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Living Buddhism is the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

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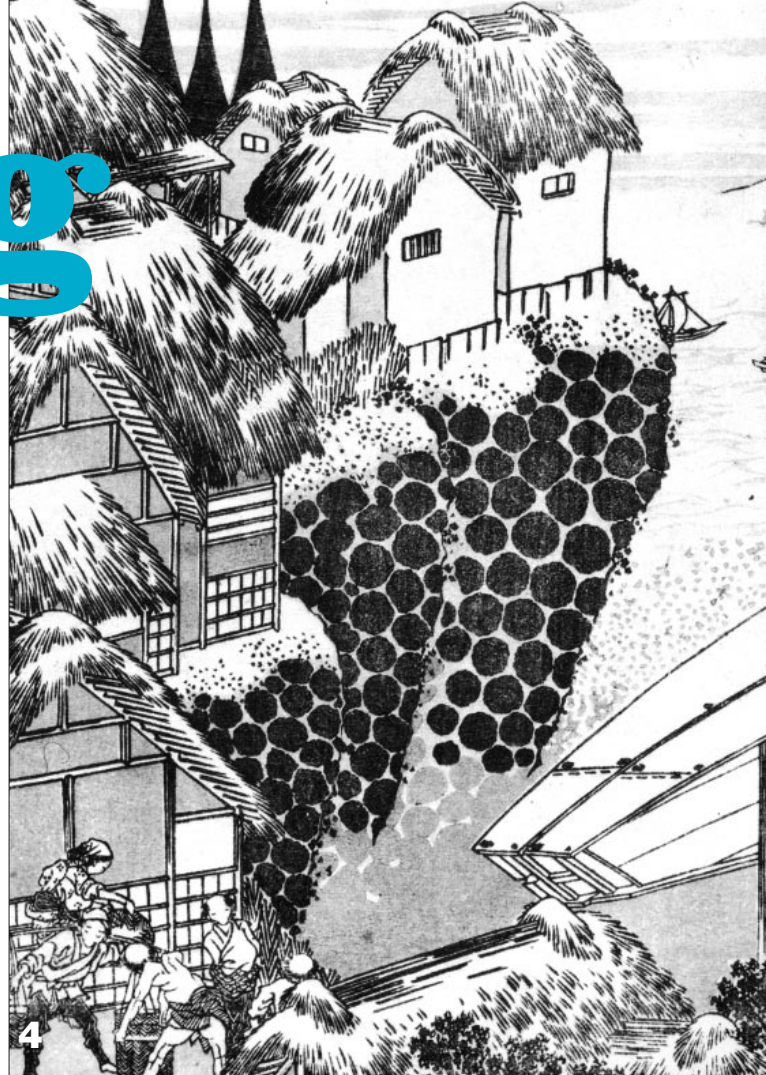
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FROM OUR READERS

Due to the volume of letters we receive, not all can be printed, and all letters are subject to condensation. Letters printed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the SGI-USA or *Living Buddhism*. Please include signature, mailing address and telephone number with all correspondence. Mail to: Letters, Living Buddhism, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

LION'S ROAR

So pure is my faith
A child of the Buddha,
An evil ego bent on destruction
Serves to make me stronger.
Ever more determined
To give my life for the TRUE LAW.
He is like dust on my fingertip
I am filled with a Lion's Roar.

MARCIE MUSSER
Reynolds Station, Kentucky

IT IS THE WHOLE PICTURE THAT GETS DEVELOPED

I am my own great spiritual keeper,
My goal is to make my happiness deeper;
To rise above all obstacles which attempt to claim,
To access all hidden potentials in my life domain;
To polish the diamond-like interior of me,
To encourage the world from sea to sea;
To lead the blind and undirected,
To discover why I had been selected;
Since all dreams are bigger than any problem,
And we all have the inner wisdom to solve them;
From the simple to the most profound,
To make causes to take action for every frown;
Through real meaningfulness and common sense,
Though the road is pitted and the forest is dense.

KARL MONROE
Union City, New Jersey

Living Buddhism is the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. In association with the SGI, the SGI-USA works in tandem with members around the world. On an international scale, the SGI centers its activities on the human potentialities for individual happiness and global peace and prosperity. Rooted in the life-affirming philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin, SGI members share a profound commitment to the values of peace, culture and education.

These values are expressed in the SGI Charter, which embodies core beliefs in the ideal of world citizenship, the spirit of tolerance and the safeguarding of fundamental human rights.

The SGI-USA applies Buddhist principles through a nationwide network of grass-roots activities centering primarily on neighborhood discussion groups. Learn more about the SGI-USA, or find a discussion group in your area by calling our national office in Santa Monica, (310) 451-8811. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

ADVANCE IN TRIUMPH

The eyes of the whole world
Are fixed upon you,
My magnificent friends of America,
Eager to see your splendid work.

Forge your solidarity
And advance in triumph,
Creating in America,
A paradise of benefit and victory.

*With my palms together in prayer for the excellent health
and successful endeavors of my supremely beloved and
cherished American friends.*

*On the morning of June 17, 1998
Daisaku*

THROUGH a recent phone call from Japan, I was asked to meet Hiromasa Ikeda at the Los Angeles airport the following day as he would be in transit to Brazil and had a gift from his father. Much to my surprise, the gift turned out to be the two poems above written by SGI President Ikeda for all the American members shortly before his son left Japan.

I read the poems immediately. As you can see, the verses are very short, but by the time I had finished the first stanza I felt goose bumps rise on my arms. I went over the poems several more times, looking for what it was that struck me so profoundly in these simple, but elegant words. And there it was—the simplicity—so clear and to the point, yet so profound.

“The eyes of the whole world / Are fixed upon you,” reads the first line. I’ve known that to be true for quite some time. I sense, when I talk to SGI members from other countries, that they really are “eager to see our splendid work.” So a question arose in my mind—what kind of work will we do in our organization, in our homes, on our jobs, or at school to actually contribute toward world kosen-rufu? That, I realized, is what the world is waiting to see.

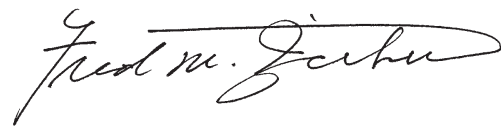
Especially when so much of the world is suffering from war, civil disturbance, famine, drought and

disease—three young boys recently burned to death in Ireland; hostilities between neighbors in Kosovo; Indonesia in chaos; thousands starving in the Sudan—what else is there to do but forge our solidarity and advance, to be the source of hope that powers the world? I feel I have come to understand that now is just like the light of a new dawn, and our potential ready to burst forth.

That President Ikeda would use these words at this crucial juncture in history is testimony to how great are his expectations of us and how crucial it is that we act. So what must we do?

“Forge your solidarity / And advance in triumph, / Creating in America, / A paradise of benefit and victory.” He is urging us to forge solidarity, encouraging us to create a “paradise of benefit and victory” by building harmonious unity in our organization. When we center on the Gohonzon, unity can be created. When we center on our goal of kosen-rufu, surely great harmony is created. When we center on President Ikeda’s heart, definitely solidarity can be created. On the contrary, if we center on our own small egos or interests, we cannot expect unity to be actualized. President Ikeda is telling us that now is the time to unite, further our expansion movement and advance kosen-rufu here in America.

We should awaken to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and stand up courageously toward propagation. Through carrying out joyful activities, I am sure that we will receive tremendous benefit with total victory in our lives. Then our organization of the SGI-USA will become a true paradise filled with happiness.



Fred M. Zaitzu
SGI-USA General Director

The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue (6)

This series is based on The Dark History of the Fuji School: Revealing the Origin of the Nikken Sect (Ankoku no Fuji Shumonshi: Nikken Shu no Engen o Kiru) by Hajime Kawai, a vice senior advisor of the Soka Gakkai Study Department. The last installment explained the appointment of children as high priests and Sakyō Nikkyō's new doctrine of the infallibility of the high priest to silence criticism of such appointments.

Chapter 6: The Establishment of the Parish System and the Rise of Funeral Buddhism

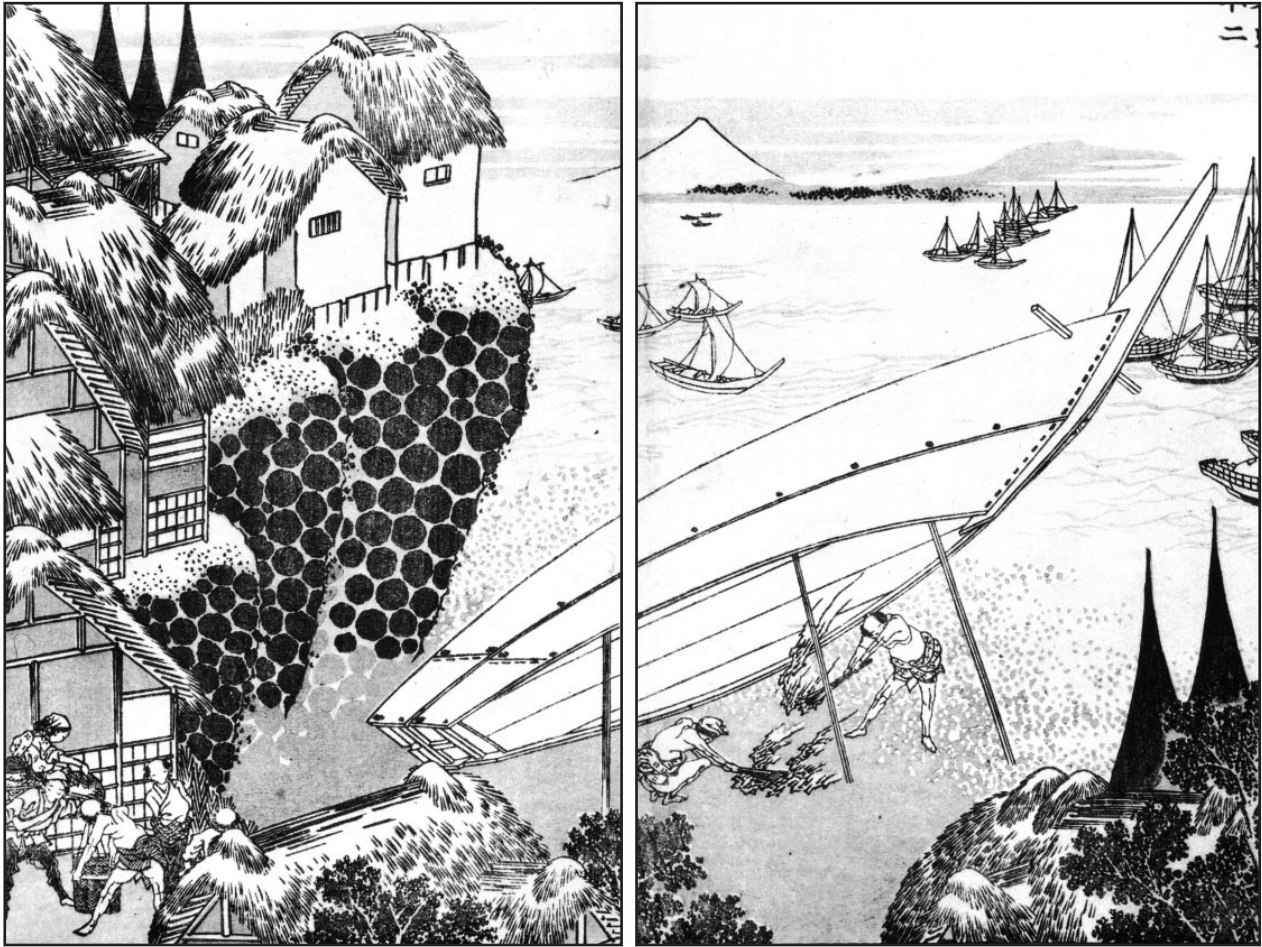


(1) Nine high priests came from an unorthodox offshoot of the Fuji School

IN September 1596, Nisshu, the fourteenth high priest, transferred his office to Nissho, the fifteenth high priest. Nissho came to Taiseki-ji from Yobo-ji in Kyoto, a temple of an unorthodox offshoot of the Fuji School. Since this time, nine successive high priests from Nissho to Nikkei, the twenty-third, came from Yobo-ji.

In 1336, Nichizon, a disciple of Nikko Shonin, established a temple called Jogyo-in in Kyoto, which later became known as Yobo-ji. It was originally a temple of the Fuji School. But it gradually started to adopt practices such as worshipping Shakyamuni's statue and reciting the entire twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. As a result, Taiseki-ji refused to have a relationship with Yobo-ji. (See *Living Buddhism*, May 1998, pp. 40–43, for more details about Nichizon and Yobo-ji.)

Nissho entered the priesthood at Yobo-ji when he was 7. There he



A nineteenth-century print of Mount Fuji and the area around the head temple, Taiseki-ji.

received instruction from Nisshin, the nineteenth chief priest of Yobo-ji. After studying at a seminary in Shimosa Province [present-day Chiba Prefecture], he came to Taiseki-ji in August 1594. Only two years later, in September 1596, he was appointed the fifteenth high priest. For nearly one hundred years, from 1596 until 1692 when Nikkei transferred his office to Nichiei, the twenty-fourth high priest, Yobo-ji priests headed Taiseki-ji. This demonstrates both Taiseki-ji's lack of its own source of capable priests as well as its lenient attitude in maintaining doctrinal orthodoxy.

Those Yobo-ji priests brought such unorthodox practices to Taiseki-ji to where it eventually allowed its branch temples to enshrine Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion. In this respect, Nichiko Hori, fifty-ninth high priest and noted scholar of the history of the Fuji School, comments: "Nine high priests of Taiseki-ji—from Nissho to Nikkei—came from Yobo-ji in Kyoto, and they imported some new formalities" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 9, p. 59).

Importation of its high priests from Yobo-ji invited long-lasting criticism

Around 1635, to solidify its control on the populace as well as to prevent the spread of Christianity, the Tokugawa government instituted a new Buddhist temple parish system.... Unless they had a permit issued by their Buddhist temple, people were unable to work or travel.

and ridicule toward Taiseki-ji. In October 1877, when some members of a Yobo-ji branch temple converted to a Taiseki-ji branch temple, they debated with a Yobo-ji priest through correspondence. In one response, the Yobo-ji priest writes:

Within the sect founded by Nikko Shonin, some temples, lacking in candidates for their chief priests, were compelled to ensure their succession by inviting priests from other branch schools. Naturally, as a result, those temples brought the traditions from other branch schools into their own. Yobo-ji of Kyoto, however, has not brought over priests of other branch schools in order to ensure its succession; it is the school of the true lineage from teacher to disciple, that is, Nichiren to Nikko, Nichimoku and Nichizon....

Since Taiseki-ji did not have candidates for its chief priest, upon its request, Yobo-ji dispatched the following nine to become its chief priest: Nissho, the fifteenth chief priest of Taiseki-ji; Nichiju, the sixteenth; Nissei, the seventeenth;

Nichiei, the eighteenth; Nisshun, the nineteenth; Nitten, the twentieth; Nichinin, the twenty-first; Nisshun, the twenty-second; and Nikkei, the twenty-third.

A pig may cost fifty yen, so nine would be 450 yen. But here we are talking about humans. At the request of Taiseki-ji, Yobo-ji sent full-fledged disciples trained under High Priest Nisshin, who was a student of High Priest Nichizon, to Taiseki-ji as its successors so that they might be helpful. Oblivious to this, Taiseki-ji speaks ill of Yobo-ji; it is like an animal that does not know how to repay a debt of gratitude" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 7, p. 13).

(2) The Fuji School and funeral Buddhism



IN February 1602, when Nissho, the fifteenth high priest, was in office, Tokugawa Ieyasu established a shogunate government in Edo (i.e., present-day Tokyo). Around 1635, to solidify its

Since the government discouraged religious propagation, Buddhist temples started conducting more rituals to entice parish members to frequent their temples, thus generating income. Many temples, regardless of their sects, promoted rituals and formalities related to one's death.

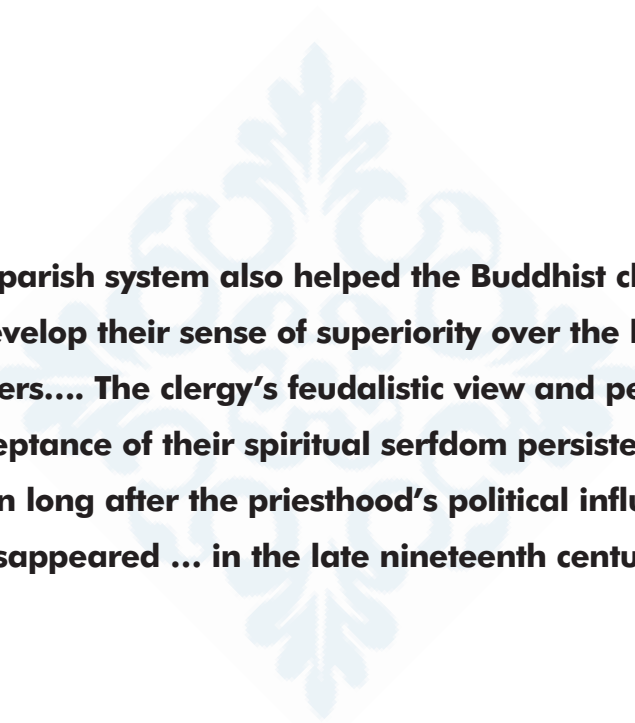
control on the populace as well as to prevent the spread of Christianity, the Tokugawa government instituted a new Buddhist temple parish system. The system was established nationwide by 1638 when the Christian revolt in Shimabara was quelled. Under the parish system, people had to be registered with a Buddhist temple in their area in order to prove that they were not Christians. Unless they had a permit issued by their Buddhist temple, people were unable to work or travel. As people's lives essentially depended upon a temple permit, the authority of a chief priest grew stronger. Even a parish leader, if he did not visit his temple on an appointed day, had his name deleted from the register and reported to the government. Put simply, under the parish system, Buddhist temples functioned as a government census bureau to control people.

