

LIVING BUDDHISM

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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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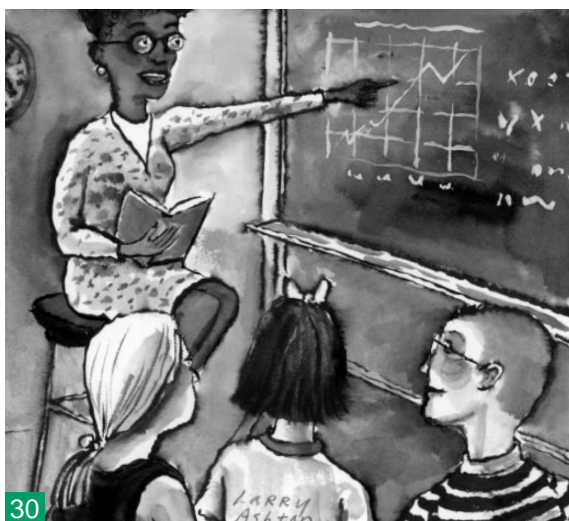
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On The Cover: *Concert in the Park*, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 72 in. by Dennis McGonagle.

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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. 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

Science and Buddhism

I'D like to thank Dr. Melvin Klegerman for his article "Science and Buddhism" in the March *Living Buddhism*. His suggestion that the three realms of *ichinen sanzen* offer a foundation for the ten dimensions of reality required by current thinking on Theory of Everything was particularly provocative. He suggested that the five components, together with the realm of individual beings, provide the six dimensions required in addition to the four dimensions of space-time. But the three realms also include the realm of the environment. I wondered, at first reading, how he might extend his thoughts to include this.

If I may venture a suggestion, perhaps the dimensions of space-time constitute the component called form. Then we have a total of eight dimensions in the realm of temporary existence, plus the realm of individual beings and the realm of the environment for a total of ten. Just in case anyone is counting.

I have been a member of SGI since 1969, practicing in the L.A. area until I moved to Northern California six years ago. The members here in Sonoma County have a tremendous seeking spirit, and many youth division in my chapter read articles such as

his — not that there are very many yet (articles, that is, we have lots of youth division)—with eager curiosity. Until recently I sometimes felt that no one else devoted any thought to the details of how the core theories of this faith might relate to contemporary science; President Ikeda's published discussions were the sole source.

STEVEN BELL
Santa Rosa, Calif.

Melvin Klegerman's reply: Thank you for pointing out an oversight in my article on "Science and Buddhism." This presentation was at least partly adapted from ideas developed in my thesis for the Study Department in 1987, in which I explained that the four dimensions of space-time corresponded to the realm of environment. Therefore, 4 (environment) + 5 (components of the individual) + 1 (aggregates of living beings, or society) = 10. I was able to introduce this concept in my presentation at the conference, but apparently did not develop it sufficiently in the article. I apologize for any confusion this may have caused.

I FOUND Melvin Klegerman's article, "Science and Buddhism," in many ways to be a very intelligent presentation on that subject, a really exciting new paradigm shift.

I believe that one part of his sug-

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 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, 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, California: (310) 451-8811. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

gested equation of Chih-i's (T'ien-t'ai's) six subjective with the six remaining objective dimensions of a Superstring ten-dimensional universe does seem, to a non-scientist, to offer an interesting explanation for a mind-boggling quantum phenomenon. Yet, a novice like myself might ask whether one should even think of taking such a literal application of a Buddhist concept and applying it so dramatically to the physics of the universe. At first I thought that such application was mind-bogglingly unrealistic. Or is it? It made me think. Are we perhaps not following other hypotheses which, if taken literally, science might find also mind-boggling, without actually ask-

ing ourselves whether that literal interpretation is the correct one?

For example, I have sometimes wondered how science—full steam ahead armed with all its “chaos” and “complexity” (see letter in the January issue), quantum theories, etc.—could explain how our usual paradigm of “reincarnation” works? It seems from my limited viewpoint that a number of SGI members take the parable literally, that we will soon be reborn on Earth (quite likely with our relatives) in human form, on a one-to-one correlation with a 100 percent recycling of our individual karmas. Others may say that it would take a super-super-computer to keep track of all that, as well as violation of physics's

Second Law of Thermodynamics! They may state that with the Big Bang, how can one talk even of the eternity of life? “It is a fairy tale.” Or is it?

There is so much that I want to learn.

In this age, science can be used for extraordinary good for humanity or for extraordinary evil. The SGI must confront it. I believe we can make a critical difference. Despite my limited understanding, I thank Melvin Klegerman for his exemplary courageous and stimulating thoughts. I hope that the youth especially leave no stone unturned pursuing science based on faith.

PHIL ANDERMANN
Edgewater, N.J.

Glossary

Bodhisattvas of the Earth: Those who chant and propagate Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. *Earth* indicates the enlightened nature of all people, and *bodhisattva* is one who dedicates his or her life to helping others.

Buddha: One who perceives the true nature of all life and leads others to attain the same enlightenment. The Buddha nature exists in all beings and is characterized by the qualities of wisdom, courage, compassion and life force.

daimoku: Literally, *title*, it refers to the invocation or chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

Gohonzon: It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and the life of Nichiren Daishonin in the form of a scroll, which SGI members enshrine in their homes. *Go* means *worthy of honor* and *honzon* means *object of fundamental respect*.

gongyo: Literally, it means *assiduous practice*. In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, gongyo consists of reciting excerpts from the second and sixteenth chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

karma: Sanskrit word meaning *action*. The life tendency or destiny each individual

creates through thoughts, words and deeds that exert an often unseen influence over one's future.

kosen-rufu: Literally, it means to *widely declare and spread* (Buddhism); to secure lasting peace and happiness for all humankind through the propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Lotus Sutra: The highest teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha, it reveals that all people can attain enlightenment and declares that his former teachings should be regarded as preparatory. Reciting excerpts from the Lotus Sutra is part of SGI members' daily Buddhist practice.

Nam-myoho-enge-kyo: The fundamental component of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it expresses the true entity of life that allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *Nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the entity of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *reng* (lotus), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (Buddha's teaching), all phenomena.

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82): The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of worship, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one's mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as the universal practice to attain enlightenment. *Daishonin* is an honorific title that means *great sage*.

Shakyamuni: Also known as Siddhartha Gautama. Born in Nepal about three thousand years ago, he is the first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings) culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching.

Soka Gakkai International (SGI): The Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a worldwide association with membership in 128 countries and territories. In the service of its members and of society at large, SGI centers its activities on human potentialities for individual happiness and for global peace and prosperity. The breadth and focus of its mission derive from the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Buddhism. Soka Gakkai means *value-creation society*. The SGI-USA is a member-organization of the SGI.

Frequently Cited Sources

For purposes of convenience, all citations from the following works will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows after the first listing:

- *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*: MW, followed by the volume and page number.
- *Gosho Zenshu* (The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin in Japanese): GZ, followed by the page number.
- *The Lotus Sutra*: LS, followed by the chapter and page number.

STANDING UP FOR HUMANITY

WHEN I learned that the mother of a Pittsburgh member recently died, I hastened to extend my condolences to him and his family. A few days later, I received a beautiful letter of appreciation from him, in which he shared some details of his mother's life. I asked for and received his permission to share them with you. He told me that his mother had always been very active in civil rights and had been arrested and jailed for a few days in 1951 for distributing a petition protesting any possible use of atomic weapons (by the United States) in the Korean War. He also told me how readily she supported his own efforts for peace when he joined the SGI in 1971. She witnessed firsthand the tremendous impact that practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism had on his life. In 1985, she also became an SGI member.

A number of thoughts came to mind as I imagined this courageous mother. I thought of the degree to which SGI President Ikeda praises women — how he has said that women are the original pacifists. I thought of how women instinctively understand the barbarous nature of war. They are the ones whose husbands and sons have been slain on battlefields all over the world throughout time.

I was also struck by the fact that I received this letter at the same time the Japanese tabloid *Shukan Shincho* questioned the accuracy of comments made by SGI President Ikeda regarding his friend and peace activist the late Dr. Linus Pauling. In 1958, Dr. Pauling wrote a petition calling for the cessation of all nuclear weapons testing. That same year he delivered his petition to the secretary-general of the

United Nations with over 11,000 signatures of scientists from forty-nine countries. In fact, it was the last public document signed by Dr. Albert Einstein before his death.

Testifying before the Senate Internal Security Committee, Dr. Pauling was threatened with arrest if he didn't turn over the names of the people who had collected those signatures. Standing on principle, he refused. He told the chairman of the subcommittee, "I could protect myself by agreeing, but I am fighting for other persons who could not make a fight themselves."¹

When President Ikeda commented on this episode in Dr. Pauling's life, the *Shukan Shincho* reporter wrote that "in the democratic United States, they don't go around arresting peace activists." Totally ignorant of the peace movement within the United States, this sarcastic reporter was trying to tarnish President Ikeda's comments honoring his late friend.

AS a journalist by training, I was outraged by such irresponsibility. To put one's personal freedom at risk to fight for one's beliefs is at the very heart of America. From the heroes of the Revolutionary War to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., from the many scientists and artists and ordinary citizens who refused to cave in to Senator Joseph McCarthy's infamous House on Un-American Activities Committee to the university protests against the Vietnam War in the '60s, Americans have unhesitatingly risked jail for the principles they believe in.

It is also a global phenomenon. I think of President Nelson Mandela of South Africa,

President Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic, Guatemalan Indian rights activist Rigoberta Minchú and Aung San Suu Kyi, who has withstood years of house arrest in her native Burma; the image of a young Chinese student facing down a tank in Tiananmen Square comes to mind. And it was also the spirit of countless nameless people like our mother from Pittsburgh.

IT is the spirit of the first Soka Gakkai president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, whose refusal to submit to the authority of the Japanese militarist government led to his arrest as a prisoner of conscience during World War II; and of the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, who joined Mr. Makiguchi in prison and forty years ago made his famous declaration denouncing the satanic nature of nuclear weapons, urging that they be banned from the face of the Earth. It is the legacy upon which the SGI-USA stands, one that pulsates in the heart of every member of our great organization.

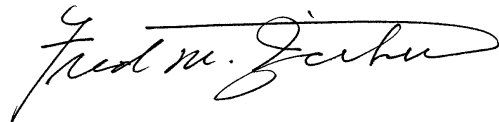
In his 1997 peace proposal, President Ikeda states:

Nichiren Daishonin, the thirteenth-century Buddhist sage whose teachings we at SGI follow, said, "Life is the most important of all our properties." This respect for life is the essential inspiration of the Toda declaration. Herein lies the reason we at SGI aspire for the inner revolution of all individuals — the human revolution — that will establish the respect for all life as the basic norm of human society. Life is the world's supreme treasure. There is no value that is worth preserving at the sacrifice of life... Our efforts are inspired by the conviction that we cannot sit by and overlook the crises occurring everywhere on the Earth.²

President Ikeda concluded his peace proposal, saying:

We at SGI, firmly committed to that conviction, will further expand the network of solidarity based on renewed humanism through our Buddhist-oriented movement fostering peace, culture and education. Working together with people of good throughout the world, we will rally courage and pool our wisdom to overcome the crises of civilization, the greatest challenges humankind has ever faced, and open the door to a third millennium where the sanctity of every individual life shines with hope and glory.³

This month we celebrate May 3, the day we acknowledge the significance of our relationship with the three presidents of the Soka Gakkai. So I will temper my outrage at one reporter's sarcasm and embrace the legacy of our presidents, Mr. Makiguchi, Mr. Toda and Mr. Ikeda, and deepen my prayer as I redetermine to do whatever I can to stand on the side of all people who face persecution in the name of peace.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

1. Hager, Thomas, *Force of Nature, The Life of Linus Pauling*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1955, p. 521.

2. Ikeda, Daisaku, "New Horizons of a Global Civilization" (1997 Peace Proposal), April 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 26.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

THE DAIMOKU OF THE LOTUS SUTRA

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT FROM THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN
IS MATERIAL FOR THE SGI-USA STUDY MEETINGS IN MAY AND JUNE.

THE character *myo* [from Nam-myoho-renge-kyo] is rendered in Sanskrit by the word *sad*, and in Chinese is pronounced *miao*. *Myo* means “fully endowed,” which in turn has the meaning of “perfection.” Each word and each character of the Lotus Sutra contains within it all the 69,384 characters that compose the sutra. To illustrate, one drop of the great ocean contains within it the waters of all the various rivers that flow into the ocean, and the wish-granting jewel, though no bigger than a mustard seed, is capable of showering down all the treasures that one could wish for.

To give another analogy, plants and trees are withered and bare in autumn and winter, but when the sun of spring and summer shines on them, they put forth branches and leaves, and then flowers and fruit. Before the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, the people in the nine worlds were like plants and trees in autumn and winter. But when the single character *myo* of the Lotus Sutra shone on them like the spring and summer sun, then the flower of the aspiration for enlightenment blossomed and the fruit of Buddhahood emerged.

(*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 15)
(*Gosho Zenshu*, [*The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, in Japanese], p. 944)



The Mystic Law enables people to “open” their lives and draw forth their innate Buddha nature; to see their lives “fully endowed” with everything they need to become happy; and to revive their lives to the state of Buddha.

Background

NICHIREN Daishonin wrote “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra” on January 6, 1266, while staying at Seicho-ji temple in Awa, the province of his birth. He was 44 at the time. The word *daimoku* from the title refers to the title of the Lotus Sutra, *Myoho-enge-kyo*, but in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, it is the invocation of the Mystic Law—*Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*.

