Tower isn't clearly explained either. We are told that it is "high," but is it rectangular? Is it cylindrical? Is it shaped like a cone or a pyramid? Is it dome shaped? None of this is clear.

**Ikeda:** Maybe the people of India at the time had a certain image of its shape. But it seems to me that the question of what a tower symbolized to them is more important than what its precise shape was.

**Suda:** Well, *tower* (Jp. *to*) is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit term *stupa*. Indian stupas are said to have had extraordinarily rich symbolism. Incidentally, the Japanese words *sotoba* and *toba* are transliterations of *stupa*.

The term *stupa* appears in ancient Vedic (i.e., Hindu) texts. Its meanings include "axis connecting heaven and earth" and "top of the fulcrum." Certain Vedic texts say that the entire universe is like a tree; the crown, or top-most portion, of this tree is called the *stupa*. It seems this portion was also taken to symbolize the entire universe.

**Ikeda:** Given that cultural background, it may be that the sutra's description of the Treasure Tower conjured up an image of some cosmic entity in the minds of the ancient Indians.

**Endo:** It's interesting that both *toba* and the Treasure Tower are stupas. To make money, corrupt priests will make a fuss urging people to make *toba* offerings [i.e., pay a fee to have a memorial tablet inscribed for a deceased person]. But they never bother trying to erect the Treasure Tower in their own lives.

**Suda:** Originally, stupas were often in the shape of a dome, and these were called "eggs" (Skt. *anda*). Not only did they resemble eggs in their shape, but there was a connection with a golden egg that is mentioned in a Vedic creation myth. The egg, it seems, symbolized the universal creative power or principle.

**Endo:** In terms of ancient Indian cosmology, there also appears to be a connection with Mount Sumeru, which was supposed to stand at the center of the world. The people of India seem to have regarded the lofty peaks of the Himalayas and other mountains as a kind of ideal land. These mountains seem to have held great meaning for them, perhaps because they were the source of water something very important for a land as arid as India.

Stupas often contained symbols of various kinds representing Mount Sumeru as an ideal land. Also in Buddhist texts, there are many statements suggesting that stupas were identified with Mount Sumeru.

**Ikeda:** The Himalayas, which I saw when I visited Nepal, are certainly a majestic sight. They struck me as having the imposing dignity of a Treasure Tower connecting heaven and earth.

It seems to me that a common thread in everything that has been said so far is that stupas symbolize the center of the world and of the universe. I think that the Treasure

Tower in the Lotus Sutra, which is astronomically large, also carries this significance.

In the “Treasure Tower” chapter, Shakyamuni purifies the world three times to cause the Buddhas throughout the universe who are his emanations to gather together, and he unifies a vast number of lands—the figure given is four hundred ten thousand million *nayutas*<sup>5</sup> of lands—into one Buddha land.

Countless Buddhas, emitting enough brilliance to illuminate the darkness of night, assemble. The lapis lazuli ground is covered with countless jewels and flowers. Jeweled trees grow lush. It is a scene of dizzying golden brilliance. And at the center of everything stands the Treasure Tower.

The Treasure Tower stands at the center of the universe. In brilliance it is like a gathering of all the jewels in the universe. Its magnificence metaphorically indicates that the life of each person is a cluster of jewels. Its immense size illustrates the truth that each person’s life is as vast as the universe.

**Saito:** Because the Treasure Tower floats in the air, it would indeed have the appearance of an axis connecting heaven and earth.

**Ikeda:** Nichiren Daishonin says, “[In terms of Myoho-renge-kyo] the air represents *renge*, earth represents *kyo*, and heaven represents *myoho*” (GZ, 742).

In other words, the Treasure Tower floating in mid-air between heaven and earth indicates that heaven, air and earth are in their entirety Myoho-renge-kyo.

The universe in its entirety, as signified by heaven and earth, is Myoho-renge-kyo. Our lives are Myoho-renge-kyo. And the Treasure Tower is also Myoho-renge-kyo. This points to the grand truth that our lives and the universe are one.

In terms of the doctrine of the three truths [see box p. 27], the identification of the universe with the entity of the Mystic Law is the truth of nonsubstantiality. And the identification of one’s body with the Mystic Law is the truth of temporary existence.

**Saito:** Each living entity is the temporary unification of the five components (i.e., form, perception, conception, volition and consciousness). This is what the truth of temporary existence means.

The “Ongi Kuden” (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) says regarding the chapter’s title, “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower”:

“Treasure” stands for the five components of life. “Tower” stands for their harmonious functioning. The five components functioning in harmony is designated the Treasure Tower. The harmonious functioning of the five components emerges, or is seen, in the five characters myoho-renge-kyo. This is the meaning of to “emerge” or “be seen.” (GZ, 739)

In other words, when we perceive that our lives are Myoho-renge-kyo, we are seeing the Treasure Tower. This is the truth of temporary existence.

**Ikeda:** You’ve explained the truth of nonsubstantiality and the truth of temporary existence. The Treasure Tower’s emergence, then, must correspond to Myoho-renge-kyo, which is the truth of the Middle Way.

In the mirror of the Treasure Tower (i.e., the Gohonzon) we see the Treasure Tower within ourselves. We perceive that we ourselves are the Treasure Tower.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

**Saito:** The Treasure Tower, in other words, is none other than the lives of people who believe in the Mystic Law and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. This is what Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly emphasizes.