The Tokugawa shogunate government also prohibited religious debate. No religious sect could publicly praise itself and criticize others. This government ordinance became effective around

1615. It prevented any overt religious propagation. Since the parish system made it extremely difficult for people to leave their parishes, their desire to improve their spiritual lives was greatly stifled and Buddhism in Japan became increasingly conservative and ritualistic.

Since the government discouraged religious propagation, Buddhist temples started conducting more rituals to entice parish members to frequent their temples, thus generating income. Many temples, regardless of their sects, promoted rituals and formalities related to death—such as funerals; posthumous Buddhist names; memorial services; Buddhist tablets for the dead; thrice-yearly tomb visits in spring, summer and fall; and so on. For this reason, some critics, after the establishment of the parish system, refer to Japanese Buddhism as “funeral Buddhism.”

The parish system also required priests to see their parish members when they died. Upon confirming that the deceased were in fact in his parish and not Christians, he would bestow upon them posthumous Buddhist



The parish system also helped the Buddhist clergy develop their sense of superiority over the lay believers.... The clergy's feudalistic view and people's acceptance of their spiritual serfdom persisted in Japan long after the priesthood's political influence disappeared ... in the late nineteenth century.

names and recite prayers for their repose. So people always had to invite priests to funerals. If they did not, they would run the risk of being labeled Christians and thus executed.

It should also be noted that most of the Buddhist formalities surrounding funerals and memorial services were introduced into the general public during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These formalities included the necessity of family tombs, memorial books, memorial tablets, Buddhist altars and so on. Parish members were required to make offerings to a priest at every service they attended. Furthermore, they were often asked to finance renovation and construction projects for their temples. People's discontent with the Buddhist clergy grew, and many sayings from the Edo period attest to the corruption of priests at that time: "All profit for priests." "If you hate a priest, you hate even his robe." "A priest recites a sutra only for what he is paid." "A priest snatches an offering without reciting a sutra." "Money talks even in hell." Even today it is customary to invite a priest to a funeral in

Japan. This tradition, however, has nothing to do with any original Buddhist teaching or with one's enlightenment. It is a remnant of the parish system established by the Tokugawa shogunate government in the seventeenth century.

In June 1641, Nisshun, the nineteenth high priest, received from the newly appointed third shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu a deed reauthorizing Taiseki-ji's property and its status as a head temple. At this time, Taiseki-ji also started to register its parish members and vouch for their non-Christian status. Following the trend of the Buddhist community, Taiseki-ji stopped its propagation efforts and started to promote rituals and formalities such as funerals and memorial services. As a result, Taiseki-ji's parish members grew dependent on their priests and became negligent in their own personal practice such as sutra recitation or gongyo. Instead of doing gongyo, they would go to the temple and ask their priests to pray on their behalf. This priest-based faith has since become the norm within the school headed by Taiseki-ji, which later became known as Nichiren Shoshu. Today

Nichiren Shoshu priests still offer various prayer services for lay believers: “prayer for health,” “prayer for traffic safety,” “prayer for warding off evils,” “prayer for good grades” and so on.

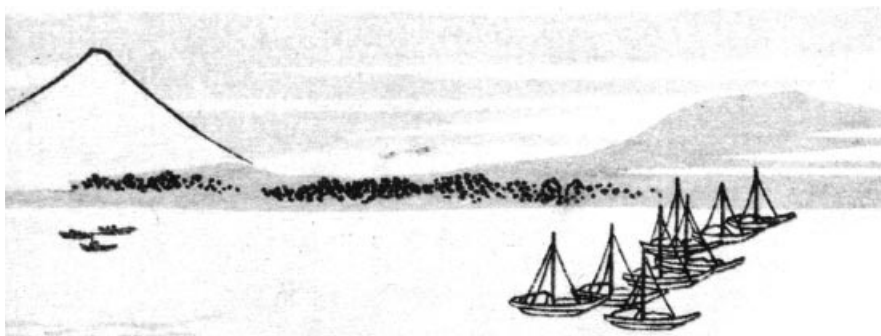
Believers’ dependency on priests is the antithesis of the self-reliant faith the Daishonin strongly advocates. He states: “Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?” (MW-1, 120). “The fact that Nichigen-nyo’s prayers have gone unanswered is like a strong bow with a weak bowstring or a fine sword in the hands of a coward. It is in no sense the fault of the Lotus Sutra” (MW-3, 73). “No matter how earnestly Nichiren prays for you, if you lack faith, it will be like trying to set fire to wet tinder. Spur yourself to muster the power of faith” (MW-1, 246). And “Whether or not your prayer is answered depends upon your faith; [if it is not,] the fault in no way lies with me, Nichiren” (MW-5, 305). In light of these passages, it becomes evident that having a priest pray for one’s happiness or enlightenment is contrary to the Daishonin’s intent.

The government-instituted parish system encouraged the further corruption in Japan’s Buddhist community. Under the strict government control and protection, the majority of Buddhist priests became oblivious to their role as spiritual teachers to their parish members and increasingly became consumed with the pursuit of worldly fame and material gain. This is in exact accord with the Daishonin’s premonition:

The Buddha stated that during the Latter Day of the Law, priests and nuns with the hearts of dogs would be as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges. By this he meant that the priests and nuns of that day would run like dogs after fame and fortune. Because they wear robes and surplices, they look like ordinary priests and nuns. But in their hearts, they wield a sword of evil, hastening here and there among their patrons and filling them full of countless lies so as to keep them away from other priests or nuns. Thus they strive to keep their patrons to themselves and prevent other priests or nuns from coming near them, like a dog who goes to a house to be fed but who growls and springs to attack the moment another dog approaches. Each and every one of these priests and nuns is certain to fall into the evil paths. (MW-3, 206)

The parish system also helped the Buddhist clergy develop their sense of superiority over lay believers. Since priests essentially acted as government agents who held sway over people’s lives, they viewed their relationship with their parish members as that between lord and serf. The Buddhist clergy’s feudalistic view and people’s acceptance of their spiritual serfdom persisted in Japan long after the priesthood’s political influence disappeared with the demise of the Tokugawa shogunate government in the late nineteenth century.

To be continued



ELEMENTARY-LEVEL EXAMINATION STUDY MATERIAL

The following pages contain a portion of the study material (see II. and III. in box below) for the SGI-USA Study Department Elementary-level Examination to be held October 25, 1998.

Pages 11–18 are from *Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*. Published in 1997, this book is a compilation of a series of lectures on the writings of the Daishonin by SGI President Ikeda.

Pages 18–47 cover material from *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*. Published in 1995, this book is a compilation of a series of lectures on two chapters of the Lotus Sutra. The part that is covered here is the SGI President’s lecture on the “Expedient Means” Chapter.

Material for the SGI-USA Study Department Elementary-level Examination on October 25, 1998:

I. SGI-USA Study Program Elementary-level Textbook

- “Letter to the Brothers”: pages 6–13; 22–25; 31–51; 57–61; 67–74; 80–84; 89–104.
- “The Person and the Law”: pages 107–127.
- *Ichinen Sanzen*: pages 128–160.

II. *Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*

- “One Essential Phrase I & II” (pages 73–94).

III. Vol. 1 of *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” & “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*

- The “Expedient Means” Chapter (pages 5–43; 53–83; 133–140).

IV. *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* (pamphlet)

- The entire pamphlet.

Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin

‘The One Essential Phrase’ Part 1

People Who Chant Daimoku Are Never Deadlocked

ALL people share the wish to lead truly joyous lives. Everyone hopes he or she can meet death with a sense of having led a fulfilled existence. In reality, though, these aspirations are seldom met. What, then, should one do?

One of Nichiren Daishonin’s disciples put the question this way: “Can one attain Buddhahood just by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo?” Buddhahood is an immense state in which life is joyful and death is joyful, too. The question, in other words, is whether it is possible to attain such a wonderful state of life by simply chanting daimoku.

The lady Myoho-ama posed this candid and straightforward question, this inquiry on the most fundamental of issues, to the Daishonin. While several of the Daishonin’s followers were known as Myoho-ama, the one who received this reply is thought to have lived in what is today Okanomiya in Numazu, Shizuoka Prefecture.

In the Daishonin’s day, the suffix *-ama* indicated a laywoman of deep faith who, as a sign of her commitment to

Buddhism, had cut her hair from waist- to shoulder-length.

Myoho-ama was in a sense asking this question as a representative of all people of the Latter Day of the Law. The Gosho we will now begin studying¹ is the Daishonin’s reply. Let us study it with this in mind.

First, for you to ask a question about the Lotus Sutra is a rare source of good fortune. In this age of the Latter Day of the Law, those who ask about the meaning of even one phrase or verse of the Lotus Sutra are much fewer than those who can hurl great Mount Sumeru to another land like a stone, or those who can kick the entire galaxy away like a ball. They are even fewer than those who can embrace and teach countless other sutras, thereby enabling the priests and laymen who listen to them to obtain the six mystic powers.² Equally rare is a priest who can explain the meaning of the Lotus Sutra and clearly answer questions concerning it. The *Hoto* chapter in the fourth volume of the Lotus Sutra sets forth the important principle of six difficult and nine easy acts.

Your asking a question about the Lotus Sutra is among the six difficult acts. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 221)

NICHIREN Daishonin praises Myoho-ama, telling her that to ask about the Lotus Sutra is itself extremely rare and a source of great good fortune.

The Lotus Sutra explains the doctrine of the “six difficult and nine easy acts.” In addition to those that the Daishonin describes here, the nine easy acts include such feats—all of them impossible from the standpoint of common sense—as walking across a burning prairie carrying a bundle of hay on one’s back without getting burned. The point is that, compared with the six difficult acts, even such things are easy.

The six difficult acts are: to propagate the Lotus Sutra widely, to copy it or cause someone else to copy it, to recite it even for a short while, to teach it to even one person, to hear of the Lotus Sutra and inquire about its meaning, and to accept and maintain faith in the Lotus Sutra after Shakyamuni’s passing.

Myoho-ama’s asking the Daishonin about the Lotus Sutra corresponds to the noble act of

inquiring about its meaning. In addition, the Daishonin points out, it is extremely rare to encounter a person who can correctly answer such a question.

Myoho-ama may well have been hesitant to pose her question, uncertain of the propriety of doing so. But the Daishonin's encouragement doubtless put her mind at ease and lifted her spirits. This was Nichiren Daishonin's way with the people.

In contrast, there are those who take others to task for asking questions, saying things like: "What's that? Don't you even know that?" There are those who put on airs of self-importance when teaching others. Such people fail to realize that they are in effect negating the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi once remarked:

There was a certain teacher who, when a pupil asked a question, would scold the child saying, "Don't you know that yet? You're a real numskull!" But the pupil asked the question because he wanted to learn the answer, not because he wanted to have his intelligence evaluated. This is a case of the teacher failing to recognize the demands of the situation and instead passing judgment.

The blurring of the distinction between recognition of facts and judgmentalism lies at the heart of the intellectual malaise of the present age.

This is a brilliant insight.

Many of the Daishonin's letters are replies to questions from followers. The Daishonin

no doubt had an air of openness and accessibility about him that made it possible for people to ask him anything.

Where there is an atmosphere of lively discussion, where people can say or ask anything, it is bright and joyful. In such an environment, there is growth. The rhythm of *kosen-rufu*, of moving forward, is there.

While sounding extremely difficult, the nine easy acts are, for the most part, physical and external in nature, and relate to mystic powers—to what might be called "supernatural abilities." But revolutionizing one's life through following the correct teaching is in fact far more difficult than working "miracles" of this kind.

As a matter of fact, modern materialist civilization, while accomplishing countless "miracles" that were formerly impossible, has not brought about human happiness. The doctrine of the six difficult and nine easy acts sounds a shrill warning against the limitations of this approach.

This is a sure indication that if you embrace the Lotus Sutra, you will certainly attain Buddhahood in your present form. Since the Lotus Sutra defines our life as the Buddha's property of the Law, our mind as the Buddha's property of wisdom and our actions as the Buddha's property of action, all who embrace and believe in even a single phrase or verse of this sutra [i.e., Nam-myoho-enge-kyo] will be endowed with the benefit of these three properties. (MW-1, 221)

THE Daishonin says that those who practice the Mystic Law will attain Buddhahood in their present form, meaning in this existence. Each of us, just as we are, will come to shine as a Buddha. This is human revolution.

The teachings expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra taught that the Buddha's body is the property of the Law; the Buddha's mind, the property of wisdom; and the Buddha's compassionate conduct, the property of action. The Buddha was always presented as an extraordinary being to be revered from afar.

By contrast, the Lotus Sutra explains that ordinary people are themselves Buddhas. This is a landmark teaching. The Lotus Sutra explains that the Buddha endowed with the three enlightened properties is the common mortal of *kuon ganjo*. Nichiren Daishonin says that when we embrace the Mystic Law, our lives become the property of the Law; our minds, the property of wisdom; and our actions, the property of action.

Our lives are the property of the Law—this means that our lives, our determination, which is an entity of the oneness of body and mind, becomes one with the Mystic Law. Our lives or determination become the wish for realizing *kosen-rufu*. We can then wholeheartedly devote ourselves to others' happiness.

When we chant *daimoku* with appreciation at having the rare opportunity to dedicate our lives to such a noble mission, immense vitality wells

forth. From the depths of our lives, we tap the wisdom to encourage others and show actual proof. And our conduct, as the Buddha's property of action, translates into value-creating activities perfectly responding to the needs of our circumstances and of those around us.

The basis for this is *daimoku*. Prayer—deep prayer from the very marrow of our lives. A person of deep prayer, a person who constantly chants the *daimoku* of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, is never deadlocked.

**The Mystic Law Is the
Essential Wisdom
for Becoming Happy**

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is only one phrase, but it contains the essence of the entire sutra. You asked whether one can attain Buddhahood only by chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and this is the most important question of all. It is the heart of the entire sutra and the substance of its eight volumes.

The spirit within one's body may appear in just his face, and the spirit within his face may appear in just his eyes. Included within the word Japan is all that is within the country's sixty-six provinces: all of the people and animals, the rice paddies and other fields, those of high and low status, the nobles and the commoners, the seven kinds of gems³ and all other treasures. Similarly, included within the title, *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, is the entire sutra con-

sisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters and 69,384 characters without exception. (MW-1, 221–22)

THE eyes are indeed the window to the soul. The eyes express a person's life in its totality. Similarly, the immense energy of a nuclear explosion is expressed by the succinct formula $E=mc^2$.⁴

While these are merely analogies, the single phrase *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is the key that unlocks the limitless energy of life. The Gohonzon of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* contains all the wisdom of Buddhism and the Lotus Sutra.

Josei Toda once said: "The Gohonzon is truly great. But because this is so simple, people fail to understand it."

Because the Law is profound, its practice is simple. The more technology advances, machines become simpler to operate. Mr. Toda went so far as to liken the Gohonzon to a "happiness-manufacturing machine." And the switch for turning this machine on is chanting *daimoku* for oneself and others. It could be said that Nichiren Daishonin distilled Buddhism down to an essence of irreducible simplicity for all people.

It seems all too simple. When television was invented, though, people were no doubt amazed at how extremely simple and convenient it was. Now television is taken for granted; no one thinks of it as mysterious anymore. The same will be true of the Mystic Law when *kosen-rufu* is achieved.

President Toda predicted that 200 years later everyone

would finally understand the significance of our efforts. He also said, "As science progresses, the validity and correctness of Buddhism will be increasingly borne out."

The air around us is filled with radio waves of various frequencies. While these are invisible, a television set can collect them and turn them into visual images. The practice of chanting *daimoku* to the Gohonzon aligns the rhythm of our own lives with the world of Buddhahood in the universe. It "tunes" our lives, so to speak, so that we can manifest the power of Buddhahood in our very beings.

The Daishonin indicates in this Goshō that *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* is the heart of the entire Lotus Sutra. It is the "eye" and essential core of Buddhism. A comprehensive compilation of wisdom for helping people become happy, Buddhism has at its essence the *daimoku* of the Lotus Sutra, or *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*.

THIS is why everything becomes a source of value, everything is brought to life, when we base ourselves on *daimoku*. The Daishonin teaches that *myo* in *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* means "to revive, to return to life." *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* rejuvenates all knowledge; it revitalizes our daily lives.

People today have a great deal of knowledge. But even though vast bodies of knowledge have been developed in scientific technology, psychology, sociology, economics, politics and other fields, confu-

sion and turmoil in the world continue unabated. The words of an ancient Greek philosopher, “There are those who lack wisdom even while knowing many things,” seem increasingly relevant. People today are like travelers who wander through a vast desert in search of water, unaware that there is a spring right under their feet.

We possess the essential wisdom for revolutionizing human life and manifesting great states of life. We possess the supreme jewel of humankind. Therefore, we are the people of the greatest wisdom and wealth.

President Toda said: “While people today are extremely greedy, they do not desire the

vast benefit of attaining Buddhahood. On this point they could be called unselfish, people of modest wants, or just plain foolish.”