Not much is known about the letter’s recipient except that she was an elderly woman who lived in Amatsu of Awa Province and had considerable attachment to the Pure Land teaching. The Pure Land sect was one of the major Buddhist sects of the time that the Daishonin had challenged as leading people to misery.

Upon receiving news of his mother’s serious illness in the autumn of 1264, one year after he was pardoned from exile on Izu Peninsula, Nichiren Daishonin returned to Awa to care for her. In November of the same year, a group of Pure Land sect zealots led by Tojo Kagenobu, a local steward, ambushed the Daishonin and his followers at a place called Komatsubara. Kudo Yoshitaka and others came rushing to his aid. Kagenobu’s men cut down Yoshitaka and another disciple named Kyonin-bo. The Daishonin received a sword cut on his forehead and had his left hand broken.

Despite the enmity from the local steward, Nichiren Daishonin remained in Awa until 1267, spreading his teaching. His mother recovered from her illness before

she passed away in 1267, as he later recounts: “When I, Nichiren, prayed for my mother, not only was her illness cured, but her life was prolonged by four years” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 230).

He wrote this letter to elucidate the benefit people gain from chanting *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo* with faith in their own Buddha nature. He explains that people can rid their lives of negative karma and gain fortune and virtue because the Mystic Law, as represented by the character *myo*, produces three beneficial results. It enables people to “open” their lives and draw forth their innate Buddha nature; to see their lives “fully endowed” with everything they need to become happy; and to “revive” their lives to the state of Buddhahood. In this issue,



Before the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, the people in the nine worlds were like plants and trees in autumn and winter. But when the single character *myo* of the Lotus Sutra shone on them like the spring and summer sun, then the flower of the aspiration for enlightenment blossomed and the fruit of Buddhahood emerged.

we are studying the portion of “The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra” in which Nichiren Daishonin explains the two meanings of *myo*—to be fully endowed and to revive.

Commentary

IN the first paragraph of this excerpt, Nichiren Daishonin explains the meaning of the character *myo* as “fully endowed.” Linguistically, the phrase *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo* consists of two parts: *nam* and *myoho-renge-kyo*. *Nam* is a

transliteration of the Sanskrit word *namas*, meaning devotion. *Myoho-renge-kyo* is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese translation of the title of the Lotus Sutra rendered by Kumarajiva (344–413), the renowned Buddhist scholar from Central Asia. He translated a number of Buddhist scriptures, including the Lotus Sutra, into Chinese during the Later Ch’in dynasty. The title of the Lotus Sutra in Sanskrit is *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*—“the sutra of the mystic law of the lotus flower.”

As Nichiren Daishonin explains

in this passage, the original Sanskrit for *myo* or mystic is *sad*. Here the character *myo* represents the Mystic Law of *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*, which is the basis of the entire sutra. He states: “Each word and each character of the Lotus Sutra contains within it all the 69,384 characters that compose the sutra.”

In “The True Object of Worship,” he explains:

The Muryogi Sutra states: “[If you embrace this sutra,] you will naturally receive the bene-

fits of the six *paramitas* without having to practice them." The "Hoben" chapter of the Lotus Sutra says: "They wish to hear the teaching of perfect endowment." The Nirvana Sutra states: "*Sad* indicates perfect endowment." Bodhisattva Nagarjuna comments: "*Sad* signifies six." The *Daijo Shiron Gengi Ki* (Annotation of the Four Mahayana Theses) states: "*Sad* connotes six. In India the number six implies perfect endowment." In his annotation of the Lotus Sutra, Chia-hsiang writes: "*Sad* means perfect endowment." The Great Teacher T'ient'ai remarks: "*Sad* is a Sanskrit word, which is translated as *myo*." An arbitrary interpretation of these quotations may distort their meaning, but in essence they mean that Shakya-

muni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase *Myoho-rence-kyo*. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was. (MW-1, 64)

FROM one perspective, the Mystic Law may be described as life itself. So when Nichiren Daishonin says that the meaning of the Mystic Law is "fully endowed" or "perfection," he tells us that our lives are innately endowed with everything we need to become happy and free, exactly the same as the Buddha's life. Those who believe in this truth and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo can embody this truth as reality. The key is our faith that we possess within our lives "the wish-granting jewel" from which we can enrich our lives.

In the second paragraph, Nichiren Daishonin talks about the meaning of *myo* to revive. He reassures us that no matter how hopeless our circumstances may appear, once we embrace the Gohonzon, we can tap our innate power to revive ourselves.

When we are ignorant of life's rejuvenating power, we become like withered plants in winter. We may be alive physically, but we are dead in spirit. But once exposed to the sun of the Mystic Law, our lives blossom into luxuriant trees, bearing the fruit of happiness. Our difficulty is believing we possess such power when confronted with the day-to-day problems that produce the illusion we are weak and limited. □

*Background and Commentary by
SGI-USA Study Department*

INTRODUCTION TO THE MAJOR WRITINGS OF NICHIREN DAISHONIN

The following is an edited excerpt from the introduction to The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, volume one. It explains some of the historical and cultural background of the Daishonin's writings and problems faced in translation.

JOSEI Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, conceived the idea of publishing Nichiren Daishonin's writings to commemorate the 700th anniversary of the founding of the Daishonin's Buddhism in 1253. In 1951, Nichiko Hori (1867–1957), who had devoted his life to compiling and cata-

loguing the Daishonin's works and who served as fifty-ninth high priest of Taiseki-ji temple, began work on the editing of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (Jp. Nichiren Daishonin *Gosho Zenshu*). In April of the following year, the completed text was published in one volume by the Soka Gakkai in Tokyo.

The authenticity of all of the 426 documents in the collection has been established. Of these, 150 exist in Nichiren Daishonin's own handwriting. Taiseki-ji has thirty-two manuscripts and others are the property of other temples or are in private collec-

tions visited by Nichiko Hori. Where no manuscript attributable to Nichiren Daishonin exists, the copies of the work made by his immediate disciples Nikko Shonin (1246–1333) and Nichimoku Shonin (1260–1333) were relied upon wherever possible.

The writings of Nichiren Daishonin fall into several categories. Some are formal treatises on Buddhism with large numbers of quotations from Chinese doctrinal works and translations of sutras. Examples of such treatises are the "The Security of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism" and the "The True Object of Worship." These treatises are written in classical Chinese, which, like Latin in Europe until recent centuries, was widely employed in Japan for works of history, philosophy and religious

doctrine. Nichiren Daishonin's writings in classical Chinese are marked by great power and fluency.

OTHER writings by Nichiren Daishonin take the form of letters to his various disciples and followers. Some of these are lengthy and detailed, giving us much valuable information on the Daishonin's activities and thinking. Others are short communications written to advise or encourage his followers. These works are written in the ordinary Japanese epistolary style of the Kamakura period. Like the works in Chinese, they show Nichiren Daishonin to have been a master of prose style and contain passages of great warmth and beauty.

The treatises, since they are carefully constructed and logical in presentation, pose relatively few problems of interpretation, though occasionally there are quotations whose sources have yet to be identified. But because classical Chinese is very concise in expression, and because much of the language of the treatises is highly specialized, it has at times been deemed advisable to expand the wording of the original in translation in order to make the meaning clear in English.

The letters, written in a more intimate and personal style, present greater difficulties of interpretation. Whereas the treatises were intended as formal documents to be handed down to posterity, the letters are in most cases rather private communications between the Daishonin and his followers. They take for granted a familiarity with certain background information that was known to the writer and the recipient but in many cases cannot be fully known to us today. Thus, without a thorough knowledge of the circumstances under

which the letter was written and the identity of the recipient, we must often guess at the exact meaning of references in the text.

Nichiren Daishonin in his letters and other writings frequently alludes to various anecdotes taken from Buddhist texts or works of Chinese history. Such allusions may appear pedantic to the English reader because of not having the cultural background to understand them. But it should be kept in mind that the Japanese readers whom Nichiren Daishonin was addressing would have encountered no such difficulty. The anecdotes he refers to would have been as familiar to them as the stories of the Bible or Greek mythology are to Western readers, and they could therefore immediately grasp the significance of the allusion and appreciate its aptness without difficulty.

ALL personal names are given basically according to their respective nationalities, but fictitious names that appear in the sutras are given in Japanese fashion. All Sanskrit names—personal, local and technical—are introduced without the elaborate diacritical marks demanded by strict Indology. Nearly all such names and terms, however, are listed in the appendix sections with full diacritical marks, along with their Japanese equivalents. All Japanese personal names are given in traditional fashion, with the family name first and the given name second. Thus, Minamoto no Yoritomo is Yoritomo of the Minamoto family. Sometimes the second element in a name is an official title rather than a given name. For example, in the name Shijo Kingo, Shijo is the family name and Kingo the

title of the government office held by the individual. Each individual selection is accompanied by a background section that gives readers the information they need to understand that particular translation.

A FINAL word should be added concerning the form of dates found in the English translation. For the sake of readability, these are given as though they were dates in the modern Western calendar. Thus, for example, the date of Nichiren Daishonin's birth is given as February 16, 1222. In premodern times, however, Japan, like China, generally recorded dates in terms of the lunar calendar, and the date of the Daishonin's birth in fact is the sixteenth day of the second lunar month of 1222. By the lunar calendar, New Year's Day, which was regarded as the beginning of the first month and of spring, varied from year to year, but always fell somewhere between January 21 and February 19 by the Western calendar. For this reason, the sixteenth day of the second lunar month would actually correspond to a date in March or April of the Western calendar. Because the months of the lunar year are shorter than those of the solar year, it is necessary to add an extra month at certain intervals to prevent the lunar year from falling behind the solar year. Such a month is known as an intercalary month and occurred regularly about one month out of every thirty.

And finally, according to the traditional Japanese way of reckoning ages, a baby is one year old at the time of birth, and a year is added to its age with the passage of each New Year's Day. □

THE JOY AND POWER OF PRAYER

The following is an excerpt from SGI President Ikeda's book Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 85–93.

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.

The important thing is to continue the practice of chanting daimoku throughout our lives. The

tain people can carry out goes against the Buddha's spirit.

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

impatiently pursue only visible gains, who put on airs, or who are caught up in vanity and formalism will definitely become deadlocked.

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 a person with strong faith, sufferings function to enable him or her to become happier still.

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. □

This "Topics for Discussion" series is intended to stimulate lively conversations about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

amount of daimoku we chant each day will naturally vary somewhat over time. That's perfectly all right.

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.

The practice of chanting daimoku embodies the Buddha's ardent and heartfelt wish to lead all people to happiness. A practice that only cer-

light shines forth. The lotus flower (*renge*), 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



Modern Buddhist Healing:

Guided Imagery Based On
Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism

By Charles R. Atkins, Chicago

THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE IS BASED ON A PRESENTATION MADE BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR BUDDHIST-CHRISTIAN STUDIES CONFERENCE HELD AUGUST 2, 1996, AT CHICAGO'S DEPAUL UNIVERSITY UNDER THE THEME, "SOCIALLY ENGAGED BUDDHISM AND CHRISTIANITY."

OVER the last two decades, medical science researchers from around the world have intensely studied the effect of prayer, faith and the mind-body connection in the healing process.

As a consequence, medical doctors are now using East Asian meditation practices as adjuncts in their clinical practice. Medical schools in the United States and elsewhere are now including Buddhist and Vedic-based

techniques like mindfulness meditation, yoga, mind-body relaxation exercises, prayer therapy and guided imagery as part of their curriculum. The position of this paper is that chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is

an extraordinarily effective means for healing the body and mind. Of particular importance is the power of this practice in managing disease and pain, especially when combined with the modern-day technique known as guided imagery.

Regarding the nature of Buddhism, Soka Gakkai International President Daisaku Ikeda writes:

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.¹

Not only does Buddhism clearly define the causes of suffering and illness, it also provides a means to change the karma that is at the root of sickness, pain and unhappiness. Nichiren Daishonin states in his writing "On Prolonging Life" that chanting daimoku with a sincere attitude can conquer any illness:

There are two types of illness: minor and serious. Early treatment by a skilled physician can cure even serious illnesses, not to mention minor ones. Karma also may be divided into two categories: mutable and immutable. Sincere repentance will eradicate even immutable karma, to say nothing of karma which is mutable. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 229)

Buddhism reveals that the reality of life is shaped by karmic cause and effect in an unbroken pattern from

My Experience With Hodgkin's Disease

WHEN I was 36 years old, I experienced a rapid deterioration of health at the beginning of 1987. I was a businessman and Chicago-area native when I began to experience severe back pain followed by drenching night sweats, insatiable itching, chills, nausea and constant fatigue. By the time all the symptoms had reached their peak, I was diagnosed with fourth-stage Hodgkin's Lymphoma and given a dismal prognosis.

Cancerous tumors were behind my ear, on both sides of my neck, in my sternum and abdomen, with a golf-ball-sized tumor fused into my spine at the L-3 level. A team of oncologists recommended a six-cycle regimen of aggressive combination chemotherapy known as MOPP BAPP followed by complete nodal irradiation.

I had been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for thirteen years and began to apply the method of chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in a life-and-death battle with my illness and the side effects of treatment. With the blessing of my doctors, I followed his protocol to the letter and used chanting to bolster my immune system.

I imagined my white blood cells exploding with spiritual energy like the halos of holy light seen in religious paintings. Every morning and evening I would imagine my insides bathed in holy light that would destroy cancer cells and revitalize healthy cells. Four months into my treatment, I



Charles Atkins

became deathly ill.

Suffering from a high fever and compromised immune system, I was hospitalized in an isolation room, unable to continue further treatment. Feeling that death was rapidly approaching, I asked visitors to leave and began to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with all the strength I had left, aspiring to crown my life with victory.