**Endo:** In one place, for example, the Daishonin says, “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter exists within the body of Lady Nichimyo” (MW-5, 273–74). He also says:

In the Latter Day of the Law, there is no Treasure Tower other than the figures of the men and women who embrace the Lotus Sutra. It follows, therefore, that those who chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, irrespective of social status, are themselves the Treasure Tower and likewise they themselves are Taho Buddha. ... Now the entire body of Abutsu Shonin is composed of the five universal elements of earth, water, fire, wind and *ku*. These five elements are also the five characters of the daimoku. Therefore, Abutsu-bo is the Treasure Tower itself, and the Treasure Tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful. (MW-1, 30)

**Ikeda:** Abutsu-bo wanted to learn the significance of the Treasure Tower. The Daishonin explained to him quite simply: The Treasure Tower is none other than you yourself. And, adding, “no other knowledge is purposeful,” he indicates that this is the main point to grasp. In other words, there is nothing to be gained from trying to understand other theories or doctrines.

Once we understand that we who worship the Gohonzon are ourselves the tower of many treasures, what need do we have of further doctrinal understanding? We are studying the Lotus Sutra in this manner to confirm our understanding of its essential meaning and to deepen our faith, and be able to talk about the Lotus Sutra with others. Knowledge that strays from this fundamental objective is of no value for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood.

Based on that, why don't we draw out the main points about the Treasure Tower as it is described in the Lotus Sutra?

### The Treasure Tower Is None Other Than Myoho-renge-kyo

**Saito:** The “Treasure Tower” chapter explains the origins of the Treasure Tower. Based on both the Sanskrit text and Kumarajiva's Chinese translation, we know the following:

(1) In the past, Many Treasures Buddha, living in a world called Treasure Purity in the eastern part of the universe, heard the doctrine of Myoho-renge (termed “White Lotus” in the Sanskrit text) and attained Buddhahood. (2) When he was about to enter extinction, Many Treasures entrusted people with the task of building an immense Treasure Tower for the enshrinement of the “body of the Thus Come One.” (3) Because of the strength of his vow (referred to earlier), this Treasure Tower appears wherever the doctrine of Myoho-renge is being taught, and will rest in the air while the doctrine of Myoho-renge is being expounded. (4) The reason for the Treasure Tower's appearance is to hear the doctrine of Myoho-renge being expounded, and to testify to its truth. (5) In order for the Treasure Tower to be opened and the “body of the Thus Come One” to be revealed, the Buddha, expounding the doctrine of Myoho-renge, must gather together all of his emanations from the worlds in the ten directions.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

What stands out in these descriptions is the frequent reference to the “doctrine of Myoho-rence.” In Kumarajiva’s Chinese translation, this is rendered variously as “the Lotus Sutra” or “this sutra,” though it is not repeated as many times, making it less conspicuous. But in the Sanskrit text, the expression *doctrine of the White Lotus* is stressed repeatedly. Also, in the Lotus Sutra taken as a whole, this term appears most frequently in the “Treasure Tower” chapter.

**Ikeda:** The Treasure Tower bears a close relationship to the five characters of Myoho-rence-kyo. Or, more precisely, as the Daishonin said, the Treasure Tower is itself Myoho-rence-kyo.

**Saito:** It is particularly important to note that the Treasure Tower is meant to appear wherever the “doctrine of Myoho-rence” is being expounded. This is highly suggestive in light of the relationship between the Treasure Tower and Myoho-rence-kyo.

Plants, for instance, bloom in response to the external causes or stimuli of sunlight and water. Similarly, the Treasure Tower appears in response to the Lotus Sutra being expounded.

Perhaps the Treasure Tower in its entirety is the manifestation of the Law of Myoho-rence-kyo, which is its essence.

**Suda:** In the sutra, the Treasure Tower certainly does appear in response to the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, just as a lotus flower blossoms when struck by the rays of the sun. I can imagine that’s how it must have seemed to those gathered in the assembly.

**Ikeda:** The Treasure Tower of Myoho-rence-kyo does indeed appear in response to the preaching of Myoho-rence-kyo. When we chant the Mystic Law and practice for our own happiness as well as that of others, our lives become the Treasure Tower. Put another way, the Treasure Tower emerges in our lives. The Law that we chant is Myoho-rence-kyo. And Myoho-rence-kyo is also the entity of our lives.

Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, remarked:

I once asked a scholar who had become a priest: “The Lotus Sutra says that the Treasure Tower appears where the Lotus Sutra is being expounded. But Nichiren Daishonin expounded the Lotus Sutra and no Treasure Tower appeared. Why is this?” The man looked very perplexed.

When Abutsu-bo asked the Daishonin about the Treasure Tower, the Daishonin told him, “Abutsu-bo is the Treasure Tower itself, and the Treasure Tower is Abutsu-bo himself.” Your body is itself the Treasure Tower. Within that Treasure Tower, within your own life, are seated the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures. And they have called forth Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Jp. Jogyo).<sup>6</sup>

**Suda:** This is a real pitfall for scholars who tend to understand Buddhism strictly in terms of theory. They think of the Treasure Tower as existing some place far away.