With “great greed” for attaining Buddhahood, let us continue working to develop the state of life of absolute happiness—the state in which life itself is an irrepressible joy—in our own lives, while enabling friends to do the same. □

1. “Myoho-ama Gozen Gohenji” (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1402–03), written in July 1278, when the Daishonin was 57. Editor’s Note: The Gosho text here may differ in places from what appears in the *Major Writings* or other previously published translations. This is so that the wording of the Eng-

lish text will accord more smoothly with the modern Japanese translation of the original Japanese Gosho. (The author is using a modern Japanese rendering of the classical Japanese original as the basis of his lectures in this series.)

2. Six mystic powers: Expounded in the *Kusha Ron*, they are: 1) the power to appear anywhere at will; 2) the power to observe all phenomena in the world, no matter how large or small, near or far; 3) the power to understand all sounds and languages; 4) the power to read minds; 5) the power to know people’s past lifetimes; and 6) the power to be free from all innate desires.
3. Seven kinds of gems: They differ slightly according to different scriptures. “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower,” the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra, defines them as: gold, silver, lapis, coral, agate, pearl and carnelian. From the standpoint of faith, they indicate the seven jewels of the Treasure Tower.
4. Energy equals mass times the speed of light squared.

‘The One Essential Phrase’ Part 2

Prayer Is the Sun That Dispels Suffering

PRESIDENT Josei Toda taught that we should study the Daishonin’s writings with a spirit of wholehearted conviction in their truth.

Buddhism is, in a sense, a science. Physics takes the physical world as its subject. Sociology looks at social phenomena. Psychology investigates the human psyche. By the same token, Buddhism is a science that takes life in its entirety as

its subject. Happiness and suffering are what it investigates.

How can this world be rid of misery? How can each person lead the happiest life? How can that happiness and good fortune be made eternally indestructible? These are the questions that Buddhism pursues.

The vast body of all sutras, known collectively as the eighty thousand teachings, and the countless treatises and interpretations that came later, represent the progress of this investigation and its findings.

The Gosho then embodies the conclusion of all this research.

Imagine someone new to the study of physics sitting in on lectures by Einstein, who stood at the pinnacle of his field. If from the outset the neophyte doubted everything Einstein said, he or she would not grow in understanding.

Therefore, President Toda taught, when we read the Gosho, we should receive it with our entire beings—with a spirit of “Yes, that’s exactly right.” This is the shortcut to happiness.

Similarly, included within the title, *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*, is the entire sutra [the Lotus Sutra] consisting of all eight volumes, twenty-eight chapters and 69,384 characters without exception. Concerning this, Po Chü-i¹ stated that the title is to the sutra as eyes are to the Buddha. In the eighth volume of his *Hokke Mongu Ki*,² Miao-lo stated that T'ien-t'ai's *Hokke Gengi* explains only the title, but that the entire sutra is thereby included. By this he meant that, although the text was omitted, the entire sutra was contained in the title alone. Everything has its essential point, and the heart of the Lotus Sutra is its title, *Nam-myoho-rence-kyo*. Truly, if you chant this in the morning and evening, you are correctly reading the entire Lotus Sutra. Chanting daimoku twice is the same as reading the entire sutra twice, one hundred daimoku equal one hundred readings of the sutra, and a thousand daimoku, a thousand readings of the sutra. Thus, if you ceaselessly chant daimoku, you will be continually reading the Lotus Sutra. The sixty volumes of the T'ien-t'ai doctrine³ present exactly the same interpretation. (MW-1, 222)

IN Nichiren Daishonin's day, some carried out the practice of reading the Lotus Sutra in its entirety. The Daishonin indicates, however, that this is not necessary. He says that chanting the daimoku, or title of the sutra, once is the same as reading the entire sutra once, and that chanting a thousand daimoku is the

same as reading the sutra a thousand times.

As indicated by the word *ceaselessly* in this passage from "The One Essential Phrase,"⁴ the important thing is to continue the practice of chanting daimoku throughout our lives. The amount of daimoku we chant each day will naturally vary somewhat over time. That's perfectly all right. The important thing is that we continue chanting daimoku throughout our lives.

Even if someone has practiced hard for many years, if he or she should abandon faith, from that moment on his or her life will become dark—like a light that has been unplugged.

As we see here and in many other Goshos, Nichiren Daishonin invariably backs up his arguments with documentary proof. He quotes sutra passages and cites the interpretations of T'ien-t'ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo. Why?

Since the Daishonin is the original Buddha, one might suppose that he could have simply described his enlightenment directly. But had he done so, the people of his time might not have been convinced of the truth of his words. Therefore, he cites textual sources to clarify that he is not speaking arbitrarily. "My teaching exactly accords with what Shakyamuni says, and with the interpretations of the great teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo," he pointed out. "Therefore, please believe it wholeheartedly."

So when we study a passage of the Goshos where the Daishonin cites Shakyamuni's words and the interpretations of T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo, we

should understand that the Daishonin, in his mercy, is trying to ensure that we, despite our strong tendency to doubt, are not confused. He is trying to give us confidence that what he says is correct.

When we can thus sense the Daishonin's immense compassion, we are deeply reading the Goshos.

A law this easy to embrace and this easy to practice was taught for the sake of all humankind in this evil age of the Latter Day of the Law. A passage from the Lotus Sutra refers to [its practice] "in the Latter Day of the Law."⁵ Another reads, "[if a bodhisattva] in the latter age hereafter, when the Law is about to perish, should accept and embrace, read and recite this sutra...."⁶ A third states, "In the evil age of the Latter Day of the Law if there is someone who can uphold this sutra...."⁷ A fourth reads, "In the last five hundred year period you must spread it abroad widely."⁸ The intent of all these teachings is the admonition to embrace and believe in the Lotus Sutra in this Latter Day of the Law. The learned priests of Japan, China and India who have turned their backs on the true teaching have all failed to comprehend this obvious meaning. They follow either the Hinayana or the provisional Mahayana teachings of the Nembutsu, Shingon, Zen and Ritsu sects; but have discarded the Lotus Sutra. The people do not realize that the priests misunderstand Buddhism and trust them without the slightest

doubt because they appear to be true priests. Therefore, unintentionally, the people have become enemies of the Lotus Sutra and foes of Shakyamuni Buddha. From the viewpoint of the sutra, it is certain that not only will all their wishes remain unfulfilled, but their lives will be short and, after this life, they will be doomed to the hell of incessant suffering. (MW-1, 222–23)

CHANTING daimoku is a teaching that is “easy to embrace and easy to practice.” Anyone can perform it. It can be done anytime and anywhere. It is the most highly refined and simplified method of practice. As such, it is the perfect Buddhist teaching for not only the twenty-first century but for the twenty-second, thirtieth and fiftieth centuries, and for the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law—for all eternity.

President Toda, smiling brightly, would say:

If a large hospital were to concoct a treatment that, if you took it every day for an hour, would enable you to become happy without fail in both body and spirit, the place would no doubt be packed. Regardless of whether it was expensive or if you had to wait in line for hours, people would come every day to receive it.

We can get this medicine, the mystic medicine of daimoku, in our own homes—and while sitting down, at that. All we need to pay for are candles and incense. So from

the standpoint of cost, it is the least expensive method available. If someone just grumbles and fails to carry out the practice, it’s a great waste.

The practice of chanting daimoku embodies the Buddha’s ardent and heartfelt wish to lead all people to happiness. A practice that only certain people can carry out goes against the Buddha’s spirit.

Nevertheless, the Buddhist priests of Japan, China and India have prompted people to discard the Lotus Sutra and have trampled on the Buddha’s spirit. Because these aberrant priests have had the appearance of “true priests,” the people have been deceived. In this Gosho, we can hear the Daishonin crying out for people to open their eyes and use their wisdom.

A follower of Buddhism ought to practice as Shakyamuni instructs. Those claiming to be the Daishonin’s followers ought to do as Nichiren Daishonin says. Otherwise, they are not true followers.

False priests try to make people abide by their mistaken beliefs and opinions. This is the inherent danger in a situation where a clergy assumes the role of directing the laity.

For precisely this reason, the SGI makes the Gohonzon and the Gosho its eternal foundation. It is vital that we always practice in direct accord with Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching.

Faith: The Key to Eternal Happiness

**Even though one neither
reads nor studies the sutra,**

chanting the title alone is the source of tremendous good fortune. The sutra teaches that women, evil men, and those in the realms of Animality and Hell—in fact, all the people of the Ten Worlds—can attain Buddhahood. We can comprehend this when we remember that fire can be produced by a stone taken from the bottom of a river, and a candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years. If even the most ordinary things of this world are such wonders, then how much more wondrous is the power of the Mystic Law. The lives of human beings are fettered by evil karma, earthly desires and the inborn sufferings of life and death. But due to the three inherent potentials of Buddha nature—innate Buddhahood, the wisdom to become aware of it, and the action to manifest it—our lives can without doubt come to reveal the Buddha’s three enlightened properties. The Great Teacher Dengyo declared that the power of the Lotus Sutra enables anyone to manifest Buddhahood in their present form. He stated this because even the Dragon King’s daughter was able to attain Buddhahood through the power of the Lotus Sutra. Do not doubt this in the least. Let your husband know that I will explain this in detail when I see him.

Nichiren

The third day of the seventh month in the first year of Koan (1278) (MW-1, 223–24)

DAIMOKU is like light. As the Daishonin says, “A candle can light up a place that has been dark for billions of years.” Similarly, the moment we offer prayers based on daimoku, the darkness in our lives vanishes. This is the principle of the simultaneity of cause and effect. At that very instant, in the depths of our lives, our prayer has been answered.

The inherent cause (*nyo ze in*) of a deep prayer simultaneously produces a latent effect (*nyo ze ka*). While it takes time for this effect to become manifest, in the depths of our lives, our prayers are immediately realized. So at that moment light shines forth. The lotus flower (*rengé*), in blooming and seeding at the same time, illustrates this principle of simultaneity of cause and effect.

Therefore, it is important that we offer prayers with great confidence. The powers of the Buddha and the Law are activated in direct proportion to the strength of our faith and practice. Strong faith is like a high voltage—it turns on a brilliant light in our lives.

Prayers are invisible, but if we pray steadfastly they will definitely effect clear results in our lives and surroundings in time. This is the principle of the true entity of all phenomena. Faith means having confidence in this invisible realm. Those who impatiently pursue only visible gains, who put on airs, or who are caught up in vanity and formalism will definitely become deadlocked.

In the SGI organization, the success of our activities or meetings, for example, hinges

on whether the leaders have prayed thoroughly to give each person hope and for each participant, without fail, to leave the activity with a sense of profound fulfillment. Those who are only concerned with what others think of them are not qualified to be SGI leaders.

People who base themselves on prayer are sincere. Prayer cleanses and expands the heart, and instills character.

Sufferings Are the Raw Material of Happiness

DAIMOKU is also like fire. When you burn the firewood of earthly desires, then the fire of happiness—that is, of enlightenment—burns brightly. Sufferings thus become the raw material for constructing happiness. For someone who does not have faith in the Mystic Law, sufferings may be only sufferings. But for a person with strong faith, sufferings function to enable him or her to become happier still.

Faith is inextinguishable hope. The practice of faith is a struggle to realize our desires. And the basis of this practice is prayer. Through prayer, hope turns into confidence. This spirit of confidence unfolds in three thousand ways, finally resulting in the attainment of our hopes. Therefore, we must never give up.

Even places that have been shrouded in darkness for billions of years can be illuminated. Even a stone from the bottom of a river can be used to produce fire. Our present sufferings, no matter how dark,

have certainly not continued for billions of years—nor will they linger forever. The sun will definitely rise. In fact, its ascent has already begun.

Those who over long periods grow accustomed to being miserable may acquire the tendency to give up. But with the Mystic Law we need never resign ourselves to defeat.

To put ourselves down is to denigrate the world of Buddhahood in our lives. It is tantamount to slandering the Gohonzon. The same is true of setting your mind that absolutely nothing can be done about some particular problem or suffering.

Also, we must not decide in advance that a particular person or a particular area is a lost cause. It is precisely when faced with challenging circumstances that we need to pray. The key is to offer concrete prayers and take action—until results are produced.

For instance, until a few years ago no one could even have imagined friends of the Mystic Law active in the former Soviet Union and other communist bloc countries. But the age has now changed. The long period of darkness has been broken. The starting point for this change lay in prayers for the people of those countries to definitely become happy and to shine with hope.

Prayers based on the Mystic Law are not abstract. They are a concrete reality in our lives. To offer prayers is to conduct a dialogue, an exchange, with the universe. When we pray, we embrace the universe with our lives, our determination.

Prayer is a struggle to expand our lives.

So prayer is not a feeble consolation; it is a powerful, unyielding conviction. And prayer must become manifest in action. To put it another way, if our prayers are in earnest, they will definitely give rise to action.

Prayer becomes manifest in action, and action has to be backed up by prayer. Only then can we elicit a response from the Buddhist gods and all Buddhas. Those who pray and take action for kosen-rufu are the Buddha's emissaries. They cannot fail to realize lives in which all desires are fulfilled.

Even if we have so much happiness that we wish for a little suffering, our happiness continues to increase by leaps and bounds—like a kite that soars ever higher. That is the

proof of attaining Buddhahood. Moreover, if we succeed in firmly establishing the world of Buddhahood in this lifetime, it will be ours eternally.

As the Daishonin indicates at the end of this letter, where he says, "Do not doubt this in the least," we need to have great confidence and live with great hope, whether we are young or old. When we manifest great hope, we can calmly survey our former sufferings. We can see that we have been taking small problems and blowing them up, worrying about them all out of proportion.

With this letter, the Daishonin appeals to all humankind: "Let us live with hope! Eternally! Our mind of faith instantaneously becomes the cause, the effect—and the power—of eternal happiness. It translates into great joy and great fulfillment." □

1. Po Chü-i (772–846): Noted Chinese poet of the T'ang dynasty.
2. *Hokke Mongu Ki* (Annotations on the *Hokke Mongu* [Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra]).
3. Sixty volumes of the T'ien-t'ai doctrine: The three major works of T'ien-t'ai—*Hokke Gengi* (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra), *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra) and *Maka Shikan* (Great Concentration and Insight)—and Miao-lo's annotations of these. Each of these comprises ten volumes.
4. "Myoho-ama Gozen Gohenji" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1402–03), written in July 1278, when the Daishonin was 57. Editor's Note: The Gosho text here may differ in places from what appears in *The Major Writings* or other previously published translations. This is so that the wording of the English text will accord more smoothly with the modern Japanese translation of the original Japanese Gosho. (The author is using a modern Japanese rendering of the classical Japanese original as the basis of his lectures in this series.)
5. LS14, 201.
6. LS14, 203.
7. LS17, 242.
8. LS23, 288.

Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra

1 Preliminary Thoughts

Impressions of My Mentor's State of Life

TO this day, memories of my mentor, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, lecturing on the Lotus Sutra, come vividly to mind like scenes in a great painting.

After World War II, the Soka Gakkai was in a state of ruin as a result of the campaign of suppression waged against it by the militarist government. At that time, President Toda began efforts to reconstruct the organization by delivering lectures on

the Lotus Sutra to a handful of members.

I was a participant in the seventh series of lectures he gave, which began on September 13, 1948. That was in the autumn of my twenty-first year. The venue was the old Soka Gakkai Headquarters in Nishi-Kanda, Tokyo.

"I see that everyone's arrived," he began. There were fifty to sixty people present. President Toda, his eyes sparkling behind his glasses, gazed around the meeting place, which consisted of two small rooms. Then he cleared his throat and began lecturing in a frank and open manner.

I was instantly awestruck, electrified by the profound ideas, the great and intense confidence, the compassionate cry of concern for the world and humankind that seemed to gush from his very being.

President Toda would never make things deliberately difficult or complex. His lectures were intelligible, straightforward and lucid. Yet, they glowed with the light of extremely profound truth. They conveyed philosophy rooted directly in life experience and in the Law that pervades the infinite universe. They were filled with breathtaking drama and joyous music. At one point, as I listened to him speak, the sun seemed to rise in my heart, and everything became illuminated brilliantly before my eyes.

That night, still filled with the thrill and excitement I felt during the lecture, I wrote a poem in the pages of my journal:

*How I marvel at the greatness
and profundity of the Lotus
Sutra.*

*Isn't it the path to salvation for
all humankind?*

*The teaching that enlightens one
to the origin of life and the
universe,*

*The fundamental principle
revealed to enable all people*

*to acquire the loftiest
character and happiness.*

I am 21 years old.

*Since setting out on my journey
of life, what did I
contemplate, what did I do,
what did I make the
wellspring of my happiness?*

*From this day on, I will advance
bravely.*

*From this day on, I will live
resolutely.*

*I will live within the life of the
Great Law, win over my
sufferings.*

*True sadness inspires one to lead
a great life.*

*I now see the true Great Path
and perceive the true nature
of life.*

Astonished at his profundity and breadth of knowledge, someone once asked President Toda, "When did you study these things?"

Smiling warmly, he replied: "While in prison during the persecution, I chanted sincere daimoku, and I studied. As a result, these things seem to have come back to me. The eighty thousand sutras in fact refer to my own life."

These lectures arose from the vast state of life of President Toda, who had awakened to the essence of Buddhism while in prison.

The Lotus Sutra of the Former, Middle and Latter Days

LATER on, President Toda developed the format for his lectures on the Lotus Sutra. He instituted beginners classes on the "Expedient Means"

(Hoben) and "The Life Span of the Thus Come One" (Juryo) chapters specifically for those who had recently taken faith.

His lectures, so brilliant and full of conviction, planted the essence of Buddhism in the hearts of his listeners, even without their being aware of it. For these persons new to faith, many of whom thought of Buddhism only in terms of Shakyamuni, President Toda began each series of lectures by emphasizing that the Lotus Sutra is expressed differently according to the age—depending on whether it is the Former, Middle or Latter Day of the Law.