Early in the morning of the second day of hospitalization, I had a near-death experience where it seemed I was greeted by thousands of Buddhas who took me on a fantastic journey, "a nirvana of eternal light." After what seemed like a hundred years, but was in actuality only several minutes, I awoke happy and refreshed. My fever had broken and I felt revitalized inside. Two days after this near-death experience, I was given a CT scan that indicated there was no more evidence of cancer. I have been cancer-free and in perfect health since 1987.

The team of doctors who worked on my case was totally impressed not only in my ability to tolerate my treatments but also in my ability to strengthen my immune system through my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. My medical records are currently on file with the Veterans Administration in Hines, Ill. □



Doctor and best-selling author Deepak Chopra asserts that every cell in a physical body is a miniature sentient being knowing every conscious and subconscious thing a person knows, but in its own unique fashion.

the infinite past. In relationship to illness and healing, the Chinese Buddhist master Chih-i (T'ien-t'ai), founder of the Tendai School of Buddhism, explained the causes of illness:

There are six causes of illness: (1) disharmony of the four elements [earth, water, wind and fire]; (2) improper eating or drinking; (3) inappropriate practice of seated meditation; (4) attack by demons; (5) the work of devils; and (6) the effects of karma. (MW-2,213)

The New Breed of Healers

HARVARD University professor and author Dr. Herbert Benson, of Deaconess Hospital's Mind-Body Institute, has studied the relationship between prayer and healing for the past twenty

years. His well-publicized research has identified three major phenomena associated with prayer and healing that he terms the relaxation response, the faith factor and remembered wellness. In his book *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief*, Dr. Benson confirmed the benefit of faith and prayer in eliciting the relaxation response and leading the way to remembered wellness. His study concluded that repetitive prayer, born of faith, is a highly effective supplement to conventional medical treatment. The essence of that clinical study found measurable recuperative benefits were consistently obtained by chronically ill Christians, Jews and Muslims who used repetitive prayer in conjunction with the best medical treatment available. Dr. Benson postulated that personally affirmative mantras or prayers practiced twice daily bring forth healthful bodily changes including lower blood pressure, slower heart rates and lower metabolic rates.

Dr. Benson's findings reveal that all mantras, prayers and secular affirmations appear to be equal in producing the relaxation response. For example, a Jew chanting "Shalom" or a Muslim reciting passages from the Koran was equally beneficial to a Hindu's mantra or a Christian repeating "The Lord is my Shepherd." Even secular affirmations like "I will overcome, no matter what" produced the benefits of the relaxation response.

Another powerful voice in the scientific investigation of prayer and healing is medical doctor and author Larry Dossey, former co-chair of the panel on Mind-Body Interventions for the National Institutes of Health. His research and writing on prayer and

self-healing in its varied forms have introduced the public to such Buddhist-like ideas as non-local consciousness, transcending space-time and our ability to initiate recovery through prayer. His book, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, affirmed what millions of people already knew and believed that prayer could heal and make the impossible, possible. His 1996 book, *Prayer Is Good Medicine: How to Reap the Healing Benefits of Prayer*, further explores his premise that prayer has always been medicine's best kept secret.

Medical doctor and best-selling author Deepak Chopra is another leading advocate and philosopher of mind-body healing. Dr. Chopra has put forward such ideas as quantum healing, realizing perfect health, reversing the aging process, balancing the *doshas*² of the human body, and the importance of humankind adopting a quantum worldview. His emergence from the constraints of conventional Western medicine spawned an explosion of insight influenced largely by the ancient Hindu-based ayurvedic medicine. Dr. Chopra's observations on life and consciousness as energy fields and that we are integral components of an all-pervasive intelligence governing the universe are important ideas in understanding the elements involved in self-healing. His opinion is that quantum consciousness breaks down matter and being into intelligent fields, waves and subatomic particles. His opinions have very important implications for self-healing, postulating that every cell in the physical body is a miniature sentient being, knowing every conscious and subconscious thing the person knows, but in its own unique fashion. By way of repro-

Various sects and schools of Buddhism have utilized pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, mantras, mudras, yoga postures, meditative disciplines, breath control practices and various rituals to produce healing in the body, mind and spirit of believers. But they have never used the essence of the Lotus Sutra.



MORTON BEBELS, F. COORNS

gramming the mind with rhythmical lifestyle changes, meditative techniques and mantras of primordial sounds, a person can redirect errant cells and the body's systems to heal themselves and function at an optimum level.

Dr. Martin L. Rossman, one of the great innovators of mind and body healing, discusses the history of guided imagery in his book *Alternative Healing*. In his 1987 book *Healing Yourself: A Step-By-Step Program for Better Health Through Imagery*, Dr. Rossman demonstrates that his therapy has many similarities with Northern Mahayana Buddhist meditation practices that use imagery. With

the introduction of the Simonton Method, a simple visualization technique is used that produces excellent results for seriously ill people. Part of the Simonton Method consists of relaxing the body and mind, then picturing immune cells as numerous, powerful and aggressive in the imagined destruction of cancer cells that are conversely visualized as isolated, weak and confused.

The Influence of Shakyamuni and Nichiren Daishonin

SHAKYAMUNI was the first historical Buddha. According to the earliest writings, he

appeared in the world to solve the fundamental dilemma posed by the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death. Preaching the dharma(s) through a multitude of sutras over a period of fifty years, the Buddha taught according to the capacity of the people, using such expedient means as similes, metaphors and parables to guide people to a correct way of living. In the final eight years of his life, Shakyamuni preached what he declared to be his highest teaching, the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni declared in the twenty-third chapter of the Lotus Sutra, the "Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King": "Such is the



KIRK CONDLLES

One of the four human dilemmas the Buddha's teaching clarifies is the mystery of birth. Once born, all people are subject to the other three dilemmas of illness, aging and death.

Lotus Sutra. It can cause living beings to cast off all distress, all sickness and pain. It can unloose all the bonds of birth and death" (*The Lotus Sutra*, ch. 23, p. 286).

In the more than twenty-five hundred years since the death of Shakyamuni, various sects and schools of Buddhism have utilized pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, mantras, mudras, yoga postures, meditative disciplines, breath control practices, and various rituals to produce healing in the body, mind and spirit of believers. But they have never used the essence of the Lotus Sutra. In the tenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "Teacher of the Law," Shakyamuni declares: "Medicine King, now I say

to you, I have preached various sutras, and among those sutras the Lotus is foremost" (LS10, 164). Because medical professionals have now demonstrated the effectiveness of prayer and meditation by use of pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, it is even more important for them to now investigate and utilize the Buddha's ultimate medicine of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the king of his teachings.

History has shown that Nichiren Daishonin (1222–81) was an unrivaled Buddhist master. Describing Nichiren, the late British historian Arnold Toynbee wrote:

"Prophet" is an appropriate description of Nichiren; for in

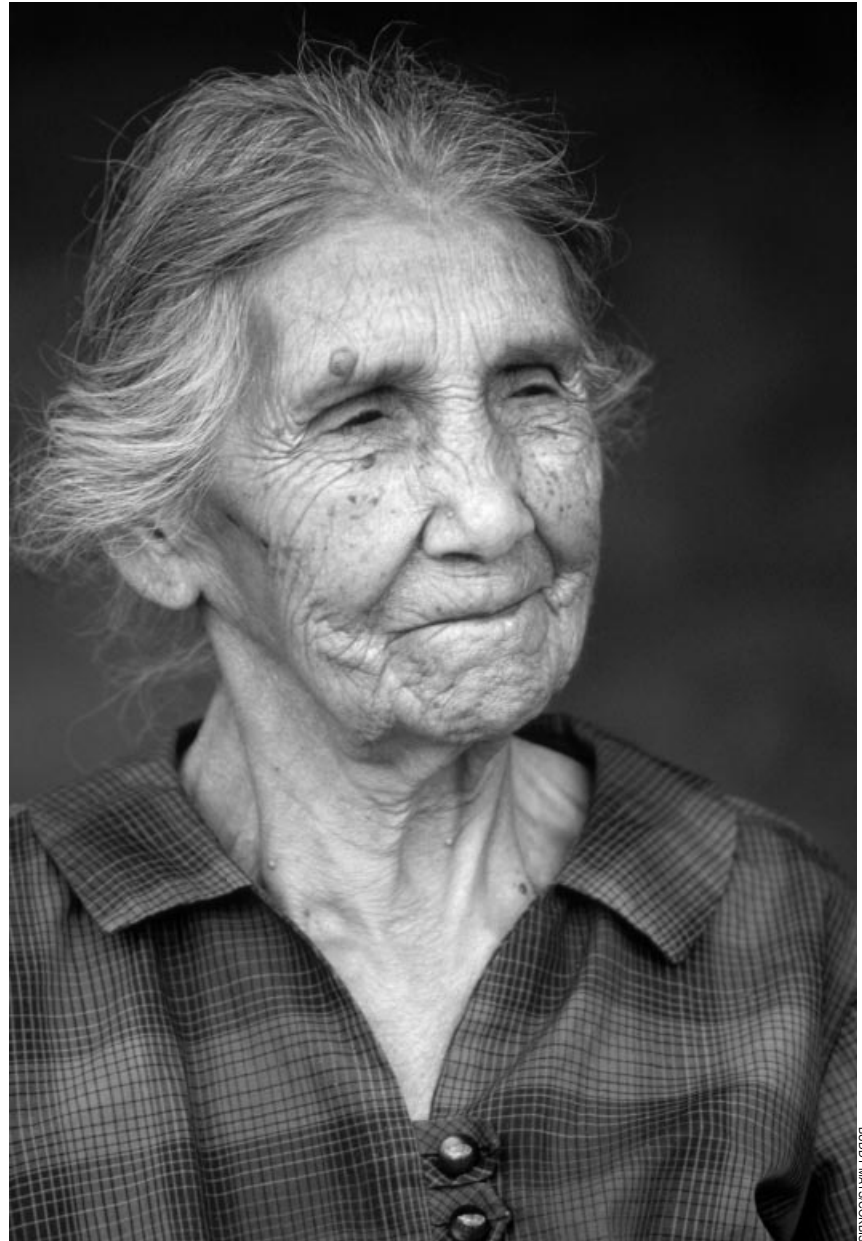
many ways Nichiren has more affinity with the prophets of western Asia than with any of the other propagators and interpreters of Buddhism in India and in eastern Asia. Zoroastrian, Muslim, Christian, and Jewish readers of this book will recognize Nichiren's affinity with Zarathustra, Muhammad, and the prophets of Israel and Judah..."³

Nichiren gave birth to the widespread chanting of the Lotus Sutra's title and essence. He instructed his contemporary and future followers to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and over-

The practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism allows for continual spiritual growth, achieving victory after victory into one's later years and even at the moment of death.

come all their obstacles based on faith in the mandala he inscribed, commonly known as the Go-honzon. In his letter "Reply to Kyo'o," Nichiren writes: "Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?" (MW-1, 119)

As evidenced by the many letters to his followers, Nichiren encouraged all people of his time and future generations to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo so they might become empowered to overcome obstacles, change negative karma, cure illness and attain Buddhahood in the present lifetime. Drawing enlightenment and hope from the mighty ocean of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren encouraged his followers with the life-sustaining knowledge that by virtue of their faith and determined practice they could overcome any illness and karma, extend their life span, die victorious deaths and be joined by a thousand Buddhas who would guide them safely to nirvana. Nichiren claimed that any illness could be overcome through strong faith. But he also placed great importance on getting proper diagnosis and the best possible medical treatment. Never did he suggest that a person disregard treatment because he or she had faith. In his writing "On Prolonging Life," he strongly encouraged a stubborn, elderly follower to take proper care of herself and overcome her illness:



SHIBUYA MAYS/CORBIS

"If you are unwilling to take proper care of yourself, it will be very difficult to cure your illness" (MW-1, 231). Earlier in the same writing he said, "In addition, you can go to Shijo Kingo, who is not only an excellent physician but a votary of the Lotus Sutra" (MW-1, 230). Maintaining a balance between the best medical treatment available and the power of faith is only common sense.

During his exile to Japan's Izu Peninsula, Nichiren was asked to cure the grave illness of the senior government official, Lord Hachiro Zaemon, who was on his death bed. Nichiren agreed to pray for the lord's recovery.

When the steward of this district sent me a request to pray for his recovery from illness, I wondered if I should accept it. But



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since he showed some degree of faith in me, I decided I would appeal to the Lotus Sutra. If I did, I saw no reason why the ten demon daughters should not join forces to aid me. I therefore addressed the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Taho and the other Buddhas of the ten directions, the Sun Goddess, Hachiman and the other deities, both major and minor. I was sure that they would consider my request and respond. Certainly they would never forsake me, but would respond as attentively as a person rubs a sore or scratches an itch. And as it turned out, the steward recovered. (MW-2, 55)

In 1264, Nichiren learned that his mother was critically ill. Returning home, he prayed for her recovery. Again, in "On Prolonging

Life," he writes: "When I, Nichiren, prayed for my mother, not only was her illness cured, but her life was prolonged by four years" (MW-1, 230).

Nichiren left a legacy of many personal letters to his followers. He frequently wrote letters that clarified how to overcome illness through the practice of Buddhism. During his lifetime, disease was rampant with deadly plagues killing off much of the populace. In "The Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra" (MW-3, 15), he states: "Bodhisattva Nagarjuna in his "Daichido Ron" (Treatise on the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom) says, '[The Lotus Sutra is] like a great physician who changes poison into medicine.' This quotation occurs in a passage in the "Daichido Ron" that explains the virtues inherent in the word *myo* of the Lotus Sutra. The Great Teacher

Miao-lo comments on this as follows: "Because it can cure that which is thought to be incurable, it is called *myo* or mystic" (MW-3, 15).

