

**WHAT A CONCEPT: 'Kyo'**  
**The Connecting Thread**  
**By LISA JONES, Staff Writer**

*Kyo* derives from Hokkekyo, which means Lotus Sutra, and is a component of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. Originally, *kyo* meant sutra or the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Later, it came to denote all Buddhist scriptures. In expounding the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nichiren Daishonin broadly interpreted *kyo* as the sounds, voices and activities of all people.

In "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," Nichiren Daishonin explains: "*Kyo* means the words and speech, sounds and voices of all living beings. Chang-an states, 'The voice does the Buddha's work and is therefore called *kyo*.' *Kyo* also signifies that life spans the three existences of past, present and future" (*Seikyo Times*, July 1995, p. 9). *Kyo* is rich in meaning, and this passage can be broken down into three parts.

First, the Daishonin says, "*kyo* means the words and speech..." On a practical level, we can take this to mean that everything we say and do is a manifestation of *kyo*. It could be said that *kyo* corresponds to the three kinds of actions by which we create our karma — deed, word and intent.

Further, if we listen to the sounds of our environment — late at night, for example — we may hear the hum of traffic, the pounding of the sea, the rustling of wind through trees or the steady beat of our own pulse. In the farthest reaches of deep space, even, there's rhythmic sound that can be detected by radio telescope. It could be said that our lives (and the universe itself) are bathed in and articulated through sound, rhythm and vibration.

Second, the Daishonin mentions that "the voice does the Buddha's work and is therefore called *kyo*." From the standpoint of life philosophy, *kyo* signifies value-creation and the principle that the goal of human life is to achieve happiness for all.

The philosophy of value (which was developed by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, founder of the Soka Gakkai) draws a sharp distinction between truth and value. Simply put, truth is fact; it is unchangeable and can't be created. Value, on the other hand, expresses the changeable and fluctuating relationship between self and other, subject and object, the individual and the universe.

SGI President Ikeda once explained that "from Makiguchi's viewpoint, the most fundamental and central value is that of life itself... He stated that 'all other values arise solely within the context of interaction with life.' The fundamental criterion for value, in Makiguchi's view, is whether something adds to or detracts from, advances or hinders, the human condition."

Ultimately, our happiness and the happiness of others are determined by the choices we make from moment to moment, not by an absolute standard or authority. Value is not a "given." It's something we must create.

To create means to turn theory into actuality, to turn an indefinite possibility into a definite something. In this sense, to do the Buddha's work means to create joy, culture, peace — to turn our dreams into realities through the wisdom and courage we develop by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.

Third, the Daishonin says that "*kyo*...spans the three existences..." That is, *kyo* is the thread that eternally connects all phenomena in the complex fabric of life. In fact, the Chinese character for *kyo* originally meant the threads running lengthwise in a loom when weaving cloth. *Kyo*, in the Buddhist sense, signifies the thread of universal, eternal continuity.

Further, this continuity is expressed in our individual lives. SGI President Ikeda

explains:

Spatially the infinite expanse of the Universe in the ten directions and temporally the eternal flow of time spanning the three existences of past, present and future — all this is contained in a single moment of one's mind.

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