President Toda used to say:

Everyone casually assumes that the Lotus Sutra indicates the twenty-eight-chapter text by that name. But there are in fact three kinds of Lotus Sutra.

The first is the Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni. This is the twenty-eight-chapter sutra of that name; this Lotus Sutra benefited people during Shakyamuni's lifetime and during the Former Day of the Law. Presently, in the Latter Day, however, even if you should carry out the practices [of the Former Day] of reading and reciting this sutra and copying it out, you will gain no benefit thereby. Our recitation of the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters during morning and evening gongyo, however, has a different significance.

The Lotus Sutra of the Middle Day of the Law is T'ien-t'ai's *Maha Shikan* (Great Concentration and Insight). The Lotus Sutra for this period of the Latter Day is Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the "seven-character

Lotus Sutra" hidden in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter. You need to understand that there are three kinds of Lotus Sutra and how they are related to one another.

In addition to these, there is another Lotus Sutra that, while not historically substantiated, was recognized alike by Nichiren Daishonin, Shakyamuni, T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo; this is the "twenty-four-character Lotus Sutra" expounded by Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Fukyo).

SHAKYAMUNI of India taught the "twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra" for those alive during his lifetime and in the Former Day. T'ien-t'ai of China expounded the *Maka Shikan* for human beings of the Middle Day of the Law. And Bodhisattva Never Disparaging expounded the so-called "twenty-four-character Lotus Sutra" for the people of the Middle Day of the Buddha called Awesome Sound King (Ionno).

President Toda explained that despite the differences in the age and the form in which the teaching was expressed, these are all in fact the same Lotus Sutra. President Toda called the Lotus Sutra as thus conceived the "manifold Lotus Sutra."

The Lotus Sutra, therefore, is not simply the "Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni." It is also the "Lotus Sutra of T'ien-t'ai" and the "Lotus Sutra of Bodhisattva Never Disparaging." This was a stunning perspective that only President Toda, who had become enlightened to the

essence of the Lotus Sutra, could have revealed.

In the course of listening to his broad-ranging lectures, his listeners, as a matter of course, could engrave distinctions between the "Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni" and the "Lotus Sutra of Nichiren Daishonin" in their lives.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Is the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day

WHAT do the different expressions of this "manifold Lotus Sutra" have in common? Ultimately, it is the teaching that "everyone equally has the potential to attain Buddhahood." There are, however, great differences in the forms whereby Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin expressed this teaching.

Whereas Shakyamuni expressed it as the "twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra," Nichiren Daishonin, to enable all human beings of the Latter Day to attain Buddhahood, revealed the ultimate truth of the Lotus Sutra as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

In the "Essence of the Lotus Sutra" (Hokke Shuyo Sho) the Daishonin says: "I, Nichiren, have abandoned the comprehensive and the abbreviated, and selected the essential. The essence is the five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo transmitted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Jogyo)" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 336).

The five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo, which constitute the Lotus Sutra's essence—that is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws—are the Lotus

Sutra appropriate to this age of the Latter Day of the Law. President Toda therefore termed the Daishonin's teaching the "Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day."

The Lineage of Votaries of the Lotus Sutra

ONE who expounds a teaching that can enable all people to attain Buddhahood is certain to encounter persecution. Even Shakyamuni underwent a succession of great persecutions.

Moreover, the Lotus Sutra itself states that whoever spreads the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law is certain to encounter numerous persecutions even greater than those Shakyamuni faced. This is clearly shown in such phrases as: "Since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?" (LS10, 164); "It [the Lotus Sutra] will face much hostility in the world and be difficult to believe" (LS14, 207); "the three powerful enemies" (LS13); and "the six difficult and nine easy acts" (LS11).

A votary who endures all of these great persecutions and perseveres in spreading the teaching among the people embodies the heart of the Lotus Sutra. Enduring persecution to spread the teaching to others is, in fact, an expression of compassion.

Just as the sutra predicts, the life of Nichiren Daishonin, who appeared in the Latter Day, was a succession of great persecutions. The Daishonin, noting that he had encountered persecutions

matching in every respect those that the sutra predicts will befall its votary, declares himself to be the “votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day” and the “Buddha of the Latter Day.”

At the same time, the Daishonin also designates Shakyamuni, T’ien-t’ai and Dengyo as votaries of the Lotus Sutra of their respective ages. They were all predecessors who expounded the Lotus Sutra out of their desire for the people’s happiness, and who were persecuted as a result.

In addition, in many places in the Goshō, the Daishonin praises and offers the greatest encouragement to his followers by calling them “votaries of the Lotus Sutra.” One such follower was Shijo Kingo, who struggled to overcome great difficulties and persevered in faith without begrudging his life. To one woman (the mother of Oto Gozen) who visited him in exile on the island of Sado, bringing her young daughter with her on the arduous journey, he goes so far as to say, “You are undoubtedly the foremost votary of the Lotus Sutra among the women of Japan” (MW-3, 52). And he gives her the name Nichimyo Shonin (Sage Nichimyo).

Buddhism Means Taking Action Among People and in Society

THE Daishonin also writes, “At the time of kosen-rufu, all people in the entire world will become votaries of the Lotus Sutra” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 834). He thus indicates the

principle that anyone in the world may become a votary of the Lotus Sutra.

“Votaries of the Lotus Sutra” refers to those who dedicate themselves to the mission of saving all people throughout the entire world and over the ten thousand years and more of the Latter Day of the Law. And “kosen-rufu” indicates a situation in which individuals, basing themselves on the Mystic Law, contribute to others and to society as “votaries,” that is, as people of action.

Accordingly, the Soka Gakkai’s first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, who struggled against the country’s militarist regime and propagated the True Law for the people’s happiness without begrudging their own lives, certainly have a place in this lineage of votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

The sixty-fifth high priest, Nichijun, lauded President Makiguchi as “an emissary of the Buddha from birth,” and he praised President Toda as “the forerunner of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.”

President Toda initiated the great struggle to spread the “Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day” for those laboring in extreme distress under the conditions that ensued following World War II.

“I want to banish the word *misery* from this world.” “I want to rid the world of poverty and sickness.” This passionate cry of my mentor, who had stood up alone after the war, still resounds in my ears. This cry of the spirit is none other than the “heart of the Lotus Sutra.”

Buddhism always means action and practice. Enabling people to overcome their difficulties and establish lives of supreme happiness requires dialogue, thoroughgoing dialogue. In such action and practice beats the “heart of the Lotus Sutra.”

The ‘Buddhism Hidden in the Depths of the Sutra’ Is Open to All

IN the course of his lectures, President Toda often spoke as follows:

Nichiren Daishonin read the Lotus Sutra from the standpoint of its most profound depths. The Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai read the surface or literal meaning of the Lotus Sutra and interpreted its passages and phrases most skillfully...

When I say Nichiren Daishonin read the Lotus Sutra, bear in mind that he was not reading the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni expounded just as it was, he was reading it in terms of the meaning contained in its depths, from his state of life as the Buddha of the Latter Day. This is what he indicates when he refers to “the theoretical teaching as I read it” and “the ‘Life Span’ chapter from the perspective of my enlightenment.”

In his lectures, President Toda strictly distinguished between the literal, surface meaning, or the interpretation from the standpoint of Shakyamuni and T’ien-t’ai, and the implicit meaning, or the interpretation from the standpoint

of Nichiren Daishonin, and he explained the correct way to read the sutra in the Latter Day.

Just what does it mean to read the sutra in terms of its implicit meaning in the 'Life Span' chapter? In a nutshell, it is to read the sutra from the standpoint of the vast state of life of the original Buddha, who desires to enable all people of the Latter Day to attain true happiness.

The Daishonin "read the Lotus Sutra with his life" by practicing with the spirit of not begrudging his life. The essence of the Lotus Sutra the Daishonin risked his life to propagate is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the "Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day," the "Lotus Sutra hidden in the depths of the sutra."

Considered from this standpoint, the twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra becomes in its entirety an explanation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Reading the Lotus Sutra from the standpoint of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, hence, is to read it from the standpoint of its implicit meaning.

When we recite the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters during gongyo, we do so not from the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra of the Former or Middle Day of the Law but from that of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Living Interpretation of Great Wisdom for People's Happiness, Rooted in Daily Life

NICHIREN Daishonin lectured on the twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra from

the standpoint of the teaching hidden in its depths, and Nikko Shonin recorded his lectures in the form of the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings). To revive the heart of the Lotus Sutra and enable all people of the Latter Day to attain Buddhahood, the Daishonin, out of his immense compassion, explains exactly how the passages of the sutra should be read.

Reading the Lotus Sutra in terms of its implicit meaning might be described as an "interpretation from the standpoint of the Daishonin's enlightenment." It is not simply a theoretical explanation of the sutra but an interpretation that articulates the spirit of the sutra passages from the single perspective of how to enable all people, who live amid the realities of daily life, to become happy.

In other words, it is a living interpretation of the Lotus Sutra—an interpretation for putting the sutra into practice in our lives; an interpretation from the viewpoint of the human being; an interpretation for ordinary people; an interpretation that focuses on people's daily lives. It is not an interpretation merely for the sake of intellectual knowledge but an interpretation based on great wisdom so as to ensure that the sutra's teaching may be developed correctly and boldly in response to the needs of the times and society.

"Hidden in the depths" may give an impression of some mystery closed off to most people. But that is certainly not the case. On the contrary, the true value of the "Buddhism hidden

in the depths" lies in its being widely opened to all people and becoming a living, pulsing force that invigorates the age and society.

The members of the Nikken sect have turned this basic tenet completely on its head. They twist the teaching of the "Buddhism hidden in the depths," get hung up on merely exegetical interpretations, and cloak themselves in a shell of authority. They have turned the world of priests and temples into a world of special privilege, and they have turned the Gohonzon into a tool for controlling people. While not carrying out a satisfactory practice themselves, they spend their time in degenerate pursuits, allowing the roots of their humanity to decay. Their conduct is truly fearful. They have killed the Daishonin's spirit.

In this series, with the "Ongi Kuden"—the Daishonin's lectures on the Lotus Sutra—and the lectures of my mentor, President Toda, as my basis, I also hope to conduct my lectures in a way relevant to modern times and society.

The Benefit of Reciting the Sutra

AS you know, chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, or the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra, is termed the "primary practice" and reading or reciting the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" chapters is called the "supplementary practice" or "supporting practice."

The twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan, explains the relationship between the primary and supplementary practices by comparing

them to food and seasoning, respectively. In other words, when eating rice or noodles, the “primary” source of nourishment, you use salt or vinegar as seasoning to help bring out, or “supplement,” the flavor.

The benefit from carrying out the primary practice is immense. When you also recite the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters, it has the supplementary function of increasing and accelerating the beneficial power of the primary practice. Our basic way of gongyo is to chant daimoku as its primary component and recite the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters as the supplementary.

The benefit of chanting daimoku is immeasurable and boundless. Indeed, there is infinite power in chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo just one time. The Daishonin says, “If you recite these words of the daimoku once, then the Buddha nature of all living beings will be summoned and gather around you” (MW-5, 112). Also, he teaches that the benefit of chanting one daimoku is equal to that of reading the entire Lotus Sutra, that of chanting ten daimoku is equal to reading the sutra ten times, that of a hundred daimoku is equal to reading the sutra a hundred times, and that of a thousand daimoku is equal to reading the sutra a thousand times.

Accordingly, we do not necessarily have to recite the sutra as we usually do in gongyo if, for example, we are sick. If, as a result of forcing ourselves to do a complete gongyo at such times, our condition should

worsen, then, rather than increasing our benefit, it may in fact have the opposite effect of destroying our joy in faith and thus generating negative value.

At such times, it may be best to simply read the “Expedient Means” and verse portion (*jigage*) of the “Life Span” chapter and chant daimoku, or to just chant daimoku. Buddhism is reason. The important thing, therefore, is for each person to make wise judgments so that he or she can carry out a practice of gongyo filled with joy at all times.

The Lotus Sutra As Read From the Daishonin’s Standpoint

THE primary practice of the Daishonin’s Buddhism is to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the ultimate truth of the highest Buddhist teaching. Since we are carrying out the supreme primary practice, anything less than the highest supplementary practice would be of no help at all.

The supplementary practice the Daishonin chose is the recitation of the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters of the Lotus Sutra, the purpose of Shakyamuni Buddha’s advent in this world. Of the sutra’s twenty-eight chapters, these two represent “the essence of the theoretical teaching” and “the essence of the essential teaching,” respectively.

During the Daishonin’s time, as well, his followers recited these two chapters. In one Gosho, for example, he says:

Among the entire twenty-eight

chapters, the [“Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters] are particularly outstanding. The remaining chapters are all in a sense the branches and leaves of these two chapters. Therefore for your regular recitation, I recommend that you practice reading the prose sections of the [“Expedient Means” and “Life Span”] chapters. (MW-6, 10)

He teaches that since the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters constitute the core of the Lotus Sutra’s twenty-eight chapters, these two should be read daily.

Gongyo and daimoku are the roots that, as it were, enable you to grow into a great tree. The tree of one’s life strengthens and thickens as a cumulative result of continuing the practice of gongyo and chanting daimoku. While it may not be possible to see any changes from one day to the next, because of the daily nourishment a consistent practice affords, our lives will one day become towering and vast like great trees. As we carry out a steady practice, we will develop a state of life of absolutely indestructible happiness.

As I mentioned earlier, however, it goes without saying that the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters we recite are those of the Lotus Sutra as seen from the Daishonin’s standpoint of the “teaching hidden in the depths.”

Nichikan explains that we read the “Expedient Means” chapter to “refute” its surface meaning and “borrow” its phrases, and that we read the

“Life Span” chapter to “refute” its surface meaning and “use” the profound meaning implicit in the chapter. Reading these chapters from the standpoint of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, we refute their surface meaning; it is as though we are saying: “The Lotus Sutra of Shakyamuni has no power of benefit in the Latter Day.”

At the same time, from the Daishonin’s standpoint, we also recite the Lotus Sutra because it “praises the greatness of the Gohonzon.” This way of reading it corresponds to “borrowing” and “using” its words.

While there are meticulous arguments to support and substantiate this explanation, for the time being I will simply confirm the point that in reading the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters, we do so from the standpoint of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

Your Chanting Voices Reach the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas

SOME of you, I imagine, may wonder how reading sutra passages you cannot understand could bring about any benefit. Let me reassure you that definitely there is benefit from carrying out this practice.

The Daishonin says:

A baby does not know the difference between water and fire, and cannot distinguish medicine from poison. But when he sucks milk, his life is nourished and sustained. Although one may not be versed [in various sutras] ... if one lis-

tens to even one character or one phrase of the Lotus Sutra, one cannot fail to attain Buddhahood. (MW-7, 104–05)

Just as a baby is nourished grows naturally of its own accord by drinking milk, if you earnestly chant the Mystic Law with faith in the Gohonzon, definitely your life will come to shine with immeasurable good fortune and benefit.

To cite another example: Dogs have a language in the world of dogs, and birds have a language in the world of birds. While people cannot understand these languages, fellow dogs and fellow birds can certainly communicate within their own species. Also, even though some people do not understand scientific jargon or a particular language, others can communicate very well through these languages.

Similarly, it might be said that when we are doing gongyo or chanting daimoku, we are speaking in the language of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Even though you may not understand what you are saying, your voice definitely reaches the Gohonzon, all Buddhist gods and all Buddhas and bodhisattvas over the three existences and the ten directions; and that, in response, the entire universe bathes you in the light of good fortune.

At the same time, it is certainly true that if you study the meaning of the sutra based on this practice and with a seeking mind, you can as a matter of course deepen your confidence and strengthen your faith still further.

A Practice for Revitalization

WHEN we do gongyo and chant daimoku, we conduct a ceremony in which we praise the Gohonzon and the great Law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo. On one level, it could be said that gongyo is a paean or a song of the highest and utmost praise for the Buddha and for Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the fundamental law of the universe. At the same time, when we do gongyo, we also praise the eternal life of the universe and the world of Buddhahood in our own lives.

President Toda once said:

When we turn to the east and salute the Buddhist gods, then and there the Buddhist gods within our own hearts appear in the universe around us. Then, when we face the Gohonzon during the second prayer, the Buddhist gods all take their seats behind us.

If I were to salute the Buddhist gods right now, then, regardless of whether it was night or day, they would all take their seats behind me and salute the Gohonzon. And these Buddhist gods would all start to work to fulfill my desires. This is how it works.

When we worship the Gohonzon, right then and there the doors of the microcosm within us open completely to the macrocosm, and we can experience a great and serene sense of happiness, as though gazing out over the entire universe. We savor tremendous fulfillment and joy, and gain

No practice is as universally accessible to all people as the practice of reading the sutra and chanting daimoku set forth by Nichiren Daishonin. This is the Buddhist practice that is most wide-open and accessible to all people.

access to a great and all-embracing wisdom. The microcosm that is encompassed by the universe in turn encompasses the entire universe.

Gongyo is an invigorating “ceremony of time without beginning” that revitalizes us from the very depths of our being. Therefore, the important thing is to do gongyo each day filled with a feeling of rhythm and cadence—like a horse galloping through the heavens. I hope you will do the kind of satisfying gongyo that leaves you refreshed and revitalized in both body and mind.

**The ‘King of Sutras,’
Which Makes People
Strong and Wise**

THE Lotus Sutra is the “king of sutras,” the “scripture that calls out to all people.” It is a scripture “living” right now; it embodies the Buddha’s compassion and egalitarian outlook. It is a “renaissance scripture,” overflowing with the spirit of revitalization, which makes human beings strong and wise. And the “Expedient

Means” and “Life Span” chapters are the heart of the sutra.