Nichiren declared in his writing "Reply to Myoshi-ama": "The person called Buddha is a physician without peer. He has taught us the elixir of immortality, which is the five characters of *Myoho-renge-kyo*. Moreover, he has taught these five characters are beneficial for the illnesses of all the people of the world" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1479).

The Oneness of Body and Mind

ONE of the most compelling concepts is the principle of the oneness of body and mind. It might also be defined as the essential oneness of the material and spiritual. Modern science has opened new paths in psychoso-

There is much to learn and use from the mind of a child when utilizing guided imagery. Imagination, well-structured fantasy or pretend are the same techniques used in conjunction with the meditative discipline to perform guided imagery.

matic medicine and is rapidly approaching the ancient Buddhist and Vedic wisdom that the mind and body are indivisible. Body and mind or spirit are inseparably linked, exerting reciprocal influence on each other. Further, the body is not the basis for the mind and vice versa. The importance in the oneness of body and mind in our quest for recovery from illness is knowing how to influence the reciprocal nature of our body and mind, like a simple push button means to calibrate a sensitive instrument. Based on the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren revealed this wisdom that enables human beings to overcome any illness as Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

When the mind is disturbed and depressed, there is a corresponding depression in the immune system, just as faith, happiness and encouragement seem to bolster the immune system. Negative feelings, unrequited stress and negative images are harmful to the body. According to Nichiren Daishonin, the true entity of life or the integrating force of the oneness of body and mind is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. The power of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo to change immutable karma is especially important for children stricken by cancer and debilitating disease, as well as their parents. It offers unlimited hope for the innocent. It has been my experience that Daisaku Ikeda's merciful words are true when he

states, "The Buddha is to be found among those who are suffering the most."⁴

Many SGI members in America first learned of what I term mantra-powered guided imagery through studying the following quote from Nichiren Daishonin's "Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings," which makes the point that chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo is our body and life itself: "Our head is *myo*, our neck is *ho*, our breast is *ren*, our stomach is *ge*, and our legs are *kyo*. This five-foot body of ours is the five characters of *Myoho-enge-kyo*" (GZ, 716).

Guided imagery is a combination of meditation and imagination. Adults should remember the incredible abilities of children to play in the world of make-believe. Children have the ability to pick up a twig and make it into a toy soldier or create a fort out of sand. There is much to learn and use from the mind of a child when utilizing guided imagery. Imagination, well-structured fantasy or pretend are the same techniques used in conjunction with the meditative discipline to perform guided imagery. In general, guided imagery encourages the person to imagine his or her body producing healing forces from within or, in some cases, attracting healing forces from outside the self, and through the combination of mind and matter, expedite the healing process.

Something of extreme significance regarding chanting is its power to affect loved ones even if they are unable to use it for themselves. One can direct healing powers at a loved one and in so doing improve the condition of that person while at the same time bringing forth strength and benefit within oneself. SGI members frequently describe their chanting as being able to beneficially influence the life of another person, even thousands of miles away.

Each syllable of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo corresponds to a specific area of the human form. *Nam* does not correspond to a specific part of the anatomy but can be envisioned as originating above the head at the (seventh) level of the *sahasrara chakra*,⁵ like a crown of light that emanates to the heavens and cascades down, surrounding the body like a golden robe of holy light. The invocation, Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, is repeated out loud. While chanting, a mentally pictured scenario to attack the disease is formulated. Examples of disease-fighting images include imagining your insides bathed in generalized or focused healing light, shooting lasers at tumors, ocean waves and tides cleansing wounds, and so on. Dr. Martin Rossman rightfully suggests using an image that has a strong emotional connection to your life.

The easiest method to begin with is concentrating only on the words and rhythm. Next you find

“The real cure is the realization that at the most essential level, we are all ‘untouchables’—utterly beyond the ravages of disease and death.”

—Dr. Larry Dossey, *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*

their corresponding place in the body. Visualize *nam* (the body’s aura), *myo* (head), *ho* (throat), *ren* (chest), *ge* (abdomen), *kyo* (extremities). When repeating the words, the mind creates a mental picture by placing the sound of each word at the corresponding area of the body. The speed of chanting is optional, but the pace of chanting most used is like that of a galloping horse of about one Nam-myoho-renge-kyo every second or two.

Where there are medical problems in the body, increased emphasis and concentration are given to that word and place. If someone has a diabetic ulcer on their foot, that corresponds to *kyo*. That person might then focus on the area of *kyo*, letting the resonance of that word merge with an image of healing the ulcer. When you feel the image has been productive, you let go of that image and allow healing to occur.

Chanting with faith, frequently and with great passion, is the key to ultimate victory in all cases and especially when confronting chronic illness. Millions of Soka Gakkai International members from around the world have had powerful experiences of overcoming all manner of affliction. However, it is a mistake to believe that every illness will automatically disappear by chanting or using this prescribed imagery, just as no medical treatment is effective in every case. When the body is worn out or

disease has spread to irreparably damage other organs, survival may not allow individuals to enjoy the same quality of life that they once enjoyed. Because we all eventually die, it is only reasonable to have



confidence in the eternity of life and pray to realize a pain-free, dignified death on our own terms. Management of chronic or intractable illness with chanting is the means to enjoy the remainder of life to the greatest extent with the most beneficial outcome. In spite of our attachment to this current, temporal existence, survival is not always in our best interest. In his best-seller *Healing Words: The Power of Prayer and the Practice of Medicine*, Dr. Dossey offers an intriguing perspective on the true nature of our prayers for recovery, the transient nature of illness, the eternity of life and the transcendental essence of the fundamental-

ly enlightened human spirit:

Even if prayer or attempts at self-transformation fail in the course of illness, there is still a sense in which a cure can always occur. By “cure” I do not mean the physical disappearance of cancer, heart disease, high blood pressure, or stroke, but something more marvelous—the realization that physical illness, no matter how painful or grotesque, is at some level of secondary importance in the total scheme of our existence. This is the awareness that one’s authentic, higher self is completely impervious to the ravages of any physical ailment whatsoever. The disease may regress or totally disappear when this awareness dawns, for reasons we may not understand. When this happens it comes as a gift, a blessing, a grace—but again of secondary importance. The real cure is the realization that at the most essential level, we are all “untouchables”—utterly beyond the ravages of disease and death.”⁶

Based on personal experience and ten years of research on the power of healing through chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with faith alone, as well as chanting coupled with guided imagery, I have personally witnessed and become aware of hundreds of cases of recovery, even when death seemed certain. Published reports also have included

people overcoming illnesses ranging from cancer and heart disease to diabetes and the host of mental illnesses. Even diseases like AIDS are proving to be mutable karma in the light of faith and improved treatments. In some cases, chanting with faith and hope for recovery with no methods of imagery proved effective. In other cases, chanting with faith was not effective until guided imagery was used. In other cases, chanting with guided imagery where people had no particular faith in it brought about complete recovery. Interestingly enough, recovery from illness based on chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with guided imagery was achieved by people of other religions and by people with no previous religious leanings, including agnostics and atheists. The common denominator of these experiences is that all the people who received proper medical treatment and as an adjunct, chanted Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, were able to make progress against their illness. By chanting, these individuals were able to spark a spiritual revolution within themselves that enabled them to more effectively manage their illness.

Conclusion

IN recent years there has been a proliferation of healing philosophies that include meditation and practices based on esoteric Buddhism and Hinduism. The reason for people's confusion in finding the best spiritual medicine for their illness is because so many respected physicians and popular authors who advocate self-healing do not yet really understand the essence of Buddhism embodied in the second and sixteenth chapters of the Lotus Sutra. The value of what has been done in merging Eastern philosophy into Western medicine is extraordinarily significant and has resulted in great benefit for sick people.

It is further hoped that the same zeal shown by clinicians and experts in alleviating the suffering of sick people through various meditations and mantras will ultimately lead to the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin's invocation and mantra-powered guided imagery. □

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Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures

Vice Chancellor Wang
Gungwu of the
University of Hong
Kong — Internationally
Renowned Scholar and
Academic

THESE are things we must not forget, painful as they may be to remember. "A historical view is important," I remarked to Vice Chancellor Wang as we sat in his official residence at the University of Hong Kong in February 1992. The afternoon sun shone gently on the greenery outside the window.

Dr. Wang, who is a renowned historian, agreed and observed with keen perception that when leaders have a mistaken understanding of history, it can adversely affect the decisions they make, thus causing society to move in the wrong direction.

Our discussion that day focused on the issue of war. Whenever I visit Hong Kong, I can't help but recall the Japanese military occupation of Hong Kong that lasted for three years and eight months. I remarked how Japanese militarism, backed by an emperor-centered view of history, had trampled on

MORTON BEBE, S.F. COURTESY



SGI President Ikeda and renowned historian Vice Chancellor Wang Gungwu of the University of Hong Kong met February 1992 in the scholar's official residence at the university.

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Hong Kong and China. And as I did so, I was struck again by the terrifying results of leaders' mistaken views of history.

A Barbaric Occupation

ON December 8, 1941, the Japanese military simultaneously attacked Pearl Harbor in the United States and invaded Hong Kong's Kowloon Peninsula. On December 14, guns began firing on the island of Hong Kong itself. Needless to say, many innocent civilians were killed. Students of the University of Hong Kong were among those who fought alongside the British forces stationed in the territory, but on December 25, the garrison surrendered unconditionally and the Japanese army and navy entered Hong Kong.

Those who experienced the Japanese military occupation will never forget the atrocities committed by Japanese soldiers. They say that

complete lawlessness prevailed.

At the time of the Japanese invasion, the population of Hong Kong had swollen to about two million people, owing to a large influx of Chinese immigrants prompted specifically by the Japanese occupation of China. One of the first things the Japanese military did when they took control of Hong Kong was to seal off all the warehouses containing food that had been set aside for the civilian population. Anyone who voiced opposition to this move was beheaded. As food shortages began to be felt, the Japanese army initiated forced evacuations of the population. Hundreds of thousands were driven out of Hong Kong, often by cruel and violent means. In at least one instance, the Japanese military packed people onto boats and then threw them into the sea or abandoned them on uninhabited islands. Still the food shortages worsened. People starved to death and it was not uncommon to find their corpses

littering the roadside. Some people even sold their children because they could not feed them.

Food was not all the soldiers devoured; they robbed people of their possessions as well. Anyone who showed even a hint of resistance was simply disposed of. Torture was commonplace and even used on children. As if they were a law unto themselves, the soldiers behaved with appalling arrogance and insolence. They broke into homes and pillaged them at will; they raped women. The people of Hong Kong spent their days and nights in fear.

There are many tragic stories of the occupation that tell of this fear. I've heard of one instance where a mother, hiding along with many others in long grass, was tragically forced to suffocate her own baby in order to stop it crying out and giving them all away to the enemy soldiers.

The Japanese soldiers were truly brutal. And in fact, the Chinese

called them “the Eastern Devils” or “the Japanese Devils.” The deep wounds the Japanese inflicted on the Chinese have not healed even today, and the scars perhaps will never completely disappear.

Given this history, many who suffered at the hands of the Japanese during the occupation find it unforgivable that even now, a half-century after these events took place, the Japanese authorities are unwilling to offer them a sincere apology or to redress past wrongs. They are also left with the distinct impression that Japan does not teach the true history of this period to its younger generation and that, on the contrary, it actually tries to cover up its unsavory past.

Today, more than a million Japanese tourists visit Hong Kong each year. Yet how many of them, I wonder, are aware of Japan’s wartime activities in Hong Kong, China and other Asian countries, or understand the magnitude of the suffering that was inflicted on the people of these places? Because of this lack of awareness on the part of the Japanese, it is not unnatural perhaps that some people in Asia fear a repetition of the nightmare that they experienced during World War II.

“It is far too dangerous,” I said to Vice Chancellor Wang at our meeting, “to leave the world’s future in the hands of politicians. The people must become wise and responsible for their own future. When people of one country communicate with those of other countries, when they join hands to work together, they will create a current toward peace. The people can forcefully direct history, so that a small handful of corrupt leaders cannot turn that current astray. That is the reason I continue to promote activities for peace, culture and educa-

tion, based on the philosophy of Buddhism.”

Because of this commitment, I have worked to pave the way for active exchange programs between Soka University, of which I am founder, and the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

Discarding Nationalism

HUMANKIND can no longer allow itself to become involved in nationalist rivalries. This is the lesson we should learn from the catastrophic history of nationalism. The nationalist agenda, which sees the world as “my country” versus “all other countries” must be abandoned, and people must be awakened to a new vision of the world—a vision of human solidarity in which “the people of all nations” stand against “the authoritarian forces of all nations.” It is vital to create a network of common people that transcends national borders and use it as a force to monitor and direct the authorities in all nations. Such efforts will certainly lead to the creation of a peaceful home for all peoples, a global federation.

Dr. Wang made a similar remark in December 1992. He noted that true leaders offer people a vision, and that this can only be done if they direct their gaze to history. That is why, he said, truly great historians are at such pains to write accurate histories so that they may be read and studied by great leaders.

“Accurate histories” — these words are rich in implication. A view of history is ultimately a view of humanity: it includes a view of human society and life itself.

Vice Chancellor Wang was inspired in his youth by the monu-

mental work of the British historian Arnold Toynbee (1889–1975), *A Study of History*. He remarked that he was deeply impressed with Toynbee’s theory of challenge and response and his gift for grasping history not just in its parts, but as a whole. Dr. Wang was also familiar with the details of my own exchange of views with Dr. Toynbee [between 1971 and 1974, and published in book form under the title *Choose Life*].