**Ikeda:** President Toda also said:

The mystic life of the world of Buddhahood is an intrinsic part of our own lives. The power and condition of this life of Buddhahood exceeds the reach of one’s

imagination and defies description in words. But we can concretely manifest it in the entity of our own lives. The ceremony in the “Treasure Tower” chapter explains that we can in fact manifest in our lives the inherent world of Buddhahood. In the ceremony of the “Treasure Tower” chapter, Shakyamuni reveals the principles of the mutual possession of the ten worlds and *ichinen sanzen* (three thousand realms in a single moment of life) within his own life.<sup>7</sup>

The ceremony in the “Treasure Tower” chapter explains in specific terms the sanctity of the world of Buddhahood, which all beings inherently possess. Why, then, does Myoho-enge-kyo need to be expressed in concrete form (as the Treasure Tower)? Because this is the teaching “for the age after the Buddha’s passing”; it’s to “ensure that the Law will long endure.”

Up to this point, it has been explained that those who hear the Lotus Sutra and believe in and understand it, can definitely attain Buddhahood. I think the appearance of the Treasure Tower is actual proof of the Lotus Sutra’s power.

From the “Treasure Tower” chapter on, Shakyamuni teaches in terms of actual life in this world what he had only explained theoretically in the preceding chapters. This, in other words, is the essential teaching. The preparatory section<sup>8</sup> of the essential teaching (or latter half of the Lotus Sutra) begins with the “Treasure Tower” chapter.

The testimony of Many Treasures Buddha goes beyond his utterances of “Excellent, Excellent!” made from within the Treasure Tower attesting to the veracity of the Lotus Sutra. Rather, the appearance of Many Treasures Buddha and of the Treasure Tower, each in their own way, serves as actual proof of the truth of Myoho-enge-kyo.

The title of the chapter, “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower,” means perceiving Myoho-enge-kyo through the appearance of the Treasure Tower. Its appearance could be thought of as the “direct experience” of Myoho-enge-kyo. In other words, the Treasure Tower teaches that our lives are Myoho-enge-kyo. In that sense, the Daishonin calls the “Treasure Tower” chapter a “bright mirror.”

**Endo:** He says: “Now when Nichiren and his followers chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, they see and understand all phenomena as though these were reflected in a bright mirror. This bright mirror is the Lotus Sutra; and, specifically, it is the ‘Treasure Tower’ chapter” (GZ, 763). He also says, “The five limbs, the five elements that make up the bodies of living beings such as we, are reflections of Myoho-enge-kyo, and therefore we should learn to use this ‘Treasure Tower’ chapter as our mirror” (GZ, 724).

**Ikeda:** The “tower adorned with the seven treasures” is the grand and dignified original form of our lives. The Treasure Tower expounded in the Lotus Sutra is indeed an accurate response to Socrates’ philosophical dictum “Know thyself.”

The Treasure Tower that those in the assembly see when lifted up in the air must be the entity of their own lives. They no doubt saw an unshakable self, solemn and towering. That’s why it’s called a “bright mirror.”

Meaning is also connected to the fact that the Treasure Tower emerges from within the earth. Here the earth symbolizes the reality of the nine worlds, of people’s lives. The Treasure Tower is more than a mere expression of the life of the world of Buddhahood; its emergence from within the earth indicates that people can choose to construct the Treasure Tower within their own lives. The nine worlds themselves contain the world of Buddhahood. That’s why the Treasure Tower emerges from the earth.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

## The Fusion of Reality and Wisdom

**Saito:** Nichiren Daishonin says that the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures indicate the two principles of reality and wisdom, and that the two Buddhas seated side by side therefore signifies the fusion of reality and wisdom. Many Treasures represents reality, and Shakyamuni, the wisdom to correctly perceive it. How should we understand this?

**Ikeda:** President Toda said that “reality” means the objective world, and “wisdom” the subjective world. He was not using these terms in a Western, dualistic sense. Rather, his comment was premised on the assumption of an essential unity of the subjective and objective realms.

**Suda:** Nichiren Daishonin says, “Reality means the entity of all phenomena in the universe, and wisdom means the perfect manifestation of this entity in the individual’s life” (MW-1, 163).

**Ikeda:** That’s right. In fact, President Toda often said, “If being a grocer is your ‘reality,’ then to really work hard to make your business prosper is manifesting the ‘fusion of reality and wisdom.’”

Of course whatever our occupation—whether fishmonger or company employee—we each have a mission to fulfill and a path in life. That mission or path is the person’s “reality.” It is the light of “wisdom” that causes this reality to shine. Effecting the perfect fusion of reality and wisdom in our own lives means becoming indispensable wherever we are.

This is not limited to human beings. Cherry trees sense the changing of the seasons, and when spring comes they all at once burst into bloom. Which also illustrates the fusion of reality and wisdom. It could be said that the wisdom of cherry trees lies in their innately sensing the arrival of spring.

**Suda:** It would indeed be quite astonishing if they were to bloom in summer.

**Ikeda:** In essence, everyone is a Buddha. That is our “reality.” It is the light of wisdom that causes the world of Buddhahood in our lives to shine. Our Buddhahood starts shining when we have the wisdom to realize we are Buddhas. This is the fusion of reality and wisdom.