No practice is as universally accessible to all people as the practice of reading the sutra and chanting daimoku set forth by Nichiren Daishonin. This is the Buddhist practice that is most wide-open and accessible to all people.

During the Daishonin’s lifetime, both priests and lay people assiduously recited the sutra and chanted daimoku. In modern society, however, for many people in Japan, sutras have become something distant and remote; the only exposure that most people in Japan have to the sutras is when they hear priests intoning them at funerals.

This state of affairs, this tendency to depend on priests—which has come to be regarded as so natural that no one questions it—has produced a spiritual foundation of blind obedience to religious authority. And it is the “fundamental evil” that has allowed members of the clergy to grow arrogant and decadent.

Today, however, as a result of the development of the Soka

Gakkai International, people not only in Japan but throughout the world joyously chant the Mystic Law and recite the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” chapters. This is a grand undertaking wholly without precedent in the history of Buddhism. This represents the great religious revolution of the twentieth century.

Nichiren Daishonin’s “Buddhism of the people” is generating a great light of peace and happiness throughout the world. Millions are experiencing the beneficial power of the Mystic Law and acting out the wonderful drama of their human revolution. More than anything else, this fact attests most eloquently to the correctness of the SGI, which carries on the spirit of the Lotus Sutra in the present age.

As I work on these lectures, I have images of these many friends in mind. I will proceed as though carrying on a discussion with each of you while gazing up into a clear, blue sky, or strolling leisurely along a path through a field filled with fragrant, blooming flowers. □

2

Behold the Sun of Buddhahood in Your Heart

On the 'Expedient Means' Chapter

PRACTICING the Lotus Sutra causes the sun to rise in our hearts. No matter how stormy our situation, when the sun blazes in the depths of our lives, a clear, bright sky—like the blue sky of May—opens in our hearts. And when we possess in our hearts the four virtues of eternity, happiness, true self and purity, then the land—the place where we are—shines as the land of eternally tranquil light.

While everyone has a sun in his or her heart, all too few are aware it exists. The Lotus Sutra is the scripture that reveals the brilliant sun of Buddhahood inherent in our lives.

"You, yourself, are a Buddha." "Revere the sun of Buddhahood in your own life." This is the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, the message of the "Expedient Means" chapter.

Shakyamuni perceived that everyone possesses Buddhahood just as he did. And he made it possible for anyone to advance along the path to which he became enlightened. Based on the irrefutable reason of the proposition that all human beings are respectable, and that there is no human being who is

better than anyone else, Shakyamuni went out among the people and began expounding the Law continuously.

Buddhism Is the Path of Limitless Self-improvement

IN the latter half "Expedient Means," Shakyamuni explains that the reason Buddhas appear in the world is to "open the door of," "show," "cause living beings to awaken to" and "induce them to enter the path of" the Buddha wisdom that inherently exists in human life. He further states that all people can equally develop the Buddha's state of life; and that by expounding the Lotus Sutra that enables them to do so, he has fulfilled a vow he made long ago.

I think the spirit of "Expedient Means," as expressed in these passages, is a profound form of humanistic education. The reason for this is that Buddhism starts from the recognition of each person's infinite potential. And it teaches the means whereby people can awaken to, and draw forth, the supreme treasure of Buddhahood in their lives.

When people become aware of this treasure in their own lives, they also come to recognize it in

others and so will treat their fellow human beings with heartfelt respect. At the same time, they naturally take action to spark the same awareness in others.

When we make such efforts, the treasure in our own lives is polished, and this in turn enables us to develop still more confidence in our innate potential and dignity. Buddhist practice is thus the path of limitless self-improvement.

After hearing the Buddha expound "Expedient Means," Shariputra and the other voice-hearers (persons of learning) attain enlightenment. Vowing to take action among the people, they become "voice-hearers who devote themselves to the people"; they emerge as true disciples of the Buddha.

Shariputra and the others no doubt were moved by the profound compassion of their mentor, Shakyamuni. The great light of the Buddha wisdom suddenly illuminated the darkness of their formerly self-centered and tightly closed hearts. Their hearts opened and expanded widely.

They understood it had been the Buddha's intention all along to guide them to Buddhahood, the vast and boundless state of life. They realized that attaining the two vehicles

(the worlds of Learning and Realization) or the three vehicles (the worlds of Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva) was not the true aim of the Buddha's teaching.

This teaching that guides people to aspire to the Buddha's state of life rather than the three vehicles is called "the replacement of the three vehicles with the one vehicle" (*kaisan ken'ichi*). The replacement of the three vehicles with the one supreme vehicle is the central teaching of the first half, or theoretical teaching, of the Lotus Sutra. And of the fourteen chapters that make up the theoretical teaching, "Expedient Means," which reveals the framework of the replacement of the three vehicles with the one supreme vehicle, is the central pillar.

In Buddhism, the term *hoben* refers to the skillful means or methods Buddhas employ to guide people to enlightenment. The "Expedient Means" (*Hoben*) chapter extols the wisdom of the Buddhas to thus instruct the people. Later, I will elaborate further on the profound meaning of the term *hoben*.

The Essence of the Entire 'Expedient Means' Chapter

IN our daily practice of gongyo, we recite the opening portion of "Expedient Means." This is the most important part of the entire chapter.

Briefly, the contents of this part of the chapter are as follows. First, Shakyamuni clarifies that the wisdom to which all Buddhas are enlightened is "infinitely profound and immeasurable"; and that it is

well beyond the capacity of Shariputra and the other voice-hearers to comprehend. Shakyamuni then says he has employed similes and various other means to expound skillfully the Buddha wisdom to the people. Finally, he reveals that the wisdom of all Buddhas is none other than the comprehension of the "true entity of all phenomena" (*shoho jisso*). This concludes the portion of "Expedient Means" we recite each day.

In a nutshell, the "true entity of all phenomena" represents the principle that all people have the potential to be Buddhas. In other words, this passage reveals in theoretical terms the path whereby all people can attain Buddhahood. The portion we recite during gongyo is thus the very essence of the entire "Expedient Means" chapter.

Let us now proceed to the contents of "Expedient Means."

"Hoben" (Expedient Means), the second chapter of Myoho-enge-kyo

Niji seson. Ju sanmai. Anjo ni ki. Go sharihotsu. Sho-but[^]chi-e. Jinjin muryo. Go chi-e mon. Nange nannyu. Issai sho-mon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho fu no chi.

At that time the World-Honored One calmly arose from his samadhi and addressed Shariputra, saying: "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers

or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it. (LS2, 23)

SHAKYAMUNI at last begins to expound the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. At the beginning of "Expedient Means," Shakyamuni, having arisen from samadhi, or deep meditation, on the truth that immeasurable meanings come from the one Law, tells Shariputra straightaway: "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable.... [None of you] is able to comprehend it." The teaching thus opens with a scene of considerable tension.

Regarding "At that time..." which opens the chapter, let us first consider just what kind of "time" is being indicated? President Toda explained:

"At that time..." refers to the concept of time as employed in Buddhism. This is different from time in the sense that we ordinarily use it to indicate some particular time such as two o'clock or three o'clock, or in the sense of "springtime."

Neither is "At that time..." comparable to the typical nursery tale opening, "Once upon a time..." Time, in the sense signified here, refers to when a Buddha, perceiving the people's longing for him, appears in order to expound his teaching.

Four conditions must be met for a Buddha to expound the Law—those of time, response, capacity and Law. Time, in terms of Buddhism, indicates when the Buddha appears in order to expound the Law in response to the capacity of people who seek his teaching. In other words, it refers to when a

Buddha and human beings encounter one another.

Shakyamuni's Disciples Were Awaiting a Great Teaching

WHILE Shakyamuni is engaged in meditation in the "Introduction" chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the seeking spirit for the Way of his disciples, including Shariputra and others of the two vehicles, no doubt reaches a climax.

They probably thought to themselves: "I wonder what kind of teaching the World Honored One will expound?" "I don't want to miss a single word." "I will engrave his teaching in my heart." While containing their blazing enthusiasm, they all strained their ears to listen. And, focusing every nerve in their bodies, they fixed their gaze on their mentor.

And so the time became ripe. Shakyamuni finally broke his long silence and began to expound the Lotus Sutra—the ultimate teaching that enables all living beings to attain Buddhahood. This is the meaning of "At that time..." which begins the "Expedient Means" chapter.

In other words, it indicates the time when a Buddha stands up to guide the people to enlightenment, and the time when the disciples have established a single-minded seeking spirit for the Buddha's teaching. It signifies a profound concordance of the hearts of the disciples with the heart of the mentor. This scene in the Lotus Sutra represents the opening of the grand drama of mentor and

disciple who dedicate themselves to the happiness of humankind.

The Buddha is the one who most keenly "comprehends the time." The Buddha awaits the proper time, discerns the nature of the time, creates the time and expounds the Law that accords with the time. Such is the Buddha's wisdom and compassion.

"Why do the people suffer?" "For what do the people yearn?" "What teaching enables the people to become happy? And when should it be taught?" The Buddha ponders these matters constantly and expounds the Law freely in accordance with the time.

In this sense, to "know the time" is also to understand the hearts of the people. The Buddha is a leader who is a master at understanding the others' hearts. The Buddha is an "instructor of the spirit" and an expert on human nature.

From the Buddha's standpoint, "that time" is the time when the Buddha initiates the struggle to enable all people to attain enlightenment. And for the disciples, it is the time when they directly grasp and become powerfully aware of the Buddha's spirit.

Regarding the importance of the time, Nichiren Daishonin says, "One who wishes to study the teachings of Buddhism must first learn to understand the time" (MW-3, 79). Thus he indicates that Buddhism is expounded based on the time, and that the teaching that should be propagated is the one that accords with the time.

Proclaiming this period of the Latter Day of the Law to be

the time when the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo should be spread, the Daishonin launched the struggle to propagate the Mystic Law and enable all people of the Latter Day to attain enlightenment.

One's Inner Determination To Fight Now Opens the Way Forward

IN other words, from the standpoint of the "Buddhism hidden in the depths," we can interpret "that time" as indicating the time when the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, commenced his great struggle to save all humankind. And it can also be said that "that time" indicates the time when the Daishonin's disciples stand up in concert with the mentor to realize kosen-rufu.

In terms of our practice, therefore, I would like to stress that "that time" exists only when we pray to the Gohonzon and manifest determination and awareness of our mission for kosen-rufu. We have to make a determination, pray and take action. Unless we do so, our environment will not change in the least; though five or ten years may pass, "that time" will never arrive.

Our single-minded determination for kosen-rufu, and that alone, creates the "time." "That time" is when we set our lives in motion, when we stand up of our own volition and by our own will and strength. "That time" is when we summon forth strong faith and take our place on the grand stage of kosen-rufu.

Goethe writes, "The moment alone is decisive; Fixes the life

of man, and his future destiny settles." "That time" is the moment you resolve from the depths of your heart: "Now I will stand up and fight!" From that instant your destiny

changes. Your life develops. History begins.

This is the spirit of the mystic principle of the True Cause (*honnin-myo*). This is the principle of *ichinen sanzen*. The

moment you autonomously determine to accomplish something—not when you do it because you are told to—is "that time," the "time" of mission. □

3

Immeasurable Meanings Derive From the One Law

Niji seson. Ju sanmai. Anjo ni ki. Go sharihotsu. Sho-but[^]chi-e. Jinjin muryo. Go chi-e mon. Nange nannyu. Issai sho-mon. Hyaku-shi-butsu. Sho fu no chi.

At that time the World-Honored One calmly arose from his samadhi and addressed Shariputra, saying: "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers or pratyekabuddhas is able to comprehend it. (LS2, 23)

AT the outset of "Expedient Means," Shakyamuni arises serenely from *samadhi* and begins expounding the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. *Samadhi*, or meditative concentration, means to focus one's mind on one point so that it becomes perfectly tranquil and still like a clear mirror, and thereby

enter a state of inner serenity. Shakyamuni enters *samadhi* early in the "Introduction," the first chapter of the sutra, and continues meditating throughout the chapter.

Even though the sutra speaks of Shakyamuni entering *samadhi*, or meditative concentration, this does not mean that in the Latter Day of the Law people should seclude themselves in mountains and forests and practice sitting meditation or contemplation. Nichiren Daishonin, who struggled in the very midst of society to enable all people to attain supreme enlightenment, rejects such practices as not suited to the time.

Needless to say, in the present age *samadhi* or "meditative concentration" means doing gongyo and chanting daimoku. We do not, however, carry out this practice of "meditative concentration" secluded in mountains and forests. Rather, on the foundation of

our practice of gongyo and daimoku, each day we polish our lives, draw forth infinite wisdom and courage, and go out into society. This is the discipline we are carrying out.

Contemplation or meditation for its own sake is absurd. In the Vimalakirti Sutra, Shakyamuni clearly explains that true meditation is not solitary contemplation beneath a tree but playing an active role in society while embracing the truth.

Mahatma Gandhi, to someone who urged that he pursue a life of meditation, is said to have remarked that he felt no need to withdraw to a cave for that purpose. He carried the cave with him, he said, wherever he went. This episode is characteristic of Gandhi, who devoted his life to taking action and practicing among the people.

Buddhism is not a religion that closes its eyes to people's suffering; it is a teaching that

Wisdom is the path to happiness. Money, skill at “getting by” in the world, status—none of these can enable us to overcome the fundamental sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. The only way is to cultivate the wisdom with which our lives are inherently endowed.

opens people’s eyes. Therefore, Buddhism is the path that enables people to become happy. To turn away our eyes from the contradictions of society and rid ourselves of all worldly thoughts is not the way of Buddhist practice.

The true spirit of meditation lies in manifesting our innate wisdom in society and resolutely struggling for the happiness of ourselves and others, and to construct a better society.

The Daishonin Stood Up for All Humankind

THE specific type of *samadhi* Shakyamuni entered is termed “meditation on the truth that immeasurable meanings derive from the one Law.” This Law from which immeasurable meanings derive is the foundation of all teachings. Thus the Muryogi Sutra reads, “Immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law.” Shakyamuni expounded the Lotus Sutra from the standpoint of

this great truth to which he had become enlightened.

Nichiren Daishonin clarified that this “single Law” is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. He revealed this fundamental Law of the universe for all people and expressed it so that anyone can practice it. He expounded it for the sake of the entire world and for all humanity.

Nichiren Daishonin stood up to expound the Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for the happiness of all people. This is what the phrase “calmly arose from his *samadhi*” signifies in terms of its implicit meaning.

In practical terms from our own standpoint, “immeasurable meanings are born from a single Law” means precisely that by believing in and embracing the Mystic Law, we can acquire the Buddha’s infinite wisdom. By doing gongyo and chanting daimoku, we cause our lives to shine with supreme wisdom and advance along the path of genuine victory in life. Each day, starting

from the prime point of life, we can refresh our vitality.

Therefore, please be confident that SGI members who pray with the determination, “I will fight again today,” “I will do my best tomorrow, too,” and who stand up for kosen-rufu in society are themselves practicing “calmly arising from *samadhi*” each morning and evening.

The ‘Unsolicited and Spontaneous Teaching’

SHAKYAMUNI, having arisen from *samadhi*, spontaneously begins to expound the Lotus Sutra without anyone first requesting him to do so. This manner of preaching, where the Buddha expounds the Law on his own initiative without any question having been put to him, is termed the “unsolicited and spontaneous teaching.”

The doctrine Shakyamuni spontaneously and serenely begins to expound is so profound that his disciples could

not have imagined it, let alone have asked him to teach it. In this, we see the outpouring of wisdom and compassion that impelled Shakyamuni to expound the Lotus Sutra.

It is of profound significance that Shakyamuni employs the “unsolicited and spontaneous teaching” format as he begins to expound the Lotus Sutra. All sutras other than the Lotus are provisional teachings expounded “according to others’ minds” (*zuitai*), that is, according to the capacity of his listeners; and as such do not represent the Buddha’s true intention. By contrast, the Lotus Sutra is described as “according with [the Buddha’s] own mind” (*zuijii*), because in this sutra Shakyamuni reveals the truth directly, in accordance with his own enlightenment.

The Daishonin’s declaration of the establishment of the Buddhism of the Latter Day of the Law is another instance of “unsolicited and spontaneous teaching.” With regard to establishing his teaching, the Daishonin says: “If I speak out, I am fully aware that I will have to contend with the three obstacles and the four devils” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 95). He knew, in other words, that if he spread the Mystic Law, he was certain to encounter persecution.

Nonetheless, without being asked by anyone, he began to expound the teaching of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. In his lifetime struggles, the Daishonin was carrying out the practice of *zuijii*.

In terms of our own practice, *zuijii* indicates the spontaneous spirit to praise the Mystic Law

out of profound recognition of its greatness, no matter what anyone might say. Such admiration for the Mystic Law is the essential reason we recite the sutra during gongyo.

Zuijii also indicates the attitude of “propagating the Law to the full extent of one’s ability,” the irrepressible desire to teach and explain to others even a single word or phrase. By contrast, if you talk about the Mystic Law because you have been told to do so, or in the belief that it will make others think highly of you, then you are following the practice of *zuitai*, or acting “according to others’ minds.”

Broadly speaking, the “unsolicited and spontaneous teaching” and the practice of *zuijii* indicate autonomous and self-motivated action. It does not matter if your words are plain, or if you are not a talented speaker; what is important is to pray earnestly with the determination for others to become happy and to tell others candidly about the greatness of Buddhism—with conviction and in your own words. This is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra, and the spirit of the Soka Gakkai.