From his youth, Vice Chancellor Wang was recognized for his intellectual brilliance. He completed his undergraduate studies in history, economics and English literature at the University of Malaya (today the National University of Singapore) when he was only nineteen. After that, he obtained a Ph.D. at the University of London, returning to work as a lecturer at his alma mater. At the age of thirty-three, he became dean of the faculty of arts at the University of Malaya. He then taught Far Eastern history for many years at the Australian National University in Canberra. In 1986, he assumed the post of vice chancellor of the University of Hong Kong, one of the most respected universities of Asia. He is indeed an internationally renowned scholar and academic.

Flexibility and Compassion: The Makings of a Good Teacher

IASKED Dr. Wang: “How does one become as brilliant as you are? Several Japanese mothers have earnestly requested that I ask you the secret of developing one’s intellectual powers.”

“That’s the hardest question of all,” he said with a smile. He then offered an indirect response to this question by discussing the qualities of a good teacher.



Hong Kong—a crossroads where East meets West.

his revolutionary ideals.

Dr. Sun Yat-sen, too, looked to the future with a unique eye to history. “This world tendency [toward democracy, despite disappointments and defeats,]” he wrote, “has flowed from theocracy on to autocracy and from autocracy now on to democracy, and there is no way to stem the current.”¹

The great Chinese leader advanced boldly toward his vision. He titled his autobiography, which ends with the establishment of the Republic of China, *Where There's a Will, There's a Way*.

Dr. Wang asserted that flexibility is an essential requirement of teachers because every student, every human being, is unique. What children learn at home, he stressed, is also important, adding that it is desirable to foster a family environment that stimulates and encourages children in a positive way. But since these conditions are not present in every home, he said, it is vital that teachers give special attention to children who are deprived of such educational opportunities, because it is their job to ensure that such children do not feel neglected or suffer any disadvantages. The vice chancellor is warmhearted and compassionate. In spite of his many public duties, he always makes time to interact with students.

Dr. Wang's father was also an educator. An important thing he learned from him, the vice chancellor said, was that education means broadening people's minds. In that respect, he noted, there are no national boundaries in education; it is completely open. And he stated with firm conviction that education

can and should contribute equally to all of humanity. The vision cherished by this renowned historian was clearly a future without borders or boundaries.

The more we look to the future, the more we are compelled to devote our energies to human education as a farsighted undertaking.

One Cannot Stem the Flow of History

I HAVE met Dr. Wang on six occasions, and during our conversations, the name of Dr. Sun Yat-sen (Sun Wen; 1866–1925), the father of modern China, has come up several times.

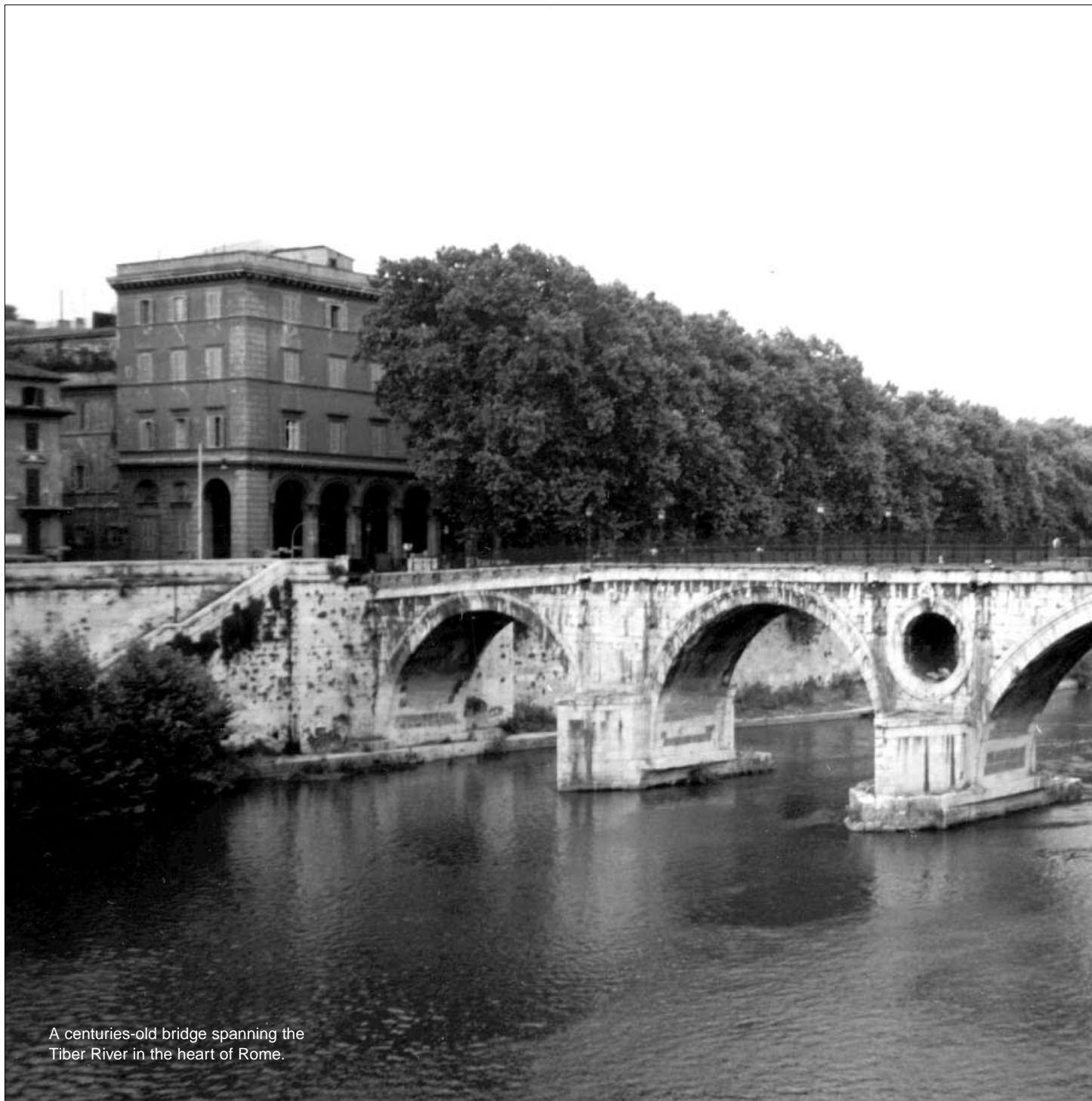
Dr. Sun Yat-sen was a graduate of the College of Medicine for Chinese in Hong Kong, the precursor of the Medical Department of the University of Hong Kong. According to his autobiography, he had already resolved before going to college that China's Qing dynasty must be overthrown and democracy established, and as a student he began to expand his circle of comrades who shared

Expanding the Sphere of Humanism

IT is my belief that the tide of the times is flowing toward ever-expanding humanism. There may be twists and turns on the way, but no one can stop this tide. And we must ensure that it continues flowing forever. Those who work actively to expand the sphere of humanism will be history's victors, whereas history will judge harshly those who seek, for their own petty, temporary gain, to turn back the flow of that mighty current.

Hong Kong—a crossroads where East meets West—is a metropolis alive with the spirit of world citizenship, a bustling port pulsing with human energy. With their respective lofty missions, I feel sure that as long as Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong continue to flourish, history's tide will never be turned back. □

1. Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price (Taipei: China Cultural Service, 1985), p. 63.



A centuries-old bridge spanning the Tiber River in the heart of Rome.

IT was in 1991 that I began to take a closer interest in the Italian movement of the Soka Gakkai, although I had known about it for some time. I had read various things about the organization and heard it spoken about by colleagues at international conferences where professors and researchers interested in

religion gather periodically. However, it was only in 1991 that I began to have direct contact with the SGI and started to contemplate a research project involving the organization which, as often happens, has gone through several different phases.

For over a year, two young collaborators, Laura Ferrarotti and

Enrica Tedeschi, and I attended those meetings, which are fundamental to the practice of SGI members, our status being that of “observer/participant.” With the consent of leaders and members, we always recorded the dialogue at meetings so that we would not forget or distort what was said. I

THE BUDDHA WITHIN OURSELVES

By MARIA IMMACOLATA MACIOTI

PROFESSOR OF SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION, UNIVERSITY OF ROME LA SAPIENZA, ITALY



LUCA MARINELLI

Maria Immacolata Macioti has taught sociology and sociology of religion at the University of Rome La Sapienza since 1976. She is a member of the International Sociological Association and the International Society of the Sociology of Religion.

wanted our role, as well as our scientific interest, to be clear at all times, and I am convinced of the importance of using an ethically correct methodology for this.

Once we realized the size of the movement in Italy, we decided to use a questionnaire to supplement our qualitative study that was

based on observation, interviews and the gathering of experiences. The questionnaire was carefully discussed and compiled and then sent to individual groups through internal distribution. About 4,000 completed questionnaires were returned. A representative sample was chosen and the results elabo-

rated with a group of students: a useful formative experience for sociology students. Then research papers were prepared, based on a deeper observation of specific areas. Meanwhile, my two collaborators analyzed the movement's two magazines, *Duemilauno* and *Il nuovo rinascimento*.



(Left) Trastevere—region across the Tiber River from Rome, Italy. (Above) Vico Equense—seaside resort in southern Italy, on the Bay of Naples. (Right) Italian members after an exuberant performance in Florence, Italy, on the occasion of SGI President Ikeda's visit, June 1992.

All of this work was presented at a conference on Buddhism in May 1994. Yet, I still wasn't sure that I had full knowledge of the movement and its reality which, contrary to my expectations, was showing itself to be rich and complex. I had heard that critics of the Soka Gakkai considered it to be a very rigid, almost militaristic, organization. I also knew that Nichiren and his followers had been accused of violence as well as intolerance and sectarianism. I had also felt that some members perceived the role of leaders as an authoritarian one. Therefore, I wanted to deepen my knowledge of the movement, continuing to have direct contact with it and to participate in both the ordinary and special meetings.

It seemed to me that the Soka Gakkai was going through a difficult period of transition in relation to its "divorce" from the priesthood, and I wanted to understand how it was going to change. Therefore, I continued to collect experiences, visiting Florence, Milan, Turin and southern Italy to take part in various meetings.

After five years of study, I believe I now understand why this movement interests and attracts many people of all ages. I think I understand why people remain in the organization and commit to participation in its many activities as well as why some don't remain. The lack of pressure to join and the freedom to leave the group seem to me nevertheless very important, and it is good that these two aspects coexist.

ONE of the reasons for people's attraction to this movement is its potential for transforming the negativity that is often unavoidable in life. The life stories of many of the people I spoke to, whose words and suffering I recorded, all reveal a difficult past. Those words still retain the sound of anguish: You can hear it, you can almost touch it. They recall how meeting someone who practiced, and then the Gohonzon, gave them an aim in life, gave them hope. Gradually they rediscovered their interest in life. Many members say that Nichiren's teachings, as

explained in Daisaku Ikeda's guidance, as well as that of the Italian leaders, constituted a turning point for them, redirecting their desires and expectations.

Another reason for people's strong interest in ISG (Soka Gakkai Italy) is related to the concept of "useful action" in the world. It seems that many members were attracted to ISG because of this. Pain is apparently transformed into medicine. Difficulties seem to take on a different aspect when reconsidered in the light of the concept of karma. Here the law of karma is not regarded as destructive, or as an alibi for incapacity or failure. Instead, it is used to offer possible explanations, rational interpretations and direction for the future. The painful present thereby becomes a clear sign of the past and of the future: It is here and now—one is taught—that one gathers the fruit from seeds sown in the past and one sows the seeds for tomorrow.

In this light, faith, practice and study are no longer abstract words or distant aims. Instead, they become



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actual facts, opportunities, constant stimulus, and it is up to the individual to reap them. People may get the impression that the way of life offered as an example by the Soka Gakkai is somewhat demanding, in terms both of time and of willingness to change. It is no wonder, therefore, that not everybody feels up to it. Yet, I understand the strong bond that unites those who remain, who intend to work together for themselves and for others.

IS the organization, then, free of problems? Is everything “smooth sailing” once an individual has determined to embark on a journey of faith? I don’t think so. Just as any personal commitment is demanding,

commitment to the Italian SGI movement seems to have had, and to still have, problems. It seems to me that there are some difficulties in the relationship between the membership and the leaders in adapting and orienting the Italian mentality towards different cultural suggestions. The movement finds itself constantly in the struggle to achieve and maintain equilibrium—to strike a balance between the tendency to institutionalize and organize (to form groups, chapters headquarters, territories, etc.) and to foster spontaneity (to form networks and groups that are created from common interests).

For many, the Soka Gakkai has meant positive experiences, footholds, encouragement; the possibil-

ity of finding answers to the exigencies of change, and to the need for meaning. For many, it has been a prime path to happiness, a source of strength. It has inspired; it offers assurances.

It should be hoped that these aspects will, with time, take even deeper root, gain acknowledgment and opportunities to develop. This will, of course, depend on the type of recognition, on the type of welcome and encounter that Italian society and the larger European context offer with regard to the Soka Gakkai.

For myself, the encounter with this complex phenomenon has been a positive and enriching experience. □

18

“Embracing the Lotus Sutra” Means Recognizing the Infinite Worth of Each Person’s Life

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

In this installment, they discuss the seven treasures adorning the Treasure Tower, and the principles of the “three transformations of the land” and their relation to the three illusions, “the six difficult and nine easy acts” and the “three pronouncements” related in the “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (eleventh) chapter.

Katsuji Saito: The more I think about the Treasure Tower, the more strongly I sense that it teaches those of us in the present age something of fundamental importance. Symbolically, it proclaims: “The human being definitely is not insignificant and powerless.”

