

WHAT A CONCEPT: Heart ('Kokoro')
The Heart of the Buddha
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The Mystic Law — the law of cause and effect — is strict but not rigid. It's strict in that it's impartial and can be likened to a sharp sword that unfailingly cuts through the fetters of darkness and delusion. Yet one who is awakened to this Law is not rigid. (By *rigid*, I mean: defining Buddhism narrowly, using authority to intimidate sincere believers and throwing around unfounded accusations of slander.) Rather, the heart of the Buddha is rooted in tolerance and compassion for people.

In a sense, Buddhist practice means to live the Law and make the heart of the Buddha our own.

Nichiren Daishonin uses the Japanese word *kokoro* to talk about the heart of the Buddha. While *kokoro* can be translated into English as heart, on a deeper level it can be construed to mean something supreme yet invisible, something all-encompassing yet non-material. It means intent, faith, prayer, sincerity, determination and even life.

The Daishonin writes: "This Gohonzon is the heart of the Lotus Sutra and the eye of all the scriptures. It is like the sun and moon in the heavens, a mighty ruler on earth, the heart in a human being, the wish-granting jewel among treasures and the pillar of a house" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 177). It could be said that by inscribing the Gohonzon, the Daishonin put the supreme yet invisible heart of the Buddha — that is, his *kokoro*, his life — into concrete form.

When we chant to the Gohonzon, we develop our human qualities that we associate with the heart: passion, compassion, sincerity, etc. That is, when we "make the cause" of chanting to the Gohonzon, one effect we receive is the enrichment of our hearts. And because we enrich our hearts, we can be true to the Law without becoming rigid.

In encouraging us to tap our Buddha wisdom, the Daishonin and SGI President Ikeda emphasize the quality or condition of our *kokoro*. The Daishonin writes: "What matters is one's heart" (MW-5, 289); "Faith alone is what really matters" (MW-1, 246); and "The Lotus Sutra states that the flower and the moon are themselves heart and mind" (MW-1, 269). One's heart, one's faith and the Mystic Law are inseparably intertwined in the concept of *kokoro*.

The condition of our hearts — the extent to which we struggle to expand and deepen them — is more fundamental than formalities, leadership positions, length of practice, material wealth and educational background. What's more, *kokoro* transcends the barriers of time, physical distance and cultural differences, allowing our hearts to touch the hearts of others freely.

Further, President Ikeda said recently: "The only way to attain the effect of Buddhahood — that is, to become a Buddha — is by becoming a person of the strongest possible faith. Faith, the cause of Buddhahood, is itself the effect of Buddhahood. Faith is itself the embodiment of the world of Buddhahood."

At the deepest level, the Buddha's heart, the Mystic Law and our hearts are one with the universe. *Kokoro* is one way to describe this insight.

Eight in a series