The Buddha Seeks To Enable All People To Attain the Same Enlightened State of Life

SHAKYAMUNI starts out by Stelling Shariputra: “The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter. Not one of the voice-hearers or *pratyekabud-*

dhas is able to comprehend it.” This statement extols the great wisdom of the Buddha.

The “wisdom of the Buddhas” is the wisdom that shines like a sun within the Buddha. Shakyamuni praises this wisdom as being “infinitely profound and immeasurable.” He calls the Buddha’s wisdom “infinitely profound” because it penetrates down to the truth that is the very foundation of life. The Buddha’s wisdom is said to be “immeasurable” because its light broadly illuminates all things.

The wisdom of the Buddhas profoundly and broadly illuminates and reveals life in its entirety. Therefore, the Buddha’s state of life is said to be “expansive and profound.” Likening the Buddha’s state of life to a great tree or a mighty river, T’ien-t’ai says: “The deeper the roots, the more prolific the branches. The farther the source, the longer the stream” (MW-4, 272).

Shakyamuni is not praising the wisdom of the Buddhas to say that the Buddha alone is great. In fact, it is just the opposite; his purpose is to encourage others. In effect, he is saying: “Therefore, all of you, too, should make this same great wisdom of the Buddha shine in your own lives and become happy.”

Wisdom is the path to happiness. Money, skill at “getting by” in the world, status—none of these can enable us to overcome the fundamental sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. The only way is to cultivate the wisdom with which our lives are inherently endowed.

The purpose of the Lotus Sutra is to enable all people to cultivate supreme wisdom in their hearts and advance along the great path of indestructible happiness. The Daishonin says, "The treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 238). That is why Shakyamuni starts out by extolling the wisdom of the Buddhas, which is the supreme wisdom.

The next passage reads, "The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter." Here Shakyamuni again praises the Buddha wisdom but from a slightly different perspective.

The "door to this wisdom" is the door to the realm of Buddha wisdom. The various teachings Shakyamuni expounded were means for enabling people to enter the realm of this wisdom. Prior to the Lotus Sutra, he had expounded various teachings in accordance with his listeners' diverse capacities. At different times, for example, he taught that life is suffering; that nothing is constant; that happiness lies in extinguishing all desires; and that people should seek to awaken to the principle of dependent origination.

In this way, Shakyamuni, exercising the wisdom of the Buddha, expounded teachings that matched the various capacities of the people. However, these individual teachings did not represent the Buddha's true purpose. The purpose of his teaching, rather, lay in enabling all people to enter the path of wisdom, the path for becoming a Buddha.

This purpose of the Buddha cannot be understood by the

wisdom of people of the two vehicles of Learning (voice-hearers) and Realization (*pratyekabuddhas*). Even though such people may understand the contents of his teaching, they cannot fathom his reason for expounding it.

Their very satisfaction with individual teachings that explained life's impermanence or the need to eradicate desires prevented them from entering the realm of the wisdom of the Buddha who had expounded these doctrines. They reached the gate, as it were, and then stopped. Therefore, Shakyamuni says this wisdom is "difficult to understand and difficult to enter."

Regard Suffering and Joy As Facts of Life

IN the foregoing, I have discussed the literal or surface meaning of this passage. President Toda explained this passage from the standpoint of its implicit meaning as follows:

The line, "The wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable" means that the wisdom of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is infinitely profound and immeasurable. The passage, "The door to this wisdom is difficult to understand and difficult to enter," refers to the "door of faith" in the Gohonzon. By substituting faith for wisdom, we can enter the "door to this wisdom." This door is "difficult to understand and difficult to enter."

As the Daishonin indicates where he says, "'Wisdom' means

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 725), Nam-myoho-renge-kyo contains the infinitely profound and immeasurable wisdom of the Buddhas in its entirety. And the door to enter the wisdom of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the "door of faith." Thus the Daishonin says, "'Door' means faith" (*Ibid.*, p. 715).

If we believe in the Gohonzon and exert ourselves in practice and study as the Daishonin teaches, then, in accordance with the principle of "substituting faith for wisdom," we can develop a state of life of supreme happiness. This is what it means to enter the "door of faith," to advance along the path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

However, carrying through with faith becomes difficult when we encounter waves of adversity in life. At such times, people may forget that faith is the "door of wisdom." Instead, filled with complaint, they are tossed about helplessly on the rough seas. Or again, they may fear suffering and give themselves over to lives of pleasure and ease. In this sense, as well, the "door of faith" is difficult to understand and difficult to enter.

For precisely this reason, the Daishonin says, "Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 161).

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the wellspring of the wisdom of all Buddhas. And gongyo is a "ceremony of *kuon ganjo*" in which we return to the very foundation of our lives and draw wisdom from the great ocean of the world of Buddhahood. □

5 A Revolutionary View of Buddhahood: 'Embracing the Gohonzon Is in Itself Enlightenment'

*Sho-i sha ga. Butsu zo shingon.
Hyaku sen man noku. Mushu sho
butsu. Jin gyo sho-butsu. Muryo
doho.*

"What is the reason for this?

A Buddha has personally attended a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million, a countless number of Buddhas and has fully carried out an immeasurable number of religious practices. (LS2, 23)

The Teaching for Attaining Buddhahood in This Lifetime

ACCORDING to this description, a Buddha has served and practiced under an incalculable number of Buddhas for an unimaginably long time. This practice, continued over many lifetimes, becomes the cause for enlightenment; as a result, the practitioner attains the supreme state of Buddhahood. This is termed "practicing toward enlightenment over a period of countless *kalpas*."

We should bear in mind, however, that this is only a literal interpretation of the causes (practices) made and effects (virtues) realized by the Buddha as described in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Reading this passage from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, President

Toda explained that it is not necessary for us to engage in this type of practice for countless *kalpas* to attain enlightenment. He discussed the meaning of this passage as follows:

From the standpoint of the Daishonin's teaching, the Buddha [the Gohonzon] of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law that gives birth to a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand or a million Buddhas. Therefore, without undertaking any difficult or painful practices, by simply chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we gain more benefit than we could by personally attending that many Buddhas. The benefit of this single practice is equal to that of the immeasurable number of austerities carried out by all Buddhas.

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the fundamental Law that generates all Buddhas. To put it another way, the fundamental Law that enables all Buddhas to attain enlightenment is not that they have carried out various austerities over countless *kalpas*, but that they have awakened to the fundamental Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The Buddhist practice of the Latter Day of the Law is to embrace and uphold the Law of

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo directly. In the Daishonin's Buddhism, therefore, it is not necessary to engage in austerities for countless *kalpas* to attain Buddhahood.

Nichiren Daishonin states in "The True Object of Worship": "Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myoho-renge-kyo. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was" (MW-1, 64). The practices to attain Buddhahood carried out by Shakyamuni and all Buddhas throughout time and space, and the virtues they acquired as a result, are all contained in Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Therefore, by embracing the five characters of the Mystic Law, we naturally acquire the benefit of both the practices and the virtues of Shakyamuni and all Buddhas, and are certain to attain Buddhahood. This is the principle "embracing the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment." It is also termed "attaining Buddhahood in one's present form" and the "immediate attainment of enlightenment."

Nichiren Daishonin says that, for a person who embraces the Mystic Law, "It is not difficult to become a Buddha" (MW-1, 259). Through the

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a teaching that enables all people to reach the summit of enlightenment instantaneously.... Then we go out in society and tell others of the exhilaration we experience in manifesting this state of life.

Daishonin's teaching, a path leading to Buddhahood has been established for all. Attaining Buddhahood is not something that happens in the distant future or somewhere far away. The Daishonin's Buddhism makes it possible for all people to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime.

The teaching "embracing the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment" represents a revolutionary view of what it means to attain Buddhahood. President Toda said, "In contrast to the Buddhas of the 'Expedient Means' chapter who have practiced for tens of millions of years, we can complete our practice for attaining Buddhahood by simply believing in the Gohonzon and chanting the single phrase Nam-myohorenge-kyo."

There is immeasurable benefit in chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo even just once. Instantaneously, we gain the full benefit acquired by all Buddhas through their practices of many lifetimes over an extremely long time. That's how great is the Mystic Law.

According to the conventional Buddhist view, the process of attaining enlightenment is akin to arduously

climbing a mountain road toward the peak of Buddhahood in the far distance. By contrast, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a teaching that enables all people to reach the summit of enlightenment instantaneously. From the state of Buddhahood, we can gaze down on the surrounding mountains far below and survey the spectacular panorama of nature stretching out in all directions.

We can attain this vast state of Buddhahood directly—right now, right where we are. Then we go out in society and tell others of the exhilaration we experience in manifesting this state of life. This practice represents the quintessence of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Buddhist Practice Means Challenging Ourselves Daily

Yumyo shojin. Myosho fu mon

He has exerted himself bravely and vigorously, and his name is universally known. (LS2, 23)

THIS passage refers to the practices of the Buddhas of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings

and the theoretical teaching, or first half, of the Lotus Sutra. At the same time it also provides us an important guideline in faith.

In the first place, "bravely and vigorously" means with faith. In his "Six-volume Writings" (Rokkan Sho), the twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan, citing the interpretation, "'Bravely' means to act with courage; 'vigorously' means to use every ounce of one's wisdom," explains that "bravely and vigorously" means to courageously exercise one's powers of faith to the fullest.

Buddhist practice has to be carried out with determination and courage. When we challenge ourselves bravely with the spirit to accomplish "more today than yesterday" and "more tomorrow than today," we are truly practicing.

Without such a brave and vigorous spirit, we cannot break the iron shackles of destiny, nor can we defeat obstacles and devils. Our daily practice of gongyo is a drama of challenging and creating something new in our lives. When we bravely stand up with faith, the darkness of despair and anxiety vanishes from our hearts, and in pours the light of hope and growth. This spirit to

stand up courageously is the spirit of faith.

The Buddha Nature Manifests When We Practice With Sincerity and Consistency

FROM the standpoint of the Daishonin's Buddhism, "exert" means to chant daimoku diligently for the happiness of oneself and others. We can exert ourselves in this fashion only if we possess a brave and vigorous spirit.

High Priest Nichikan, citing Miao-lo's interpretation of the term *exert* as meaning "pure" and "continuous," teaches the proper attitude to have in chanting daimoku. He explains that "pure" means unalloyed, and that "continuous" means to practice continuously and unceasingly. In other words, the important thing is that we chant daimoku each day with sincerity and consistency. Only then does it become the practice for polishing our lives and for attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime.

The Daishonin says: "If you exert a hundred million aeons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment. Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is the practice of 'exerting' oneself" (*Gosho Zen-shu*, p. 790).

In chanting daimoku, we are carrying out the practice of "exerting" ourselves. Therefore, the three enlightened properties, the immeasurable wisdom and compassion of the Buddha, manifest at each moment in the lives of those

who possess extremely earnest concern for the Law, and who bravely and tenaciously struggle for its sake. When we have a brave and vigorous spirit of faith, we instantaneously manifest the "mind of the Buddha." This is what "embracing the Gohonzon is in itself enlightenment" means.

Put another way, the Daishonin is saying that those who bravely and vigorously exert themselves in faith are all Buddhas.

A Life of Continuous 'Self-Improvement'

LET us remember that the LSJI has greatly developed precisely because we have bravely and vigorously exerted ourselves in faith—that is, with true earnestness.

Once when asked by a foreign journalist to explain the reason for our great development, I said, "It's because of our wholehearted dedication." The present tremendous advance of kosen-rufu has come about because we have earnestly and wholeheartedly taken action for the sake of friends, society and peace.

A youth once asked Soka Gakkai founding president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi how one could develop the ability to judge good and evil. President Makiguchi replied, "If you have the tenacity and courage to practice the world's foremost religion, you will come to understand." He also once said: "You must bravely and vigorously exert yourself. You must take action. Even though I am now an old man, I, too, am practicing in this manner."

"Exerting oneself bravely and vigorously" truly is the wellspring of the Soka Gakkai spirit. When we bravely challenge ourselves through faith, our lives stir, wisdom is born, our beings overflow with joy and hope.

A person of bravery and vigor who continually, moment by moment, makes causes for self-improvement is an eternal victor. Those who struggle with earnestness and broad-mindedness, with the spirit of a lion king, are certainly exerting brave and vigorous effort.

Shine As a 'Celebrity of the Mystic Law'

THE next line, "his name is universally known," means that the names of those who bravely and vigorously exert themselves in their practice will be known far and wide. Because of their brave and vigorous efforts, they win renown. Because of their splendid Buddhist practice, they move the hearts of all Buddhas.

The Daishonin writes to a follower whose husband is seriously ill:

No matter what might befall him on the road between this life and the next, he should declare himself to be a disciple of Nichiren.... My name has reached the pure lands of the ten directions, and heaven and earth surely know of it. If your husband declares that he is Nichiren's disciple, no evil demon can possibly claim ignorance of the name. (MW-5, 281–82)

President Toda often told us that when we go to Eagle Peak,

The Lotus Sutra makes public to all people the “secret teaching”.... A genuine “secret teaching” is not something kept to oneself, hidden from others and used to create an aura of mystery or to appropriate authority to oneself. The Nikken sect’s authoritarianism is evidence that they totally fail to understand the heart of the Lotus Sutra.

we should proudly declare ourselves “disciples of Josei Toda, the leader of kosen-rufu.” The names of those who bravely and vigorously dedicate themselves to kosen-rufu are known to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and to Bonten and Taishaku and all Buddhist gods. Their reputation extends throughout the universe.

The reason for this, the sutra explains, is that spreading the correct Buddhist teaching in the Latter Day of the Law is the most difficult undertaking there is. Accordingly, the great achievement of those who actually spread the Lotus Sutra cannot fail to be known to the beings in the worlds of the ten directions. Therefore, all Buddhas, bodhisattvas and Buddhist gods in the three existences and the ten directions are sure to protect the courageous men and women who propagate the Mystic Law.

In “Emergence of the Treasure Tower,” the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni says: “This sutra is hard to

uphold; if one can uphold it even for a short while [after I have entered extinction] I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas. A person who can do this wins the admiration of the Buddhas” (LS11, 180–81)

And Nichiren Daishonin says: “Now you must build your reputation as a votary of the Lotus Sutra and devote yourself to it” (MW-1, 93); and, “Bring forth the great power of faith and establish your reputation among all the people of Kamakura and the rest of Japan as ‘Shijo Kingo of the Hokke sect’” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 201).

The Daishonin’s intent is for each person to shine as a “celebrity of the Mystic Law” in the community and in society. By making dedicated efforts in faith, we are certain to develop such a reputation.

To win a name for oneself through dedication to the Lotus Sutra is the highest honor. The names of those who struggle for kosen-rufu alongside the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, bloom with an eternal fragrance. They

are definitely known to all Buddhas in the ten directions.

The ideals and the movement of the SGI have now spread throughout the world, and as a result, voices far and wide are extolling the worth of Buddhism. This might be seen as corroborating the words, “his name is universally known.”

This propagation, which has brought the Mystic Law to as many as 115 countries and territories, is certainly without precedent in the history of Buddhism. You, the millions of friends who have emerged from the earth, have accomplished this sacred undertaking. No other individuals or groups have dedicated themselves to spreading Buddhism and elevating the Law with such earnestness.

Your names and the name of the SGI will definitely shine with a golden light in the human history, and also resound throughout the universe, reaching the ears of all Buddhas in the ten directions. This is clear in light of the principle “his name is universally known.” □

6 The Daishonin Established the ‘Object of Worship Never Known Before’

Joju jinjin. Mi-zo-u ho.

He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before,... (LS2, 23–24)

All People Are Entities of the Mystic Law

ACCORDING to this passage, the Mystic Law in which we believe is the supreme teaching that has “never been known before.” When I read these words, I feel as though the dawn were spreading before my eyes.

In the past, Shakyamuni served countless Buddhas and carried out an immeasurable number of religious practices. This passage says that as a result of his arduous practice for enlightenment over a period of countless kalpas, he “has realized the Law that is profound and never known before.”

T’ien-t’ai explains that “profound” means “reaching the very foundation of enlightenment.” And “never known before” indicates that until then, no one had known of this Law, and that Shakyamuni himself hadn’t known of it until he attained enlightenment.

It was therefore certainly beyond the ken of the people of the nine worlds, including the people of the two vehicles and the

bodhisattvas. That’s why a little later in “Expedient Means” Shakyamuni says, “[The true entity of all phenomena] can only be understood and shared between Buddhas” (LS2, 24). In other words, it is a Law that can only be comprehended by Buddhas.

The Lotus Sutra Makes Public the ‘Secret Teaching’ for Attaining Buddhahood

THE Lotus Sutra is the teaching that reveals this “Law ... never known before,” this Law that “can only be understood and shared between Buddhas.”

The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings were all expounded “according to others’ minds” (*zuitai*), that is, according to the capacities of the people of the nine worlds. For the people of the nine worlds, therefore, the Lotus Sutra is a teaching they have never before heard; and in this sense, too, it is a Law “never known before.”

The Lotus Sutra makes public to all people the “secret teaching” “understood and shared [only] between Buddhas” that has never been known before. A genuine “secret teaching” is not something kept to oneself, hidden from others and used to create an aura of mystery or to appropriate authority to oneself.

The Nikken sect’s authoritarianism is evidence that they totally fail to understand the heart of the Lotus Sutra.

When the proper “time” arrives, a genuine “secret teaching” should be expounded vociferously and spread to cure the ills of all humankind and its brilliant force thus proven. That is the purpose of this “secret teaching,” of this “Law that is profound and never known before.”