From our standpoint, according to the Buddhist principle of “substituting faith for wisdom,” the “wisdom,” component in the fusion of reality and wisdom, means “faith.” That we possess the world of Buddhahood is the objective truth, the “reality,” of our lives. Faith causes this reality to shine in actuality.

Shakyamuni and Many Treasures represent ordinary people who cause the original world of Buddhahood in their lives—usually covered over by the soot of earthly desires—to shine. The Thus Come One is an ordinary person, a human being. Nichiren Daishonin says, “Shakyamuni, Taho [Many Treasures], and all the other Buddhas in the ten directions represent the world of Buddhahood within ourselves” (MW-1, 64).

Again, Many Treasures corresponds to “reality” because he always appears where the Lotus Sutra is being expounded. In other words, he represents eternal truth. And

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

Shakyamuni causes this eternal truth to manifest “here and now.”

Put another way, something eternal manifests in the here and now as a result of the two Buddhas sitting side by side, that is, through the fusion of reality and wisdom. In fact, it is only in the here and now that something eternal can appear. Anything else is just an illusion.

Shakyamuni represents “wisdom,” or the subjective entity. The Mystic Law manifests in our lives only when we wage a great struggle on our own initiative. We experience the fusion of reality and wisdom when we work to carry out our mission burning with the conviction, “I am a Bodhisattva of the Earth! I am a Buddha!”

**Saito:** And Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the expression of this fusion of reality and wisdom.

**Ikeda:** That’s right. “Reality” means the reality of the Mystic Law, and “wisdom,” the wisdom of the Mystic Law. This is what the Daishonin teaches when he says, “What then are these two elements of reality and wisdom? They are simply Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 164).

Reality and wisdom are not separate; they are a single entity. Reality gives rise to wisdom, and wisdom illuminates reality. That is their relation.

Thinking about this in terms of the sun may make it easier to grasp. The substance of the sun is its “reality.” Just as the sun emits light, and thereby illuminates and causes itself to appear, reality produces wisdom.

**Suda:** The two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures are functions of the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Shakyamuni and Many Treasures express the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo embodying the oneness of reality and wisdom.

**Ikeda:** Nichiren Daishonin says, “The two Buddhas, Shakyamuni and Taho, are merely functions of the true Buddha, while Myoho-renge-kyo actually is the true Buddha” (MW-1, 90).

### The Gohonzon and the Ceremony in the Air

**Endo:** In terms of the appearance of the Gohonzon inscribed by Nichiren Daishonin, this passage clarifies why the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo appears prominently down the center and Shakyamuni and Many Treasures are positioned on either side.

**Saito:** The two Buddhas seated side by side also express the principle of the true entity of all phenomena; Many Treasures represents all phenomena, and Shakyamuni the true entity. They also express the oneness of life and death; Many Treasures represents death, and Shakyamuni life.

**Suda:** The Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon based on the ceremony that takes place in the “Treasure Tower” chapter, incorporating such elements as the two Buddhas seated side by side [see box p. 33].

The Daishonin says that only he is “qualified to inscribe the object of worship which physically manifests the ceremony of the two Buddhas seated together in the Treasure Tower” (MW-1, 90).

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

He also declares: "This mandala is in no way Nichiren's invention. It is the object of worship which perfectly depicts Lord Shakyamuni in the Treasure Tower and all the other Buddhas who were present, as accurately as the print matches the woodblock" (MW-1, 212).

**Ikeda:** In explaining the significance of the "Treasure Tower" chapter to Abutsu-bo, the Daishonin prefaced his remarks by saying that this matter "is of great importance" (MW-1, 29). That is because the Ceremony in the Air is a fundamental issue relating to the Gohonzon.

**Saito:** In a letter to Shijo Kingo, as well, he says [regarding the significance of Shakyamuni and Many Treasures in the Treasure Tower as representing reality and wisdom], "These teachings are of prime importance" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 200).

**Ikeda:** The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China explains that the appearance of the Treasure Tower has two distinct functions: one is to lend credence to the preceding chapters and the other is to pave the way for the revelation to come.

**Suda:** That's mentioned in the Hokke Mongu.<sup>9</sup> That the Treasure Tower "lends credence" to the preceding chapters means that it certifies the truth of Shakyamuni's preaching in the earlier chapters. Thus the great voice of Many Treasures Buddha issues from within the Treasure Tower asserting that Shakyamuni's words are true.

**Ikeda:** By his voice and his appearance, Many Treasures testifies to the truth of the Mystic Law. This is the function of Many Treasures Buddha. In the Soka Gakkai today, this is in a sense the function of the members of the Taho-kai (Many Treasures group).

**Endo:** I now see the significance of your forming the Many Treasures group as a way of honoring longtime members who have such rich experiences in life and in faith.

**Ikeda:** These are people who have dedicated their lives to the noble mission of proving the truth of the Mystic Law. Each one of them is literally a treasure of the Soka Gakkai, of kosen-rufu, and of society.

I hope all members will live long lives. The longer we live, the greater the victory of kosen-rufu. Also, I hope members who are advanced in years, as "Many Treasures Buddhas of kosen-rufu," will always be ready to warmly praise their juniors with a sense of "Excellent, excellent!"