People today, by and large, are satisfied neither with their lives nor with the state of the world. A feeling of powerlessness seems to predominate. People are asking themselves, “But what can I possibly do to change things?” A sense

of futility and despair is casting a dark shadow over their inner lives and over society. This, perhaps, is the basic dilemma of the modern era, isn’t it?

Daisaku Ikeda: You’ve raised a vital issue. The problem is particularly acute in the so-called advanced countries. In the United States, for example, there are signs that, increasingly, young people are suffering and having problems in life on account of low self-esteem. In many cases, these

young people so despise themselves that, in order to escape their pain, they resort to habitual drug use.

Takanori Endo: They don’t realize their inherent worth. And if people cannot treasure themselves, how can they ever treasure others?

Ikeda: It is a great tragedy to see one’s own life and the lives of others as inconsequential. In our modern society, everything has been, as it were, magnified to colossal pro-

DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA



THE WISDOM OF THE LOTUS SUTRA—
A DISCUSSION ON RELIGION IN THE
TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY



portions. The human spirit, laboring under the immense “mass” and “weight” of society, groans in despair. As early as the 1960s Norman Cousins, who was known as the conscience of America, wrote about this.

[Dr. Cousins’ dialogue with the SGI president has been published in Japanese under the title *Sekai Shimin no Taiwa* (Dialogue toward Global Harmonization).]¹

In one place, he wrote:

In traveling around the United States, I have been made aware of a melancholy tension. The questions people ask are not related to their personal incomes or the need to find better ways to amuse themselves. They want to know how to overcome their sense of personal futility on the big issues.²

Haruo Suda: The possibility of nuclear war and ensuing feelings of vulnerability must have weighed heavily on people’s spirits at that time.

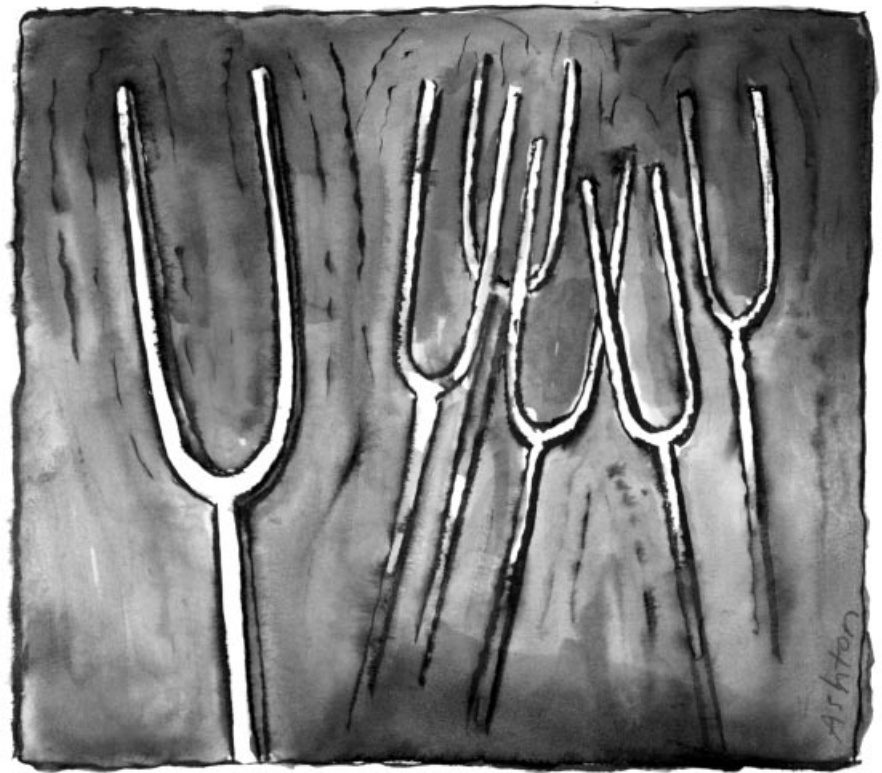
Ikeda: The nuclear threat was but one symbol of the insecurity people were feeling.

In the past, the “world” people were aware of was quite circumscribed. When a problem arose in their local city or village, they could readily grasp it, directly express their views on the matter and influence the outcome of events. But now people have become anonymous citizens of vast countries. They are becoming more and more aware that their destiny is inextricably linked with the destiny of the entire human race. While people worry about the direction in which their country as well as humankind as a whole are heading, they are uncertain as to how they can express their personal views on such matters or what kind of action to take in order to influence outcomes. And even where they find they can do something, they are not confident their efforts will truly help improve things in the world. This is the predicament people find themselves in today.

Dr. Cousins argues, “There can be no more important education today than education for personal effectiveness and a sense of connection with big events.”³ This of course applies to the education one receives in school, but that is not all. I regard the popular movement we in the SGI are developing as social education in a broad sense. It is a movement to empower people by showing them that, through their efforts, they can definitely change the world. And it is a movement to develop a solidarity of people who aim to do this.

Saito: That’s a good example of what we call “actual *ichinen sanzen*.”⁴ Nichiren Daishonin said,

When the tuning fork of our lives begins to ring with compassion, then, even if at first we are all alone, other tuning forks will start to ring with the same compassion. Compassion has a certain "wavelength"; but some person has to be the first to sound it.



"It is from this single entity of life that the differences among lands arise" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 563). In other words, he teaches that it is within the power of each of us to change the world we live in.

The Treasure Tower symbolizes the greatness of each person's life. The individual is a microcosm living in exquisite harmony with the macrocosm. Surely there is no greater joy than realizing that our lives exist in a state of oneness and indivisibility with the vast universe.

Ikeda: Speaking of the microcosm, we know that the human body is made up of the same chemical elements as the universe. Similarly, when you examine the constituent elements of the seven treasures that adorn the Treasure Tower you'll find that each one also exists in our bodies.

Endo: That's right. I did a little research on the seven treasures. In the Buddhist scholar Kumarajiva's Chinese translation of the sutra, the seven treasures are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, seashell, agate, pearl and carnelian. Of these, gold, silver, agate and pearl are well-known gems and precious metals. Lapis lazuli is a semiprecious stone with a deep azure color. "Seashell" means the shell of a giant clam. Carnelian is a translucent quartz; Chinese carnelian, by the way, is said to be very rare.

Saito: The list varies from text to text. For example, in the Sanskrit text of the Lotus Sutra, the seven treasures include coral, amber and crystal.

Endo: Nonetheless, of the seven treasures, the basic component of lapis lazuli, agate and carnelian is sil-

icon. Silicon is absolutely essential for the development of the human body; it is needed for the formation and growth of the skeletal system. And the main component of pearl and agate is calcium, which we know plays a very important role in building bones and teeth.

I also discovered that agate shows a variety of different hues depending on the kind of metal in which it is set. In iron, it has a reddish hue; in cobalt, it is blue; and in chrome, it appears green. These metals are all indispensable for the proper maintenance of our lives: iron for carrying oxygen in the blood, cobalt for building blood cells, and chromium for the metabolism of sugar and fat.

Other metals required by our bodies include copper, zinc, tin, manganese and nickel. And our bodies may also require gold, mercury and some other metals.

Ikeda: That's fascinating. You are quite right when you say our lives are literally "treasures."

Hydrogen, oxygen, carbon and nitrogen are the most common elements in the human body. The metals that you mentioned, maintained in precise equilibrium, support the microcosm of our lives.

Suda: Regarding blood, I understand that the total length of blood vessels in the human body is an astounding 96,000 kilometers (60,000 miles). That's two-and-a-half times the circumference of the Earth. It's hard to believe that such a great distance is contained within one's body.

Ikeda: In "The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future,"⁵ Nichiren Daishonin elaborates on the statement by the Great Teacher Miao-lo of China, "Our bodies each take the form of heaven and earth." He says, for example, "Our blood flow is like rivers and streams" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 567). Our lives, in other words, mirror the natural world.

Saito: Buddhism is truly universal in scope. The Daishonin also says, "Our eyes are like the sun and the moon, their opening and closing is like day and night" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 567).

Ikeda: "Our eyes are like the sun and the moon." While this might at first seem far-fetched, if we stop to think about it we can see the reasoning.

Goethe (1749–1832) cites an ancient saying to the effect that: "Were they not sun-akin, our eyes, / To sunlight's glory they'd be blind."⁶ He further observes, "Nothing's outside that's not within."⁷

Nichiren Daishonin, in discussing the words of Miao-lo that I just mentioned, explains that to know oneself is to know all things in the universe. When you change, your environment changes, too. When your spirit or *ichinen* changes, everything is transformed. This is the principle of *ichinen sanzen*. This principle is summed up by Goethe's maxim "Nothing's outside that's not within."

Suda: Buddhism explains that a "law" or "reason" pervades all life and the entire universe. Scientists, influenced in part by Goethe, have considered this from the standpoint of the physical manifestation of life. Goethe observed that plant parts are all helical or spiral shaped. He noted, for example, the way in which bindweed winds around the plants among which they grow, and how the white birch tree rotates around its central axis.

The same spiral pattern is evident in the shell of a shellfish, the horns of sheep and oxen, and elephant tusks. Blood vessels are also woven from spiral-shaped fibers. In the submicroscopic world, DNA, which carries our genetic information, has the structure of a double helix. And in the macrosphere, a similar spiral or "whirlpool" shape can be seen in tornadoes and typhoons, as well as star nebulae.

Endo: The same pattern is found in whirlpools created by tidal currents. Since ancient times, the spiral seems to have symbolized life force, growth and evolution. One researcher propounds the view that the spiral, because it is produced by the repetition of similar phenomena, is an expression of rhythm.⁸

Ikeda: There certainly is rhythm in

the universe. And the rhythm of the life of an individual pulsates in perfect harmony with it. It seems to me that life, in essence, is an expression of a sympathetic resonance between the macrocosm of the universe and the microcosm of our lives.

In terms of "rhythm," the universe itself produces a kind of cosmic rhythm. It is a compassionate rhythm that enables all living things to grow and advance. You might even call it a "wavelength" of compassion. Living beings are "receivers" that can intercept this wavelength. No matter where we are, when we "tune in" to the "frequency" of Buddhahood, our lives are embraced in this compassionate melody infusing us with the spirit to realize growth in our lives and help others do the same.

We could also use the image of a tuning fork to describe this phenomenon. If you have two tuning forks of the same wavelength and you ring one, then the other tuning fork, even if it is at some distance from the first, will start ringing spontaneously.

Saito: What you've described is the acoustical phenomenon of resonance.

Ikeda: Yes. To continue the analogy, when the tuning fork of our lives begins to ring with compassion, then, even if at first we are all alone, other tuning forks will start to ring with the same compassion. And though at first perhaps only two or three will catch the rhythm, others will definitely follow. Compassion has a certain "wavelength"; but some person has to be the first to sound it. However, a tuning fork will not ring if it is left lying on its side; to produce a sound, it must stand upright. The same is true with our lives.

In the “Treasure Tower” chapter, the gathering of the Buddhas in the ten directions is like so many tuning forks starting to ring in unison in response to the reverberations of the tuning fork of Shakyamuni’s spirit “to make certain the Law will long endure” (LS11, 177)⁹. This is a grand illustration of the principle of sympathetic resonance.

The Three Transformations of the Land

Shakyamuni Buddha, in order to provide seats for all the Buddhas that were arriving, once more transformed two hundred ten thousand million *nayutas*¹⁰ of lands in each of the eight directions, making them all clean and pure and without hells, hungry spirits, beasts or asuras. He also moved all the heavenly and human beings to another region. ... the whole area comprising a single Buddha land, a jeweled region level and smooth. (LS11, 174)

Saito: That’s a wonderful image. To cause his emanations who were preaching the Law in the worlds of the ten directions to return and gather together in one place, Shakyamuni transforms and purifies the strife-ridden *saha* world¹¹ three times. This is the origin of the term the *three transformations of the land*. The term expresses the transformation of the realm of the environment. The first transformation is when Shakyamuni changes and then purifies the *saha* world. As he does so, he moves all the human and heavenly beings dwelling there to another region, with the exception of those in the assembly where the Lotus Sutra is being expounded.

But the number of the Bud-

dha’s emanations in the ten directions is so great that they cannot all fit in the *saha* world. To accommodate them, Shakyamuni next transforms and purifies two hundred ten thousand million *nayutas* of other lands in each of the eight directions,¹² and moves the heavenly and human beings living there to another world. He then joins these several lands together to form a single Buddha land. This is the second transformation. The third transformation occurs when Shakyamuni transforms and purifies an additional two hundred ten thousand million *nayutas* of lands in the eight directions, removing the heavenly and human beings in those lands to another region. He also made each of those worlds part of the one great Buddha land.

When the transformations were complete, the Buddhas of the ten directions filled the four hundred ten thousand million *nayutas* of lands that Shakyamuni had purified and consolidated into one land. This is the three transformations of the land.

Ikeda: It’s interesting that he moves the heavenly and human beings in these lands to other regions. I would imagine that various interpretations of this would be possible.

Suda: One interpretation is that those heavenly and human beings are among the beings of the six paths.¹³ Because beings transmigrating in the six paths are deluded, they cannot see the Buddha land that Shakyamuni created when he transformed and purified the *saha* world. This, perhaps, is what is meant when the text says they were “moved to another region.” Unless

you yourself change, things won’t look any different.

Endo: Similarly, although the world is changing rapidly in the post-Cold War era, many people, particularly here in Japan, it would seem, are still caught up in outmoded ways of thinking reminiscent of the Cold War.

Saito: In the *Hokke Mongu*,¹⁴ the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China says that Shakyamuni effects the three purifications through *samadhi*.