In many Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin refers to the Gohonzon of the Three Great Secret Laws as a “great mandala that has never before been known.” In one place, he says: “Even in the Lotus Sutra Shakyamuni only revealed it (the Gohonzon) in the ‘Life Span’ chapter; and in the ‘Supernatural Powers’ (Jinriki) chapter he entrusted it to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth” (MW-3, 64–65).

In another place, he states:

After the Buddha’s death, in the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law, not even the term “object of worship of the essential teaching” was mentioned, let alone the object itself being inscribed.... T’ien-t’ai, Miao-lo and Dengyo ... never expounded it.... Nichiren was the first to inscribe this great mandala (MW-1, 211).

Nichiren Daishonin bestowed upon all people of the Latter Day of the Law the great “secret teaching” known only to Buddhas in the form of the “object of worship that has never before been known.” And toward that end he underwent great persecutions.

It is important to bear in mind the Daishonin’s immense compassion as revealed by his actions to spread this teaching. And for the same reason, it is important to practice faith based on a profound sense of gratitude and joy.

The “Law that is profound and never known before” manifests in our lives when we have ardent faith in the “great mandala that has never before been known.”

Advance With the Pride of Bodhisattvas of the Earth Creating a New Dawn of Human History

PRESIDENT Toda explained the passage “He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before,” as follows: “This refers to the establishment of the Dai-Gohonzon of the Buddhism of sowing in Nichiren Daishonin’s own life.”

The “Law that is profound and never known before” does not exist somewhere else. It manifests in the living bodies, the actual lives of us [who embrace the Gohonzon]. In the well-known Goshō “On the Treasure Tower,” the Daishonin says, “Those who chant Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō, irrespective of social status, are themselves Treasure Tower and likewise

they themselves are Taho Buddha” (MW-1, 30).

We should erect the Treasure Tower of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō within our lives, he is saying. This is the spirit that imbues the passage “He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before.”

Not only Shakyamuni, but all people can awaken to the “Law that is profound and never known before.” All people can establish the Treasure Tower in their lives and shine brilliantly as entities of the Treasure Tower. In time, the earth will teem with countless shining Treasure Towers of life. From the standpoint of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, this will constitute the actual proof of the passage “He has realized the Law that is profound and never known before.” We are opening an unprecedented dawn in human history by means of the great and unprecedented Mystic Law.

Because it is a teaching never known before, votaries and courageous Bodhisattvas of the Earth never known before must appear in order to spread it. President Toda said, “We are members of the Soka Gakkai family, Bodhisattvas of the Earth, who have emerged from the earth to accomplish the unprecedented widespread propagation of the Law.” We have inherited President Toda’s spirit and are striving to carry out this “practice never known before.”

Please be confident that in advancing this “unprecedented movement of kosen-rufu,” we will receive immeasurable and boundless good fortune and

blessings, the likes of which have never been known before.

The SGI Puts the Daishonin’s Intention Into Practice

Zui gi sho setsu. Ishu nange.

...and [he] preaches [this Law] in accordance with what is appropriate, yet his intention is difficult to understand. (LS2, 24)

IN this passage, Shakyamuni explains why the “door to the wisdom” of the Buddhas is difficult to understand and difficult to enter.

Shakyamuni indicates that the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings were expounded according to the various capacities of the people of the nine worlds, and that he has not yet explained his intention—that is, the Buddha’s true intention in expounding his teaching—and that no one has yet comprehended it.

It is no simple matter to directly expound the “Law that is profound and never known before,” which the Buddha has attained as the result of bold practice. That’s because the difference in level of understanding between the Buddha and other beings is so great.

Even were the Buddha to expound the true teaching, should the people’s understanding be incomplete, there would be the danger they would develop doubt, destroy the Law and fall into the three evil paths of existence.

Shakyamuni, immediately after attaining the Way beneath

The “Law that is profound and never known before” does not exist somewhere else. It manifests in the living bodies, the actual lives of us [who embrace the Gohonzon].

the Bodhi tree, at first hesitated to expound the Law. However, he realized that unless he expounded his teaching right then and there, people would be forever locked in the darkness of delusion. Herein lay the inner conflict of Shakyamuni, who pioneered the Way for the enlightenment of all human beings. Overcoming his dilemma, he began to expound the Law.

So that people could gain a correct and unerring understanding of the Law, Shakyamuni, exercising every ounce of his wisdom, continuously pondered how he could convey his enlightenment to as many people as possible. He taxed his ingenuity. Such was Shakyamuni’s compassion. Wisdom is born of compassion.

The teachings for people of the three vehicles (of Learning, Realization and Bodhisattva) certainly were set forth according to the people’s various capacities. The Buddha expounded the way of the voice-hearers, the way of the *pratyek-abuddhas*, and the way of the bodhisattvas, tailoring each teaching to the understanding of each of these groups. In this way, he enabled them to arrive at the “door to the wisdom” of the Buddhas. This was the expedient purpose of the provisional teachings that preceded the Lotus Sutra.

In this passage, Shakyamuni says that he “preaches it in accordance with what is appropriate.” In other words, he expounds the Law in accordance with what is appropriate to the capacities of the people.

The Buddha’s true intention was always to expound the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood, the path for all people to become Buddhas. However, the voice-hearers and the *pratyek-abuddhas* do not understand this. Having grown attached to provisional teachings, they fail to understand that the Buddha’s true intention is to enable all people without exception to become Buddhas. They do not comprehend the true teaching that makes all people Buddhas. This is the meaning of “his intention is difficult to understand.”

Needless to say, the Buddha did not go out of his way to make his preaching difficult to understand. Rather, the Buddha’s intention is difficult to understand because of the disbelief and the attachments of those who receive his teaching.

When people’s hearts are closed, they cannot readily accept even sound reasoning. This suggests just how fearful is attachment to mistaken ideas. Such attachment can destroy a person’s life.

In fact, the three powerful enemies persecute the Lotus

Sutra’s votaries precisely because, failing to understand the heart of the Lotus Sutra (“his intention is difficult to understand”), they remain attached to provisional teachings. The sutra says, “The evil monks of that muddled age, failing to understand the Buddha’s expedient means, how he preaches the Law in accordance with what is appropriate, will confront us with foul language.” (LS13, 195)

Evil priests of the muddled Latter Day of the Law, failing to understand that the teachings expounded before the Lotus Sutra are all “expedient means” taught “in accordance with what is appropriate,” become attached to these shallow teachings. As a result, they bear malice toward and persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra, who refute the teachings they uphold.

Those who fail to understand and who distort the Buddha’s true intention will persecute those who practice exactly as the Buddha taught. And in any age, the former will be numerous and the latter few.

The Shout of Justice, the Victory of the True Teaching

IN a polluted and evil society, those who persecute the votaries of the Lotus Sutra will spread malicious rumors and try to turn

public opinion against the votaries. And they will seek to drive off people of justice.

Since this is a muddled world of such inverted proprieties, we need to raise the cry of truth and justice persistently. We must win and show proof of the correct teaching.

After the Daishonin died, his correct teaching was protected because Nikko Shonin stood up alone. Had Nikko Shonin remained silent, then no doubt a history of the "justice of the five senior priests" would have emerged. Instead, Nikko Shonin strictly refuted the erroneous teachings of the five senior priests.

The five senior priests did not understand the Daishonin's "intention," the true intention of the original Buddha. The Daishonin's sole intention was to accomplish the widespread propagation of the object of worship of the Three Great Secret Laws and enable all people of the Latter Day of the Law to become happy.

The five senior priests lost sight of the spirit of the Daishonin, who revealed the Three Great Secret Laws. Nikko Shonin alone followed and served the Daishonin continually, endured persecutions together with him and boldly developed propagation of his teaching in strict accordance with the mentor's instructions. Because he struggled at one in spirit with the mentor, he understood the Daishonin's intention.

You can tell whether the spirit of the mentor has been handed down correctly by looking at the conduct of the disciple. No matter how people

may claim to uphold the Three Great Secret Laws, if they are not taking action for kosen-rufu out of the desire for the happiness of all people, then we can only conclude that they have lost sight of the Daishonin's intention.

Seven hundred years after the Daishonin's struggle to spread the teaching in the face of persecution, when his spirit was truly on the verge of becoming extinguished, the Soka Gakkai appeared. The Soka Gakkai is a body that has directly inherited his true teaching and that advances in accord with his will and decree.

The SGI, which is directly connected to the Daishonin, and which thoroughly bases itself on the Gohonzon and the Gosho, is the only body of harmoniously united believers who are correctly passing on what the Daishonin intended.

As glorious "verifiers of the correct teaching," let us speak out for kosen-rufu with lofty pride and dignity and with golden eloquence, not begrudging our voices.

'If We Do Not Harbor Doubts in Our Hearts' We Can Definitely Attain the Summit of Happiness

PRESIDENT Toda explained the meaning of the line "his intention is difficult to understand" as it applies to our practice:

Whereas the Buddha sees what is to come, for us the future is totally dark, and we can only see what has already passed. For this reason, it is

difficult for us to awaken to the heart of the Gohonzon. It is enough that we believe wholeheartedly in the Gohonzon, no matter what. If we do so, then we will definitely receive benefit. It is no good if we start doubting along the way.

He is discussing the ultimate meaning of faith. Firm faith in the Gohonzon leads to the highest "wisdom." This is the principle of "substituting faith for wisdom."

Nichiren Daishonin's intent is to enable all people to become Buddhas. Therefore, it is impossible that those who embrace his Buddhism throughout their lives could fail to realize true happiness.

In the course of our practice, however, various things arise on account of the negative causes and tendencies in our own lives. There may be times when we think, "What did I do to deserve this?" But we should not be swayed every time some such phenomena arise; for it is already certain that we will become happy in the end. We should regard everything that happens to us in our practice to reach the destination of happiness as our training. If we do so, then later on we will see the profound "meaning" and "intention" underlying each of these phenomena.

The Daishonin says, "If we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 180). Those who avoid succumbing to doubts no matter what happens are winners in faith. They are people who truly understand the Daishonin's intention. □

7 Expedient Means Are Words of Wisdom for Raising People Up

Shari-hotsu. Go ju jo-butsumi irai. Shuju innen. Shuju hiyu. Ko en gonkyo. Mu shu hoben. Indo shujo. Ryo ri sho jaku.

“Shariputra, ever since I attained Buddhahood I have through various causes and various similes widely expounded my teachings and have used countless expedient means to guide living beings and cause them to renounce their attachments. (LS2, 24)

HERE, Shakyamuni is elaborating on the immediately preceding passage, where he says, “He [a Buddha] has realized the Law that is profound and never known before, and preaches it in accordance with what is appropriate [to the capacities of the people], yet his intention is difficult to understand.”

Shakyamuni had earlier discussed the “wisdom of the Buddhas.” In this passage, by contrast, he reveals this wisdom as he has gathered it up in himself.

“Ever since I attained Buddhahood” refers to the period from when Shakyamuni attained enlightenment until he taught the Lotus Sutra, during which time he expounded various provisional sutras. Shakyamuni then clarifies the distinctive character

of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. He says that before teaching the Lotus Sutra he had employed “various causes” (explaining why things are the way they are) and “various similes” in widely expounding his teaching; and that these teachings were “expedient means” (*hoben*) for guiding people to the truth and freeing them from their various attachments.

The Expedient Means of the Pre-Lotus Sutra Teachings

AN expedient means is a means or a device that the Buddha, out of compassion, employs to help people attain enlightenment. From the outset, Shakyamuni’s ultimate purpose lay in enabling all people to attain Buddhahood; but he did not reveal this in the provisional sutras. He reveals it for the first time in the Lotus Sutra.

The purpose of the provisional sutras is to enable people to part with various attachments. People differ in terms of the types of attachments or “fetters” they possess. Therefore, Shakyamuni expounded a variety of teachings, employing various causes and similes that matched the capacities of specific people.

These teachings were all no more than “means” for drawing people toward the “end” of

attaining Buddhahood. In this sense, the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are regarded as expedient means.

Still, the expedient teachings expounded before the Lotus Sutra also arose from the Buddha’s compassion. Shakyamuni strove to respond to the different capacities of people, to select teachings that precisely matched their needs, and to satisfy everyone. He was waging a struggle of compassion and wisdom.

“What is this person seeking?” “How should I instruct this person to ensure that he or she will not deviate from the correct path?” He deeply considered the case of each individual, and gave instruction with an earnest “must-win” spirit.

Though we may speak of “the people” in the aggregate, they are not an abstract, homogeneous multitude; they are not a colorless mass. “How can the heart of this person before me be opened?” “How can I reinvigorate this specific individual?” This is the spirit of Buddhism. When speaking to a large number of people, only if we have the attitude of addressing each individual can we offer “living words” that reverberate in the hearts of many.

Since attaining the Way, Shakyamuni thoroughly devoted himself to expounding the Law

for the sake of individuals. Because his words and phrases were uttered for individuals and with their happiness in mind, the Law imbued the life of one person after another. Because he waged such a struggle, he sent people's hearts a fresh breeze, dispelling the dark clouds of doubt and anxiety and causing the sun of hope and happiness to rise. Because he regarded the individual with such warmth, people from all walks of life—young and old, men and women—gathered with joy and enthusiasm to hear Shakyamuni expound his teachings.

Shakyamuni preached the expedient teachings because he sympathized with the people, whose lives were steeped in illusion and suffering. He was impelled by the desire to somehow help them. This led him to consider, "By what means can I save them from suffering?" "How might I liberate them from illusion?" In other words, expedients arose from his desire to help people; his compassion gave birth to wisdom.

Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree, aroused a spirit of great mercy and determined to save all people from suffering. At that time, the Buddhas of the ten directions appeared and urged Shakyamuni on, saying: "Following the example of all other Buddhas, you will employ the power of expedient means. We too ... make distinctions and preach the three vehicles" (LS2, 43). Thereupon Shakyamuni, preparatory to expounding the Law "never known before" to which he had

become enlightened, began to expound the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings using the power of expedient means.

Expedient means are expressions of wisdom serving to raise people up. Shakyamuni, armed with words of compassion and wisdom, thus resolutely took the first step on the difficult journey to expound the Law for the salvation of all people. And so he raised the curtain on Buddhism, which sends out a message of happiness to all humankind.

The 'Secret and Mystic Expedient' of the Lotus Sutra

AS I have already mentioned, the "expedient means" to which this passage refers are the expedient means of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. These are not to be confused with the expedient means indicated by the title of the second chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Profound significance is attached to the expedient means of the Lotus Sutra.

T'ien-t'ai identifies three types of expedient means: "functional-teaching expedients," "truth-gateway expedients" and the "secret and mystic expedient." The first two correspond to the expedient means of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings. The secret and mystic expedient corresponds to the expedient means of the Lotus Sutra, the expedient means of the "Expedient Means" chapter.

Functional-teaching expedients (*hoyu hoben*) are the various teachings expounded according to the differing capacities of the people. Through the function (*yu*) of these teachings (*ho*)

Shakyamuni brought benefit to people of various capacities.

Truth-gateway expedients (*notsu hoben*) are teachings that represent the gateway for entering the truth. To follow these teachings is termed *notsu*, because through them people are led to the truth.

These expedients of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings serve to guide people to the wisdom of the Buddha; they are "means" for directing people until they have reached the Lotus Sutra. And, as Shakyamuni indicates when he says "honestly discarding expedient means," (LS2, 44) the expedients of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings should be discarded once the Lotus Sutra has been expounded.

Shakyamuni Dared To Express the Truth in Words

BY contrast, the expedient of the Lotus Sutra is not an expedient that ought to be discarded; it is the teaching of the truth. At the same time, however, it is still always just an expedient. Although the second chapter explains the truth, it is titled not "Truth" but "Expedient Means." Herein lies the profound significance of the secret and mystic expedient (*himyo hoben*).

In the opening of "Expedient Means," we are told that the wisdom of the Buddhas is infinitely profound and immeasurable, and difficult for all voice-hearers and *pratyekabuddhas* to comprehend. It is the ultimate teaching that defies expression through words and so cannot be explained.

However, unless the wisdom of all Buddhas is expressed, all people will forever remain shut away in darkness. For this reason, the Buddha ventures to put it into words.

Compared with the inexpressible truth, the words the Buddha uses to expound it are an expedient. At the same time, however, it is a fact that through these words people can be saved. The words of the Lotus Sutra that the Buddha, out of his compassion, expounded “according with his own mind” for all people, constitute the secret and mystic expedient; more than simply a means, the words are an expedient at one with the Buddha’s wisdom.

Regarding the words of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin says things like: “Its words are the reality of life” (MW-1, 3); “Each of the 69,384 characters of the Lotus Sutra is a Buddha” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 971); and “When you cast your eyes upon the words of the Lotus Sutra, you should consider that you are beholding the living body of the Buddha Shakyamuni” (MW-5, 147). The Daishonin thus repeatedly emphasizes the oneness of the Buddha’s wisdom and the words whereby it is expressed.

In a sense, it could be said that the expedients of the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the expedient of the Lotus Sutra are entirely opposite in their directionality. The Japanese term *hoben* (expedient means) originally derives from the Sanskrit *upaya*, meaning “approach.” The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings enable people to move away from illusion and

approach enlightenment. The direction, in other words, is toward the wisdom of the Buddhas. This is the direction of the functional-teaching expedients and the truth-gateway expedients. These expedients are no longer of any use once we arrive at the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

In the Lotus Sutra, by contrast, Shakyamuni explains and articulates the wisdom of the Buddhas—to the world and in a manner according with his own mind. The directionality of this expedient is thus that of the Buddha approaching the world of human beings. This is the secret and mystic expedient.