**Endo:** By lending credence to the preceding chapters, the "Treasure Tower" also "paves the way for the revelation to come"; that is, it sets the stage for the teaching that follows. Shakyamuni's gathering together of the Buddha's of the ten directions becomes the starting point for his expounding the "Life Span of the Thus Come One" (sixteenth) chapter. That's because the fact that he has so many emanations suggests that Shakyamuni has been instructing others as a Buddha for an extremely long time.

**Ikeda:** From a literal standpoint, "preceding chapters" (in "lend credence to the preceding chapters") refers to the teaching in the first half of the Lotus Sutra (or theoretical teaching). And "the revelation to come" means the teaching in the Lotus

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

Sutra's second half (or essential teaching). The emergence of the Treasure Tower is the starting point for the preaching of the essential teaching that follows.

In terms of the Daishonin's Buddhism, however, the Treasure Tower's appearance paves the way for Nichiren Daishonin's essential teaching. The preaching in the "Treasure Tower" chapter becomes the starting point for the Daishonin's establishment of the Gohonzon. From this standpoint, "the revelation to come" means the Daishonin's revelation of the object of worship for the Latter Day of the Law. That's why Nichiren Daishonin calls the object of worship he has inscribed the Treasure Tower.

The Gohonzon is the Daishonin's very life, the life of the Buddha inherently endowed with three enlightened properties. It is the Treasure Tower of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

As was mentioned before, the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures indeed represent the two principles of reality and wisdom. In terms of the Buddha's three enlightened properties,

Many Treasures Buddha, representing reality, signifies the property of the Law. Shakyamuni, representing wisdom, signifies the property of wisdom. And the Buddhas of the ten directions, representing the compassion that arises through the fusion of reality and wisdom, signify the property of action. The appearance of these three Buddhas—Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions—expresses the state of life inherently endowed with the three enlightened properties that the Daishonin himself attained.

Let us discuss the three enlightened properties in detail on another occasion. The important point here is that the Daishonin opened a path whereby all people of the Latter Day can themselves actualize these three enlightened properties. And that is the path of believing in and upholding the Gohonzon.

**Saito:** This is what is meant by "The inherently endowed three properties ... are attained through a single word. And that word is 'faith'" (GZ, 753).

**Ikeda:** Nichiren Daishonin says that those who believe in the Lotus Sutra "can enter the Treasure Tower of the Gohonzon" (MW-1, 214), indicating that they can construct a Treasure Tower within their own lives.

Because of the principle of the oneness of life and its environment, when we open up the Treasure Tower in our lives, the world in which we live also becomes the Treasure Tower; and so we "enter the Treasure Tower." Then, while dwelling in the world of the original Buddha, we can freely take action. Our bodies, which amount to barely a speck in the larger scheme of things, are adorned with the seven treasures, and our state of life limitlessly expands approaching the vastness of the universe. Nothing is more wondrous than this transformation of our lives.

While in prison (during World War II for his refusal to compromise his religious beliefs), President Toda made an in-depth study of the Lotus Sutra. And he realized that its essence is to be found in the Gohonzon Nichiren Daishonin inscribed. He understood, in other words, that there is not the slightest deviation between the words and phrases of the Lotus Sutra and the teaching of the Daishonin. And at this realization he shed tears of joy.

**Saito:** You describe that scene in the first volume of your novel, *The Human Revolution*. You wrote that right after his release from prison, Mr. Toda examined the Gohonzon in his home, scrutinizing every character. And then he says:

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)  
Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20  
Author:  
Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

"It was just like this. No mistake. Exactly, just as I saw it ... ." Murmuring silently, he satisfied himself that the solemn and mysterious Ceremony in the Air which he had witnessed in his cell was indeed inscribed on the Gohonzon. Profound delight surged through him and tears streamed down his face. (Volume 1, "Dawn")

**Endo:** Today we can only imagine the joy he must have felt. At that point, he became all the more confident of the truth of what he had realized while in prison.

**Ikeda:** Because of President Toda's conviction in this, faith in the Gohonzon became firmly established in the Soka Gakkai. This is the prime point of the Soka Gakkai's great development.

President Toda saw everything with perfect clarity. It was impossible to put something over on him. The only way to approach him was with complete honesty and forthrightness. And to people who approached him in that way, he responded in kind without fail. Over time, I have come to appreciate even more keenly President Toda's greatness. It's something I feel with my entire being.

An example that comes to mind has to do with the practice of making pilgrimages to holy sites. Many religions revere places associated with their founders as special. Sites with strong connections to Nichiren Daishonin include the Izu Peninsula and Sado Island, where the Daishonin was sent into exile; Tatsunokuchi and Komatsubara, where he encountered severe persecution; Kamakura, where he was active for many years; his birthplace, Kominato; Mount Minobu, where he spent his final years; and Ikegami, where he passed away.

But President Toda did not treat these places as "holy sites." Rather, he taught that we should always base ourselves on the Gohonzon. In this we can see his profound insight.

When we worship the Gohonzon with strong faith, then that place, wherever it may be, becomes the holiest of lands. For it becomes the site of the Ceremony in the Air. It becomes Eagle Peak. There, the Treasure Tower emerges.