Ikeda: The Sanskrit word *samadhi* means to settle and focus the mind; in other words, to meditate. From our standpoint, *samadhi* means establishing an unalterable state of life, or *ichinen*; constructing a sound and stable “inner realm” that nothing can disturb. In that sense, the principle of the three transformations not only speaks to the transformation of the land; it also addresses the transformation of one’s own inner state of life.

Restoring People’s Ailing Lives to Health

Saito: I recall that in the “War and Reconciliation” chapter of the fifth volume of *The Human Revolution*, you explain the principle of the three transformations through a very familiar example.

You presented the hypothetical case of two families that had been closely related for many generations; let’s call them the Saitos and Endos. The two families were next-door neighbors. But their ancestors had quarreled, so for many years they didn’t speak to one another. In the meantime, the Endo family formed a new relation with another



Even in international relations, human beings are the key. Countries are gatherings of people, and they are created by people. It is impossible, therefore, that people could be unable to change them. Moreover, one must realize that the state exists for the sake of the people, not the other way around.

er family; let's call them the Sudas, who lived a thousand miles away. The Endos and Sudas became very good friends.

In time, the Saito and Endo families' memory of their ancestors' animosity faded, and gradually they felt the desire to forgive and forget. However, the Endo family, out of fear of offending their new friends the Sudas, simply could not find it in themselves to reach out to the Saitos in friendship. Naturally this upset the Saitos very much.

Now what would have happened, you asked, if at this point the neighboring Saitos and the Endos had simply let bygones be bygones and embraced one another in friendship? The environment would have changed completely. And the three families could have begun a harmonious relationship. Such a change, you explained, illustrates the principle of the transformation of the land. This is the basic outline.

Endo: You [President Ikeda] suggested that Japan and China were in the predicament of the neighboring families, and that the United States was like Japan's new friend from afar. You were making the case that Japan should develop friendly relations with China. At the time when you wrote this, Japan and China on the one hand, and China and the United States on the other were in great conflict. I recall how truly inspired I felt when I read your words.

Ikeda: Even in international relations, human beings are the key. Countries are gatherings of people, and they are created by people. It is impossible, therefore, that people could be unable to change them. Moreover, one must realize that the state exists for the sake of the people, not the other way around.

On account of various "enthrallments," people have lost sight of this simple and clear fact. Enthralled by

self-righteous ideologies, by concern over petty profit and loss, by emotionalism, by erroneous ideas and prejudice, and, fundamentally, by ignorance about human nature and life itself, people shut themselves up in their own narrow worlds.

Only when we cut the chains of these attachments can we respect other people as human beings and begin to conduct truly humanistic dialogue.

Saito: When you visited the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, President Ikeda, many people criticized you. Undaunted, you said: "I will go there, because there are people there." And you set to work building a bridge of friendship.

At the time, it seemed as though the conflict between China and the Soviet Union would continue indefinitely. And as a matter of fact, I heard that your visit to the Soviet Union drew criticism



Blaming sufferings on someone or something outside oneself is an example of an illusion of thought. When we realize that the causes for everything that happens to us are within our own lives, we have defeated this illusion of thought.

from the Chinese, too. Still, you maintained your conviction, asserting that China and the Soviet Union would definitely mend their relations. Things turned out exactly as you said. Your tremendous faith in human nature prevailed over what were seemingly insurmountable odds.

I think it's about changing mistrust into trust. This is easy to say, but extremely difficult to put into practice.

Ikeda: If you consistently take action in the arenas of power based on humanism, you are certain to encounter difficulties. This is an example of the principle of "the six difficult and nine easy acts" that we find in the "Treasure Tower" chapter.

Ricardo Díez-Hochleitner, president of the Club of Rome, has suggested that while we may say that the Earth is sick, the real problem is that the human beings who

inhabit the Earth are sick. The three transformations indicates making the world, the Earth, healthy by restoring the ailing lives of its people to health.

The Three Categories of Illusion

Suda: In the *Hokke Mongu*, T'ien-t'ai correlates the three transformations of the land with the three categories of illusion, which are illusions of thought and desire, illusions as innumerable as particles of dust and sand, and illusion about the true nature of existence. The three transformations of the land in effect eradicate the three illusions.

Illusions of thought, by the way, are mistaken views. While illusions of desire arise from the three poisons, namely, greed, anger and stupidity.

Endo: Blaming sufferings on someone or something outside

oneself is an example of an illusion of thought. When we realize that the causes for everything that happens to us are within our own lives, we have defeated this illusion of thought.

Saito: Broadly speaking, feeling prejudice toward others or judging people on the basis of social class can also be considered an illusion of thought.

Ikeda: Indeed. When we view people in this way, we are indiscriminately accepting images that other people over time have intentionally created. And when we readily rely on images without trying to open our hearts and discern the truth for ourselves, we quickly succumb to prejudice. Once we become biased, it is human nature to become attached to those biases and reluctant to surrender them. This is another type of illusion of thought.

Suda: By contrast, it could be said that illusions of desire are impurities nesting still more deeply in life. These illusions cloud our eyes to the truth.

Ikeda: These illusions could be described as distortions of life itself. They distort the mirror of the heart in which other people are reflected, giving us a skewed image of others.

Needless to say, the poisons of stupidity, greed and anger destroy human relations. And they have a similarly deleterious effect on relations between countries. Ultimately, illusions of thought and desire produce nothing but prejudice and hatred. In such a frame of mind, you cannot conduct open-hearted dialogue with anyone; nor will others approach you with open hearts.

Saito: The second transformation of the land signifies the purification of the illusions as innumerable as particles of dust and sand. These illusions afflict bodhisattvas. They are the countless worries that arise when they struggle to help others become happy.

Ikeda: That's right. This is something SGI members all experience. Before taking faith, we struggle earnestly just to overcome our own worries and sufferings. But after taking faith, we increasingly come to worry about the well-being of others. For example, we may worry about how to encourage someone who is sick. These are noble worries.

Endo: There are even instances where, for example, in trying to intervene in a marital dispute, it may happen that, ironically, we end

up suffering while the couple becomes happy.

Ikeda: For people who embrace the Mystic Law, to worry about friends and pray for their happiness comes naturally. Without hesitation, SGI members dive right into the reality of the *saha* world, with all its conflict, to come to the aid of people who are suffering. Yet we should not forget just how noble such efforts are.

The sutra says that in the second and third transformations Shakyamuni purifies two hundred ten thousand million *nayutas* of lands in the eight directions. This is the very image of the expansion of *kosen-rufu*.

SGI members dare to take on this most difficult work for those who are struggling the hardest. And by their actions, they are constructing "cities of tranquil light" in all parts of the world. As a result of their encouragement, friends who had been in the depths of suffering stand up and enact a "drama of revitalization" based on the Mystic Law. This itself is the splendid transformation of an "impure land" filled with suffering into a "pure land" pervaded with joy.

Saito: Each person's human revolution can fundamentally transform the destiny of an entire country.

Ikeda: Put into words, the transformation of the land may sound static; but since it comes about through individuals earnestly grappling with reality, it is actually a highly dynamic principle. As the sutra indicates where it says, "The *saha* world thereupon immediately changed into a place of cleanness and purity" (LS11, 173), the pure

land is not to be found in some other world. Rather, this world itself becomes the land of tranquil light.

Put succinctly, the Buddha's land is a place where many human Treasure Towers are constructed, where everyone shines as a "tower of treasure." The appearance of forests of these Treasure Towers creates the Buddha's land.

Endo: The third transformation represents the eradication of illusion about the true nature of existence.

Ikeda: Illusion about the true nature of existence is literally illusion about the nature of one's own life. This is the fundamental source of all illusions. If we are ignorant about the nature of our own existence, then we will be ignorant about the nature of other people's lives, too.

On the other hand, when our lives are free of illusion, we can perceive the Treasure Tower that shines resplendent in all people, in all beings. Such an "open heart" is the nature of enlightenment. The "closed heart" that prevents us from seeing the Treasure Tower is ignorance about the nature of life, or "darkness." This is the crux of the problem.

In the future I hope we can discuss darkness and enlightenment from various angles. But for the time being, why don't we consider their relation to the six difficult and nine easy acts in light of the "Treasure Tower" chapter?

Since propagating the Lotus Sutra is ultimately a struggle to overcome the fundamental darkness in our own lives, it is the most difficult of all tasks. And since this is also a struggle against the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, in carrying out this work we are sure to meet with obstacles.

**The Six Difficult
and
Nine Easy Acts**

The other sutras
number as many as Ganges
sands,
but though you expound those
sutras,
that is not worth regarding as
difficult.
If you were to seize Mount
Sumeru
and fling it far off
to the measureless Buddha
lands,
that too would not be difficult.
If you used the toe of your foot
to move the thousand-
millionfold world,
booting it far away to other
lands,
that too would not be difficult.
If you stood in the Summit of
Being heaven
and for the sake of the assembly
preached countless other sutras,
that too would not be difficult.
But if after the Buddha has
entered
extinction,
in the time of evil,
you can preach this sutra,
that will be difficult indeed!
(LS11, 178–79)

Suda: To begin with, the principle of the six difficult and nine easy acts, literally referring to six difficult and nine easy tasks, is indicative of just how difficult it will be to propagate the Mystic Law after Shakyamuni's death.

Saito: In the Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin repeatedly cites the sutra passage describing the six difficult and nine easy acts, and indicates that it has special relevance to himself.

Ikeda: In "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin goes so far as to say, "If a person fulfills the teaching of 'the six difficult and nine easy acts' of the Lotus Sutra, then, even though he may not have read the entire body of sutras, all should follow him" (MW-2, 151 [175]15). He indicates that just as all the "river gods" follow the "lord of ocean," and as all "mountain gods" follow the "lord of Mount Sumeru," all Buddhas and bodhisattvas follow the Daishonin, who read the teaching of the six difficult and nine easy acts with his entire being and thereby attained mastery of all sutras.

The Lotus Sutra is the king of all sutras. And the essence of its practice lies in the teaching of the six difficult and nine easy acts. One who internalizes this teaching therefore walks the supreme path in life.

Saito: Why don't we consider the six difficult and nine easy acts in terms of the flow of the "Treasure Tower" chapter? The three transformations have taken place and all of the Buddhas have assembled. Shakyamuni and Many Treasures (Jp. Taho) Buddha have taken their places within the Treasure Tower, and all beings in the assembly have been raised into the air. The stage has been set, and the Ceremony in the Air at last begins.

Shakyamuni first says:

Who is capable of broadly preaching the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law in this saha world? Now is the time to do so, for before long the Thus Come One will enter nirvana. The Buddha wishes to entrust this Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful

Law to someone so that it may be preserved. (LS11, 176)

Endo: Starting with this first exhortation, in the "Treasure Tower" chapter Shakyamuni calls out three times to the bodhisattvas urging them to spread the teaching after his death.

Ikeda: In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin refers to this as the "three pronouncements."

Suda: In the second pronouncement, Shakyamuni clarifies that the reason why Many Treasures Buddha has appeared and Shakyamuni's emanations in the ten directions have gathered is "to make certain the Law will long endure" (LS11, 177). And the third time, he issues his exhortation after revealing the extreme difficulty of propagating the Lotus Sutra in the future by explaining the six difficult and nine easy acts.

Ikeda: In this light, it is plain that the Ceremony in the Air is "for the time after the Buddha's passing." Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions unanimously urge that the true teaching be spread in the future. That is the purpose for the creation of such a magnificent stage.

Endo: The nine easy acts are as follows: (1) to teach innumerable sutras other than the Lotus Sutra; (2) to take up Mount Sumeru and hurl it to the measureless Buddha lands; (3) to kick the entire thousand-millionfold world (major world system) into another quarter with one's toe; (4) to stand in the highest heaven and preach innumerable sutras other than the Lotus Sutra; (5) to grasp the sky



Since propagating the Lotus Sutra is ultimately a struggle to overcome the fundamental darkness in our own lives, it is the most difficult of all tasks. And since this is also a struggle against the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, in carrying out this work we are sure to meet with obstacles.

with one's hand and travel around with it; (6) to place the earth on one's toenail and ascend to the Brahma heaven; (7) to walk across a burning prairie carrying a bundle of dry grass on one's back without being burned; (8) to preach eighty-four thousand teachings and enable one's listeners to obtain the six transcendental powers; and (9) to enable innumerable people to reach the stage of arhat and acquire the six supernatural powers.

Suda: One tends to wonder just what is easy about these things; or if it's perhaps not some kind of mistake, and that these are actually supposed to be the "nine difficult acts."

Saito: We can classify these nine into two groups: "physical" and "doctrinal." The second, third, fifth, sixth and seventh are physical tasks, and the first, fourth, eighth, and ninth are primarily doctrinal. The point is that they are all "easy" compared to the six difficult acts.

Ikeda: The reason for their inclusion is of course to illustrate by contrast the great challenge of the six difficult acts. Even so, it cannot be said that they are subjective or exaggerated. I think this formulation contains profound meaning.

Endo: The six difficult acts are as follows: (1) to preach the Lotus Sutra, (2) to write out and embrace

it and cause others to write it out, (3) to read this sutra even for a little while, (4) to embrace this sutra and expound it to even one person, (5) to listen to and accept this sutra and ask about its meaning, and (6) to honor and embrace faith in it after the Buddha's death.

In short, it is extremely difficult to carry out the practice of the Lotus Sutra for oneself and others in the Latter Day of the Law.

Ikeda: Do you know why this is?

It's partly because the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day of the Law is the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. There is also an important distinction when it comes to spreading the Law; only Bodhisattvas of the Earth can carry



History offers countless examples of instances where speaking the truth has invited strong condemnation. Many pioneering individuals, including scientists such as Galileo, encountered persecution that in some cases even cost them their lives.

out the practice of the Mystic Law. Furthermore, those who practice the Lotus Sutra are certain to encounter great difficulties. That's probably the key point.