Through the power of the Lotus Sutra, pre-Lotus Sutra teachings take on importance as partial expressions of the truth. They are said to be “revealed and unified” in the teaching of the Lotus Sutra.

Revealing the Power of the Mystic Law Through Our Struggles

THE wisdom of the Buddhas revealed in the “Expedient Means” chapter is the “true entity of all phenomena.” Put another way, it is the truth that all living beings are Buddhas.

The “secret” of the secret and mystic expedient is that this truth can only be understood between Buddhas. It is called “mystic” because it is difficult for people to comprehend. The teaching that awakens people to the truth that all living beings are Buddhas is the secret and mystic expedient.

This is exemplified in the parable of the gem in the robe

related in “Prophecy of Enlightenment for Five Hundred Disciples” (Gohyaku Deshi Juki), the eighth chapter of the Lotus Sutra: A man is given a priceless gem by a close friend, who sews it into the lining of his robe while he drowns in a drunken stupor. Not realizing he possesses the gem, the man suffers hardships and is always in want. Much later he meets the friend again, and only then does he discover that all along he has had the gem of great value.

The man’s friend (the Buddha) knew that the man possessed the gem in his robe (the world of Buddhahood in his life), even though the man (representing the beings of the nine worlds) failed to realize it.

An ordinary human being is a Buddha. This is difficult to understand. Unless we believe we possess the Buddha nature, it will remain forever “secret.” However, once we recognize it, it is no longer “secret,” and our “mystic” powers appear.

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, said: “That we are merely ordinary, unenlightened beings is the secret and mystic expedient. The truth is that we are Buddhas.” To realize this truth is to understand the secret and mystic expedient.

Although we are Buddhas, we are born as common mortals. This is so that, through doing our human revolution and showing proof of the Mystic Law, we can accomplish *kosen-rufu*. If we had everything, including good health and riches, from the outset, then other people could not understand the power of the Mystic

Law. Therefore, we try to reveal it to them through our struggles as common mortals. This is the secret and mystic expedient.

Victory in Life Through Victory in Faith

IN a word, all of us who believe in the Gohonzon, the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law, and who are struggling amid the reality of the nine worlds exemplify the secret and mystic expedient.

As long as we always live based on the Gohonzon, then

any and all sufferings become expedient means for us to strengthen and deepen the world of Buddhahood in our lives. Sufferings and joys and everything that happens to us become expedient means for us to reveal the power of the Mystic Law.

It is said that life is like a drama. Whether in the world of business, education, the home or wherever, each person acts out a drama. This “role” is itself an expedient means; but should the “actor” abandon this role, he or she will be at a loss for a mission. When acting

out our respective roles, we manifest our own inner truth most fully.

Daily life equals faith. And the world of Buddhahood appears nowhere except wedded to the stage of the reality of the nine worlds. Let us enact the drama of human revolution on the stage of our lives.

From misery to happiness, from disappointment to hope, from fate to mission, from suffering to eternal joy—the driving force that makes these dynamic transformations possible is the Mystic Law, is faith. □

13 The True Entity of All Phenomena Is the Wisdom To Grasp the Truth of Life

WE now come to the most important passage of the “Expedient Means” chapter, the section dealing with the true entity of all phenomena and the ten factors.

Just what exactly is the wisdom of the Buddha that Shakyamuni has been praising from the start of the chapter as “infinitely profound” and “difficult to understand”? Here, he tries to explain.

The true entity of all phenomena is the wisdom of the Buddhas that can only be understood and shared between Bud-

dhas. Shakyamuni clarifies that the true entity specifically consists of the ten factors—appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect, and their consistency from beginning to end.

“All phenomena” indicates life in the Ten Worlds (*shoho*) and its environment (*eho*), or all living beings and the realms in which they dwell. In other words, it refers to all nature, to all things and phenomena.

Also, “true entity,” just as it sounds, means the true reality just as it is. The true entity of all

phenomena might be thought of as the undisguised truth of all things.

The ten factors that follow indicate the contents of the true entity. For this reason, this passage is termed the “true entity of the ten factors.”

Yui butsu yo butsu. Nai no kujin. Shoho jisso. Sho-i shoho. Nyo ze so. Nyo ze sho. Nyo ze tai. Nyo ze riki. Nyo ze sa. Nyo ze in. Nyo ze en. Nyo ze ka. Nyo ze ho. Nyo ze honmak^kukyo to.

The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood

As long as we always live based on the Gohonzon, then any and all sufferings become expedient means for us to strengthen and deepen the world of Buddhahood in our lives. Sufferings and joys and everything that happens to us become expedient means for us to reveal the power of the Mystic Law.

and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect and their consistency from beginning to end." (LS2, 24)

What Are the Ten Factors?

THE meaning of the ten factors might be summarized as follows:

(1) appearance (*nyo ze so*): the external manifestation of life. (2) nature (*nyo ze sho*): the spiritual or mental aspect of life. (3) entity (*nyo ze tai*): the totality of life consisting of appearance and nature. (4) power (*nyo ze riki*): inherent energy. (5) influence (*nyo ze sa*): externally directed action. (6) internal cause (*nyo ze in*): the direct cause for things to occur. (7) relation (*nyo ze en*): the causes or conditions that activate the internal cause. (8) latent effect (*nyo ze ka*): the result produced [in the depths of life] by internal cause and relation. (9) manifest effect (*nyo ze ho*): the concrete, perceptible manifestation of the latent effect. (10) consistency from beginning to end (*nyo ze honmatsu kukyoto*): the

perfect integration of these nine factors in every moment of life.

The three factors of appearance, nature and entity explain the essential composition of all phenomena. The six factors of power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect analyze the functions and workings of all phenomena. And consistency from beginning to end indicates the coherency of the nine factors from appearance to manifest effect.

In the passage, each factor is prefixed by the term *nyo ze* (literally, "it is like"). Shakyamuni is saying in effect: although the Buddha wisdom fundamentally cannot be articulated in words, if one were to venture to describe it, this is how it might be expressed.

Let me try to explain the ten factors through an example. Your own existence is a "phenomenon." Your features, posture and so on comprise the "appearance" of the "phenomenon" of your life.

Again, while invisible to the eye, such traits as shortness of temper, magnanimity, kindness or reticence, or the various aspects of your personality or temperament, make up your "nature."

Your physical and spiritual totality—that is, your "appearance" and "nature" together—make up your "entity," the person you are.

Also, your life has various energies ("power"), and these produce various external functions ("influence"). Your life thus becomes a cause ("internal cause") and, activated by conditions internal and external ("relation"), changes arise in your life ("latent effect"), and these eventually appear externally ("manifest effect").

Moreover, these nine factors interweave your life and your environment without any inconsistency or omission ("consistency from beginning to end"). This is the true aspect of the ten factors of your life.

Each of us lives within the framework of the ten factors. No one could say that he or she has no "appearance." Such a person would be invisible. Similarly, no one could truly claim not to have a personality, not to have any energy, or not to carry out any activity. Nor could there be a situation where the appearance was one person, the nature someone else and the entity another person still. There is consistency among all factors, and together they make

As seen with the eye of the Buddha, this world, this universe is shining with life, resounding with the chorus of all things. The Buddha perceives the irreplaceable uniqueness and value of all things in the world. The Buddha's wisdom is a state of life filled with boundless exhilaration and joy in living.

up the irreplaceable totality of your being.

People in each of the Ten Worlds are endowed with the ten factors according to their state of life. For example, people in the world of Hell have the dark and depressed appearance of those overwhelmed by suffering. Since their nature is filled with suffering and anger, their power and influence tend to mire those around them in darkness, too.

Those in the world of Heaven are typically bright and smiling in their appearance. In their nature, since they feel uplifted—as though “ascending into the sky,” as it were—anything they see makes them happy. Their power and influence tend to make those around them feel buoyant and cheerful, too.

Similarly, each of the ten worlds has its own factors of appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect, and there is consistency from beginning to end. This is the true nature of all phenomena.

President Toda explained this as follows: “Suppose there is a thief in front of us. He is a thief from appearance to manifest

effect. That's consistency from beginning to end in a thief's life. There is no discontinuity.”

Rather than simply looking at surface appearances, understanding the true entity of all phenomena means to grasp the vastness and profundity of life in its entirety.

The ten factors are not limited only to human beings. Flowers blooming on the roadside, for example, have the appearance, nature and entity of beauty. And they also possess power, influence, internal cause, relation, latent effect and manifest effect, without any omission. And in their totality, all of these factors are coherently integrated with the life of the flower.

The same is also true of inorganic things. A pebble, the sky, the moon, stars, the sun, the sea with its salty scent, rugged mountains, skyscrapers overlooking noisy streets, houses and cars and every piece of furniture or utensil—the ten factors describe the existence of all things.

This is the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena that the Buddha has attained. In other words, when observing any phenomenon, the Buddha

understands its true entity. When looking at people, the Buddha understands their state of life and sees their Buddha nature within. When looking at something in nature, the Buddha can sense its noble brilliance. And, considering social phenomena, the Buddha can deftly discern their underlying significance.

It might be said that the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena is the ability to discern the true nature of all things.

The Importance of Seeing the Truth

BUDDHISM explains that there are five types of vision people may possess depending on their state of life: the eye of common mortals, the divine eye, the eye of wisdom (of people of the two vehicles), the eye of the Law (of bodhisattvas), and the eye of the Buddha. The wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena is to view everything with the eye of the Law and the eye of the Buddha.

Seeing is of course an example, but there is also hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling and

sensing. Through all our faculties we should strive to perceive the true entity of all phenomena.

The French poet Comte de Lautréamont writes: “Amid passing phenomena, I search for the truth.”

What is important is the vision to profoundly and deftly perceive the true nature of shifting phenomena. The Buddha is one who has mastered this vision.

Often people experience failure or loss in even simple, everyday affairs due to misunderstandings or misperceptions, prejudice or speculation. It is all the more difficult to see the truth when it comes to fundamental problems of human life or society. When observing the same phenomena, the Buddha succeeds in seeing the true entity while others fail.

To take one example, the scientist Isaac Newton is said to have discovered the law of universal gravitation from observing an apple fall from a tree. In the falling apple (the phenomenon), he discerned the truth (the true entity) that the force of gravity acts upon all things. This could be thought of as a part of the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena.

No matter how many apples someone sees fall, if the person lacks insight, he or she will not be able to discern the true entity. Newton’s discovery resulted in the opening of a new world and has greatly benefited humankind.

Similarly, and on an even grander scale, the Buddha wisdom to discern the true entity of all phenomena is inestimably important for people’s

happiness in life, for the advancement of humanity.

To speak of discovering the true entity “behind” phenomena might give the impression that the Law exists somewhere apart from the phenomena. This is definitely not the case. Phenomena and their true entity are always inseparable. The Buddha observes the true entity as it manifests through phenomena and correctly perceives that the true entity exists only as the phenomena. They certainly do not exist separately.

To illustrate, if phenomena, which are constantly changing, are likened to waves, then the true entity is comparable to the ocean. Waves are produced by the ocean, and wave crests consist of sea water. Conversely, there is no ocean that does not manifest as waves. The two are one in essence.

Again, if the true entity is likened to the surface of a mirror, then phenomena would be comparable to the images appearing therein. The mirror reproduces all things as images. There is no mirror that does not reflect images as long as there is light. Conversely, there can be no reflected images without the mirror.

From the standpoint of life, “all phenomena” means individual lives, and “true entity” refers to the truth of life—which pervades the universe—that the Buddha perceives. The Buddha perceives the universal life in even the smallest living manifestation.

To put it another way, all living beings are entities of the Mystic Law to which the Buddha is enlightened, and the

Buddha perceives that they are inherently endowed with the Buddha nature. This is the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena.

The vision that enables the Buddha to perceive the true entity that manifests in all phenomena is also the eye of compassion to save all people and enable them to become Buddhas.

The Daishonin says: “Life itself is the most precious of all treasures. Even the treasures of the entire universe cannot equal the value of a single human life” (MW-1, 267). The life of one person, an individual, he says, is more precious even than all the treasures of the universe. This is the wonderful Buddhist view of life, which is based on the perception of the true entity in all phenomena.

Life is mysterious. It is the wisdom of the Buddha to perfectly and fully understand the truth of life. What a vast and infinitely profound wisdom this is!

As seen with the eye of the Buddha, this world, this universe is shining with life, resounding with the chorus of all things. The Buddha perceives the irreplaceable uniqueness and value of all things in the world. The Buddha’s wisdom is a state of life filled with boundless exhilaration and joy in living.

As I will discuss later, from the standpoint of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, the true entity of all phenomena means the Gohonzon. For us who embrace the Gohonzon, the wisdom of the true entity of all phenomena means to view everything with the eye of Buddhism and the eye of faith. □

GLOBAL FRIENDSHIPS FOR PEACE

SGI REPORT: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EXHIBIT

By Malina Moore, Santa Monica, California

THE "Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" exhibition, sponsored by the SGI-USA, celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The exhibit is an upbeat celebration of the wonder of youth while, at the same time, it makes the viewer aware of certain basic human rights abuses facing children around the world. It presents children's issues as they relate to such themes as community and homelessness, education and child labor, health and nutrition, environment, violence and war and peace.

The exhibit is based on the "United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child," a ground-breaking treaty that expanded the world's legal boundaries to legitimize the needs of children. The first international human rights treaty for children, it was adopted by the United Nations in 1989, and has been ratified by more than 185 countries.



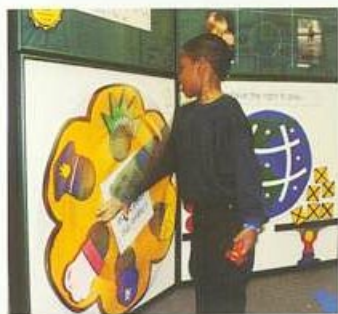
PHOTOS BY GERRY HALL

Children perform in a music festival for the opening of the SGI-USA children's rights exhibit at the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, September 1997.

"Treasuring the Future: Children's Rights and Realities" has received recognition for its outstanding content and interactive presentation through mayoral proclamations and has been shown at museums, including the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, as well as state

and local government buildings throughout the United States.

This acclaimed exhibit is currently on a fifteen-city national tour working its way to the Western part of the United States with upcoming shows in St. Petersburg, Minneapolis, Colorado Springs and Tacoma. □

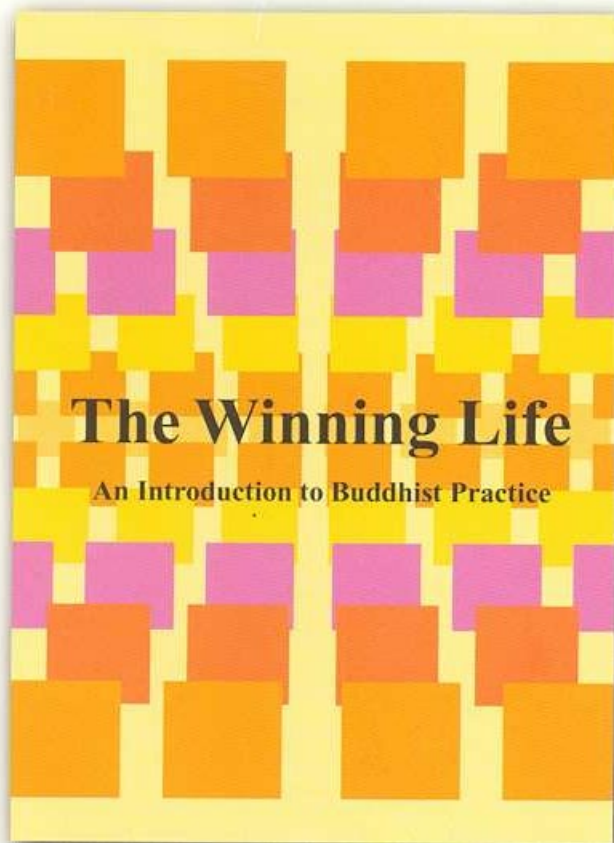


(Top row) Viewers take in the exhibit at "The Shops at Somerset" in Glastonbury, Connecticut, March 1998.
 (Middle row, left) A hands-on approach in Camden, New Jersey, October 1997. (Middle row, center) Executive Director René L. Huggins of the Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center in Camden, New Jersey, offers the keynote address, October 1997.
 (Middle row, right) Kids have interactive-fun in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, February 1998.
 (Bottom) Ribbon-cutting ceremony at the Walt Whitman Cultural Arts Center in Camden, New Jersey, October 1997.



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BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

AUGUST 1998



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THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE FUJI SCHOOL (6)

CALEDON CENTRE FOR CULTURE AND EDUCATION

SGI Canada's Caledon Centre for Culture and Education was officially opened on July 14, 1996, just outside of Toronto, amid the stunning beauty of the Caledon Hills.

Situated on 134 acres of land and surrounded by a pine forest, the Caledon Centre overlooks a pristine fresh-water lake. Here Canadian members refresh their spirits as they attend conferences, small group seminars and various cultural activities.

In June 1997, the SGI Canada co-sponsored, along with several other organizations, the Interdisciplinary Conference on the Evolution of World Order. More than 150 participants from North America, Europe, Russia and Japan attended this conference dedicated to peace and holistic problem-solving toward the new millennium.

Scientists from many disciplines, including representatives of nongovernmental organizations and agencies of the United Nations, as well as administrators of finance, foreign policy and the military spent three days answering challenging questions. On the last day, at the Caledon Centre, small discussion groups developed recommendations on U.N. reform, development and population, peace and security, and social justice and economics.



People enjoy the view from the second-floor lobby of the Caledon Centre.