**Suda:** I understand that many of the world's religions designate specific sites as being particularly relevant. In most cases their members have the choice to visit them or not. But to require adherents to visit such sites, in my view, limits a religion's universality and can certainly diminish the scope of its appeal.

**Ikeda:** You're quite right. We, on the other hand, can attend the eternal Ceremony in the Air here and now. We can cause the Treasure Tower to shine in our lives, our daily existence, our homes. That is the greatness of faith in the Gohonzon. It is always close at hand and always reflected in our immediate reality.

The Ceremony in the Air, in contrast to the ceremonies at Eagle Peak that precede and follow it, takes place in a realm that transcends time and space. It does not occur in a specific historical time or place. For precisely this reason, we can attend the Ceremony in the Air at any time and in any place.

When we pray to the Gohonzon, which depicts the Ceremony in the Air, in the present moment, we become one with the eternal and universal life; and, right where we are, we manifest the vast state of life to be able to survey the entire universe.

In that sense, our daily practice of gongyo and chanting daimoku is a "journey of life"

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

of an even grander scale than that of an astronaut looking down on Earth from outer space.

### The Seven Treasures Adorn the Self

**Endo:** Then the “seven treasures” that adorn the Treasure Tower must exist within our own lives.

**Ikeda:** Yes. They exist nowhere but within our lives.

**Saito:** Nichiren Daishonin reveals to Abutsu-bo that the seven treasures indicate “listening to the true teaching, believing it, keeping the precept, attaining peace of mind, practicing assiduously, unselfishly devoting oneself, and forever seeking self-improvement” (MW-1, 30).

**Ikeda:** These are treasures within our lives. In contrast to what people commonly regard as treasures, the gold, silver and other treasures adorning the Treasure Tower indicate treasures in the realm of faith; they are the treasures, for example, of “listening to the teaching” and “believing it.” They are the only treasures we can take with us after our death. They are eternal wealth.

**Endo:** These seven treasures, also referred to as the “seven riches of the Law,” are indispensable elements of Buddhist practice.

**Suda:** President Ikeda, I recall an explanation you once gave of the concept of the seven treasures. “Listening to the true teaching,” you explained, means a seeking spirit to hear about Buddhism. You said Buddhist practice begins with “listening.” “Believing it” means the power of belief. According to the principle of “substituting faith for wisdom,” wisdom arises from faith.

You also said, it is the power of faith that forges bonds between people. “Keeping the precept,” which originally carried the meaning of “stemming injustice and eradicating evil,” indicates advancing straight ahead along the correct path of Buddhism.

This could also be termed a spirit of self-regulation or deep sense of justice. “Attaining peace of mind” means meditation; pacifying the mind, banishing rambling thoughts, and entering a state of calm and stability. “Peace of mind” could be thought of as a quiet and unwavering spirit or conviction. “Practicing assiduously” means to exercise tireless diligence. It refers to the spirit to advance toward attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime and realizing kosen-rufu. “Unselfishly devoting oneself” means discarding attachments. This implies having the courage to break free of the lesser self or ego, and the spirit to realize great ideals. “Forever seeking self-improvement” means having the humility to reflect on oneself.

**Ikeda:** All of these are encompassed in the word “faith.” They are all included in SGI activities. We work with the sun during the daytime and reflect on ourselves in the light of the moon at night, and ever seek to advance—all based on the Mystic Law. When we practice with this spirit of “faith manifesting itself in daily life,” our lives are adorned with the seven treasures. This is the way to accumulate true and eternal wealth.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

**Saito:** Not only do these treasures apply to faith, they are conditions of humanity that are prized universally.

**Ikeda:** Practicing faith means to lead the most correct life. Acquiring wisdom means attaining the most profound understanding of human nature.

The Treasure Tower exists in human life. To understand it in these terms is to see beyond our apparent differences and perceive the sanctity of life itself. The reason for this is that on the most essential level of life, there is no such thing as superior and inferior. Everyone alike possesses life. On the level of life there are no differences of gender, skin color or ethnicity. There is no discrimination on the basis of wealth or social status. Everyone is equal.

Basing oneself on the Treasure Tower, therefore, could be thought of as establishing a view of the sanctity of life of absolute equality. It is true humanism.

**Endo:** “Irrespective of social status,” as the Daishonin says to Abutsu-bo, means that all beings alike are infinitely worthy of respect.

**Ikeda:** Those who discriminate against others violate the sanctity of their own lives. On the other hand, when we treasure the lives of others, the Treasure Tower within us shines.

**Suda:** That’s the spirit of the “oneness of self and others.”

**Saito:** It sounds like we’re approaching the theme of the “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging” (twentieth) chapter.

**Endo:** Let’s not get too far ahead.

**Ikeda:** This is in fact an important theme that runs generally through the entire Lotus Sutra. I expect we’ll have the chance to discuss it in detail on another occasion.

### True Democracy

**Endo:** Isn’t respecting other people as “treasures” in fact the spirit of democracy? I recall Walt Whitman (1819–92), the great poet of democracy, expressing the view that “at the core of democracy, finally, is the religious element.”<sup>10</sup> Dr. Chappell, similarly, has suggested that in the twenty-first century religion will, of necessity, play an increasingly important role in people’s lives.

**Suda:** I have also read Whitman’s description of democracy. He writes that he assumes democracy “to be at present in its embryo condition, and that the only large and satisfactory justification of it resides in the future, mainly through the copious production of perfect characters among the people, and through the advent of a sane and pervading religiousness.”<sup>11</sup>

**Saito:** The other day (April 26), a lecture on the theme of democracy and religion was held at the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century. The speaker, Professor Vincent Harding of the University of Denver,<sup>12</sup> a close friend of the late Civil Rights

leader Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–68), argued that American democracy is still highly imperfect.

Touching on the achievements of Dr. King, he emphasized that to make democracy live up to its promise, there is a great need for leaders with roots in religion who can truly sympathize with the people.

**Ikeda:** Respect for the individual is the very soul of democracy. Democracy's success hinges on whether people can recognize the lives of all as equally sacred. Everything depends on this.

**Suda:** Many Japanese think our nation has fully achieved democracy. But it seems to me that Whitman's comment, made 130 years ago, that democracy was still in an embryonic stage, and Dr. Harding's insight are all the more true today.

**Ikeda:** That's because, ultimately, democracy is a manner of living. In the words of Tomas Masaryk (1850–1937), the founding father of Czechoslovakia, "Democracy is not only a form of government, it is not only what is written in constitutions; democracy is a view of life, rests on faith in men, in humanity and in human nature."<sup>13</sup>

Democracy, in other words, means trusting people as noble and eternal entities in and of themselves, not viewing them as a means to some end. When we believe in ourselves and trust others in this way, then, according to Masaryk, it will not be possible for one person, whose life is eternal and infinite, to regard another person, whose life is equally eternal and infinite, with indifference: "The eternal to the eternal cannot be indifferent, the eternal cannot misuse the eternal, it cannot exploit and violate it."<sup>14</sup> In other words, it is impossible for someone who is aware of the eternal nature of his being to maliciously exploit or violently repress another person whose being he recognizes as equally eternal.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "The Treasure Tower is none other than all living beings, and all living beings are none other than the complete entity of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (GZ, 797). This is the perspective of "The Emergence of the Treasure Tower" chapter.

We perceive the Treasure Tower in our own lives, and we perceive the Treasure Tower in the lives of others. And we are working to sanctify the places where we live and the entire world with forests of Treasure Towers. Let us construct "Treasure Towers of kosen-rufu" in our communities. Let us each leave behind an eternal golden monument of personal achievement. Let us adorn our lives by challenging ourselves with the spirit, "This is where I will build my Treasure Tower."

Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra as the crowning achievement of his life of great struggle. And the Treasure Tower first appeared in response to Shakyamuni's tireless efforts to widely propagate the Mystic Law. Many Treasures Buddha appeared to support him and Shakyamuni's emanations, the Buddhas in the ten directions of the universe, gathered around him. Behind all of this were Shakyamuni's tireless efforts and deep determination for kosen-rufu.

When we take action for kosen-rufu, the Treasure Tower appears. This is not a matter of theory; it comes down to a hands-on struggle with reality, an earnest win-or-lose effort to overcome great difficulties. Through waging such a struggle, our lives shine with the seven treasures of "listening to the true teaching, believing it, keeping the precept, attaining peace of mind, practicing assiduously, unselfishly devoting oneself,

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

and forever seeking self-improvement.” Nichiren Daishonin, likewise, amid great difficulties, established the Treasure Tower of the Gohonzon.

From that standpoint, it is no coincidence that the “Treasure Tower” chapter uses the principle of the “six difficult and nine easy acts” to explain the difficulty of propagating the Mystic Law in the Latter Day. Let’s take up this concept next time. □

(To be continued)

1. Dr. Chappell was formerly director of the Center for Buddhist Studies of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and is currently director of the school’s East-West Religions Project. He is a member of the International Association of Buddhist Studies and the Society for the Study of Chinese Religions.
2. Joseph Campbell with Bill Moyers, *The Power of Myth*, ed. Betty Sue Flowers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 212.
3. *saha* world: This world, which is full of sufferings. The Sanskrit word *sha* means endurance. According to the Hike Sutra, the *saha* world is so called because people in this world must endure many sufferings stemming from the three poisons and other earthly desires.
3. *ri*: About 0.5 km or one-third of a mile according to classical Chinese sources.
4. Abutsu-bo: A follower of the Daishonin on Sado Island.
5. *nayuta*: An Indian numerical unit corresponding to 100,000,000,000.
6. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Works of Josei Toda), vol. 7, p. 455–56.
7. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 6, p. 275.
8. Preparatory Section: The first of the three divisions of a sutra (preparation, revelation and transmission), a format often used in interpreting sutras thought to have been formulated by the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China. Preparation indicates the introductory section, revelation contains the main teaching, and transmission is the concluding part. In the case of the Lotus Sutra, in addition to the entire sutra having these divisions, each half may be further analyzed into three sections.
9. *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 8.
10. Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas and Other Papers* (London: The Walter Scott Publishing Co., LTD, 1888; reprint, Michigan: Scholarly Press, 1970), p. 27.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
12. Dr. Harding is professor of Religion and Social Transformation at the Iliff School of Theology, University of Denver.
13. Karel Capek, *Masaryk on Thought and Life: Conversations with Karel Capek*, trans. M. & R. Weatherall (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), p. 191.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 190.

### **The Six Difficult and Nine Easy Acts**

SHAKYAMUNI used the parable of the six difficult acts and the nine easy acts in “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter of the Lotus Sutra to show just how difficult it would be to propagate the Lotus Sutra (the Gohonzon) after his death. Shakyamuni asked the people in the assembly where he preached the Lotus Sutra three times who would be courageous enough to vow to propagate the Lotus Sutra in the future. After he

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure

asked the third time, he cited the six difficult and nine easy acts to show what attitude would be required. The nine easy acts are:

1. It is easier to teach the innumerable sutras (as many as the sands of the Ganges River) other than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
2. It is easier to take Mount Sumeru and hurl it across the universe over countless Buddha lands than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
3. It is easier to kick a major world system into another quarter with one's toe (i.e., from one galaxy across into another galaxy) than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
4. It is easier to stand in the highest heaven and preach innumerable sutras other than the Lotus Sutra than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
5. It is easier to grasp the sky with one's hand and travel around with it than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
6. It is easier to place the Earth on one's toenail and ascend to the Brahman Heaven than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
7. It is easier to walk across a burning prairie carrying a bundle of hay on one's back without being burned than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
8. It is easier to preach eighty-four thousand teachings and enable one's listeners to obtain the six supernatural powers than to teach the Lotus Sutra.
9. It is easier to enable innumerable people to reach the stage of *arhat* (one who has attained the highest degree of practice in Hinayana Buddhism) and acquire the six supernatural powers than to teach the Lotus Sutra.

The nine easy acts above may seem impossible. However, feats even more difficult than these are:

1. It is difficult to propagate the Lotus Sutra widely.
2. It is difficult to copy it or cause someone else to copy it.
3. It is difficult to recite it even for a short while.
4. It is difficult to teach it to even one person.
5. It is difficult to accept the Lotus Sutra and inquire about its meaning.
6. It is difficult to maintain faith in it.

These comparisons show how difficult it will be to expound and spread the Lotus Sutra after the passing of the Buddha. They also serve to encourage people who have stood up in faith, realizing their mission to spread the Lotus Sutra. The difficulties of propagation can be attributed to the profundity of the Law and its property of being the agent of change in both society and human life.

### **The Three Truths**

THREE integral aspects of the truth formulated by the Chinese teacher T'ien-t'ai (538–597): the truth of non-substantiality, the truth of temporary existence and the truth of the Middle Way.

The truth of non-substantiality means that phenomena have no absolute or fixed existence of their own. Their true nature is *ku*, which is variously translated as emptiness, void, latency, relativity, etc. It means that phenomena arise and continue to

exist only by virtue of their relationship with other phenomena and have no fixed substance. Their true nature is *ku*, a potential state that cannot be defined as either existence or nonexistence. This is a view of the unchangeable aspect of phenomena.

The truth of temporary existence means that while all things are non-substantial (*ku*) in nature, they nevertheless possess a provisional or temporary reality that is in constant flux. All existence are temporarily formed of elements through the bonding of cause and effect. It is the recognition of the visible, surface aspects of phenomena. As all phenomena are perceived as temporarily being formed by cause and effect, all things disappear as cause and effect change. This is the view that all phenomena are transient and changeable and that nothing stays the same.

The truth of the Middle Way is that all phenomena are characterized by both non-substantiality and temporary existence. The Middle Way is the insight that enables us to perceive phenomena through the unchangeable existence of things that display the characteristics of non-substantiality while exhibiting the qualities of temporary existence. President Ikeda explains this phenomena as “the self of one’s life.”

The three truths are not separate and independent of one another. They are all effective means to understand accurately the phenomena of the world. This means that the truths of non-substantiality, temporary existence and the Middle Way each possesses all three truths within themselves. This is called the unification of the three truths. The real existence of a thing can be distorted when considered in light of only one of the three. The true meaning of the unification of the three truths lies in accurately grasping the entirety of a single existence from the viewpoint of the unity of the three truths.

### **The Two Buddhas Seated Side by Side**

THE great Chinese teacher T’ien-t’ai (538–597) interprets Taho and Shakyamuni seated side by side in the Treasure Tower as the fusion of reality and wisdom, with Taho representing the objective truth or ultimate reality, and Shakyamuni, the subjective wisdom to realize it. Moreover, Taho Buddha represents the property of the Law; Shakyamuni Buddha the property of wisdom, and the Buddhas from throughout the universe, the property of action; together they represent the three properties.

The three properties (also known as three bodies or three enlightened properties) are the property of the Law, or the essential property of the Buddha’s life which is the truth to which the Buddha is enlightened. The property of wisdom, or the spiritual property of the Buddha’s life, which enables the Buddha to perceive the truth. And the property of action, which is the Buddha’s body with which he or she carries out compassionate actions to save people.

Nichiren uses the interpretations of T’ien-t’ai and further states in his writing “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life” that Shakyamuni and Taho represent, respectively, life and death, the two phases that the entity of life undergoes. They appear on the Gohonzon at the top, Shakyamuni to the left of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo (down the center), and Taho to the right.

Title: Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (17)

Subject: Living Buddhism 03/97 v.1 n.3 p.20 LB9703p20

Author:

Keywords: Dialogue Lotus Sutra Tower Treasure