In the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of Orally Transmitted Teachings), Nichiren Daishonin, addressing Shakyamuni's statement in the "Treasure Tower" chapter that "This sutra is hard to uphold" (LS11, 180), says, "Those who embrace this Lotus Sutra should be prepared to meet with difficulties" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 742).

Saito: "This Lotus Sutra" means the Gohonzon of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day. And "embrace" means to devote one's life to the widespread propagation of the Mystic Law.

Endo: Only those who endure persecution on behalf of the Law and

persevere in its propagation truly "embrace the Mystic Law." If people merely read the sutra, while failing to spread the teaching and running away from difficulties, they are not "embracing the Lotus Sutra."

Saito: In that sense, SGI members are genuinely carrying out the extremely difficult practice of "embracing the Lotus Sutra" in the modern age, after the example of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president, who died upholding the teaching.

Conquering Fundamental Darkness

Ikeda: In light of the six difficult and nine easy acts, we understand just how terrifically challenging it is to dedicate one's life to kosen-rufu.

Without relying on power, authority or wealth, SGI members

have, by their own efforts, spread the great teaching that can enable all people to attain enlightenment to 128 countries and territories around the world. Nichiren Daishonin no doubt praises this most highly. Shakyamuni, Many Treasures and the Buddhas of the ten directions surely all send their applause.

Suda: Because these acts are so difficult, immediately after Shakyamuni attained enlightenment he hesitated, unsure of whether or not to expound the Law. In the *Gosho*, the Daishonin also describes feeling some uncertainty before establishing his teaching.

The Daishonin says he realized that if he uttered so much as a word about the fundamental cause of human misery, then without a doubt not only he himself, but his parents, siblings and even his mentor would suffer persecution at the hands of the ruler. On the

other hand, he knew that if he failed to do so he would be lacking in compassion.

The Daishonin worried about whether he should speak out or hold his tongue. He realized, in light of passages in the Lotus Sutra and the Nirvana Sutra, that if he did not tell people the truth, then, while he might not suffer any negative consequences in his present life, in the future he would be certain to fall into the hell of incessant suffering. On the other hand, if he spoke out then the three obstacles and four devils would attack him. Taking these considerations into account, the Daishonin resolved to propagate his teaching.

He knew that if he lacked the fortitude to follow through when persecuted by the ruler, then he would be better off not saying anything from the start. It is said that at that time the Daishonin recollected the principle of the six difficult and nine easy acts in the "Treasure Tower" chapter.

Endo: With the six difficult and nine easy acts in mind, Nichiren Daishonin made his great determination. He says, "I vowed to summon up a powerful and unconquerable desire for the salvation of all beings, and never to falter in my efforts" (MW-2, 96 [114]). The question here is why difficulties arise when someone spreads the Lotus Sutra.

Suda: There are two reasons: the Lotus Sutra is the "sutra of shakubuku," and it is the teaching expounded in accord with the Buddha's own mind. In other words, in the Lotus Sutra, the Buddha expresses his enlightenment just as it is, without modifying his explanation or accommodating it to

the understanding or capacity of others. In that sense, it's only natural that this teaching should provoke a strong reaction.

Saito: It is certainly true, as the saying goes, that good medicine is bitter to the taste. History offers countless examples of instances where speaking the truth has invited strong condemnation. Many pioneering individuals, including scientists such as Galileo, encountered persecution that in some cases even cost them their lives.

Endo: Those in power will deny and fiercely react against even the plainest truth if it threatens to destroy the status quo.

Suda: There is a famous story about how Galileo, upon being sentenced to life imprisonment by the Inquisition, mumbled under his breath, "But it [the earth] does move."¹⁶ Eager to crush Galileo's assertions were both the authority of the Church and the proponents of Scholasticism, a movement to force philosophy into reconcilability with church doctrine, providing the ideological moorings of the society.

Ikeda: When we talk about ideology, it sounds very complex. But the truth is that any society and any age have a worldview and set of values that form people's consciousness. When something contradicts this worldview or system of values, there will be an opposing reaction. We find examples of this in both present and past, East and West.

Suda: This is something Descartes (1596–1650), who challenged the metaphysical view of the universe

associated with Scholasticism, also encountered. When he wrote *The World*, he feared he would be punished just as Galileo had because it contained Copernican theory. So he did not make it public.

Ikeda: That's normal. Everyone prizes his or her own life. But the Lotus Sutra says that unless this Great Law is revealed and spread, humankind will remain shrouded in darkness. Therefore, the Daishonin made a firm resolution. Only those who do "not hesitate even if it costs them their lives" are votaries of Lotus Sutra.

However, this in itself cannot account for the extreme difficulty of the six difficult acts. In fact, the Lotus Sutra is not the only sutra to discuss difficulties. In this connection, we are better served if we focus on the problem of the fundamental darkness inherent in human life, to which we referred a little earlier.

The Lotus Sutra, remember, is the "teaching for transforming life." It articulates the Great Law for conquering fundamental darkness or ignorance. Fundamental darkness is the underlying illusion inherent in life. While there are various points of view, Nichiren Daishonin says that "fundamental darkness manifests itself as the Devil of the Sixth Heaven" (MW-3, 279). In the "Letter to the Brothers" he wrote:

In each case, the Devil of the Sixth Heaven possessed these Buddhist scholars in order to deceive the believers... The devil of fundamental darkness can even enter the life of a bodhisattva who has reached the highest stage of practice and prevent him from attaining the Lotus

The Devil of the Sixth Heaven can be thought of as the fundamental tendency to seek to use everyone and everything as a means. In a sense, this is a natural inclination that all beings possess.



Sutra's ultimate blessing — Buddhahood itself. Thus he can easily obstruct those in any lower stage of practice. (MW-1, 136–37)

Saito: A bodhisattva at the highest stage of practice has attained a level of enlightenment equal to that of the Buddha. The Daishonin is saying that even bodhisattvas at this stage have not yet conquered their fundamental darkness. Put another way, whether someone has conquered fundamental darkness or not determines whether that person has truly attained Buddhahood.

Endo: Both passages explain that fundamental darkness manifests as the “Devil of the Sixth Heav-

en” and functions to obstruct the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra. The Devil of the Sixth Heaven, the “king who makes free use of the fruits of others’ efforts for his own pleasure,” is so called because it dwells in the highest of the six heavens of the world of desire. We could think of it as the embodiment of the “devilish nature of power.”

Ikeda: The Devil of the Sixth Heaven can be thought of as the fundamental tendency to seek to use everyone and everything as a means. In a sense, this is a natural inclination that all beings possess. By contrast, to actively seek to support other people and improve our environment is extremely difficult. Compassion, love of humanity, the

spirit to serve others — these are wonderful qualities; but manifesting them in our actions is extremely difficult.

The universe and one's own life are in essence one. Even though people may understand this intellectually, usually they fail to grasp it in the depths of their lives. This could be termed fundamental darkness. Because of this ignorance about the true nature of life, people try to make everything and everyone in the universe serve them, to turn them into a means. This is the function of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, of the devilish nature of power.

The Lotus Sutra explains that the self is one with the universe. The practice of the Lotus Sutra is the practice of compassion. It is to

respect and revere everyone as a Treasure Tower, and to become happy conjointly with others in accord with the principle of the oneness of self and others, while overcoming the various difficulties we face.

In the course of carrying out this practice, we will definitely have to battle our own fundamental darkness. And because by our efforts we are stimulating and activating the fundamental darkness in other people's lives, we are sure to encounter difficulties.

Those in positions of power are not the only ones influenced by the devilish nature of power. As indicated by the line, "the Devil of the Sixth Heaven possessed these Buddhist scholars in order to deceive the believers," spiritual leaders who are revered in society may also brandish the devilish nature of power.

Saito: Such people represent the third of the three powerful enemies.¹⁷

Ikeda: Great persecutions usually result from the collusion of evil authorities and corrupt spiritual leaders. This holds true in the past and present, as it will in the future.

Endo: That's perfectly consistent with how, in making the *saha* world a land of tranquil light through the "three transformations," Shakyamuni ultimately has to battle ignorance and illusion about the true nature of existence.

Saito: T'ien-t'ai's doctrine of the "three obstacles and four devils" originally referred to obstructions and negative functions that emerge from the depths of life in the process of developing "inner sight." In order to embody the

principle of *ichinen sanzen*, that is, to attain the awareness that our mind or life-moment is one with the universe, we have to overcome the seven inner obstacles and negative functions (i.e., three obstacles and four devils). In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, this inner struggle is often played out in dynamic terms as a battle to defeat devils and obstacles that arise from without in the course of one's Buddhist practice.

Suda: "Embracing the Lotus Sutra" is the key to winning in the struggle against fundamental darkness and the devilish nature of power. Therefore, in the broadest sense, it is truly "difficult."

Ikeda: In terms of difficulty, both the "physical" and the "doctrinal" tasks of the nine "easy" acts pale by comparison.

Endo: The physical tasks sound impossible, but when you examine them carefully, you see that they are all superficial. It may even be that the advancement of scientific technology has already brought some of them quite into the realm of possibility.

Ikeda: The point is that changing the inner world is far more difficult than changing the outer world. That's what the doctrine of the six difficult and nine easy acts teaches.

Suda: Regarding the doctrinal tasks, teaching and spreading sutras other than the Lotus Sutra is "easy" because these teachings do not enable one to conquer fundamental darkness.

Ikeda: We should be careful not to overly restrict the concepts of fun-

damental darkness and the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. The Lotus Sutra explains that fundamental darkness and the nature of enlightenment are in essence one.

The Daishonin says that even the devil king has both "body" and "function." The "body" is the devil king inherent in life in terms of the "oneness of darkness and enlightenment." The "function" is the devil king of the sixth heaven as the function of life that derives from this essence (cf. *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 843). But why don't we take this up in detail another time?

Since darkness and enlightenment are essentially one, ultimately even the devil king functions to protect Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra says, "although the devil and the devil's people will be there, they will all protect the Law of the Buddha" (LS6, 108). This time in our study of the Lotus Sutra we are focusing on the devil king function.

The Unifying Power of Compassion

Saito: And so we come to the devilish nature of power—this is a theme that we have to discuss time and again.

Ikeda: That's right. Just what is the "evil of power?" This is a fundamental issue with an important bearing on the twenty-first century. During the twentieth century the "evil of power" has assumed enormous proportions. Fascism and Stalinism are obvious examples.

Endo: While representing diametrically opposite ideological positions, in terms of one being rightist and the other leftist, fascism and

Stalinism are similar in that they both produced fearfully oppressive totalitarian societies.

Ikeda: In a totalitarian system, everyone and everything is simply a “means” for the powerful to use. Human beings are nothing more than tools, commodities, numbers. They are simply non-entities.

This is all too clear when we look at the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis and their atrocious behavior toward physically and mentally handicapped people and others, whom they defined as “inferior.” These are instances of such cruelty that it’s hard even to discuss them.

Under such systems, human beings are selected as “useful” or “useless” according to standards arbitrarily determined by those in power, and then exploited or slaughtered at will.

Suda: In Japan’s invasion of Asia, as well, there was a “commodification” of people that can only be described as insane.

Endo: While the devilish nature of power is present in any age, in the twentieth century it took on huge dimensions and became highly organized.

Ikeda: Not infrequently people have tried to justify such inhumanity on the basis of ideology.

Another factor in this century has been the advance of science and technology, which has greatly expanded the scope of tragedy. The atomic bomb and the gas chambers (used in Nazi concentration camps) are symbolic of this trend. Such technology has put in people’s hands the power to brutalize and kill human beings on a massive scale.

Science in essence exhibits the tendency to try to quantify everything; and “soulless technology” spurs on the commodification of human beings. Nuclear weapons symbolize the devilish nature of power. They are like the incarnation of the devil king. “Devil” means robber of life; the exact opposite of “Buddha,” one who restores and invigorates life.

Saito: The statement by second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda in his “Declaration on the Abolition of Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs” in 1957, “Anyone who uses an atomic weapon is a devil and a Satan who threatens people’s very right to existence,” was based on such profound insight into the nature of life.

Ikeda: President Toda fought with his entire being against the negative functions pervading the universe. His struggle was intense. Probably no one can fully appreciate the anguish he went through and the strain he felt. The fierce pressures on his life would have caused another person to become violently ill or die, or commit suicide, or develop a severe psychological disorder.

I have described atomic weapons as the embodiment of darkness. But they could also be described as the incarnation of mistrust in, and hatred toward, human beings. The philosopher Max Picard (1888–1965) argued that the atomic bomb is a symbol of a “disintegrating” world. Picard wrote:

The very force which holds the atoms together as they form a world is now being used to explode that world. It is by no means accidental that the atom

bomb was invented in the day and age which lives and which dies by disintegrating everything.¹⁸

The devilish nature of power functions to disintegrate and divide. It cuts people off from the universe, alienates them from other people, divides one country from another, and sunders people’s bonds with nature. On the other hand, compassion unifies. In the universe itself there is a “unifying compassion.”

The universe itself is originally compassion. In that sense, the universe is the perfect stage for the struggle between the “Buddha” and the “devil,” between the “devilish nature of power” and “compassion”; for the struggle between the desire to turn life into a means, and the compassion to make life the objective; for the battle between the power that attempts to turn people into grains of sands, to reduce them to nonentities, and the power that seeks to enable people to become Treasure Towers.

Saito: This reminds me of Immanuel Kant’s famous definition of human worth. Kant (1724–1804) held that people have absolute worth. He said, “Act so that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of another, always as an end and never as a means only.”¹⁹

Endo: Kant also said: “Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing admiration and awe, the oftener and more steadily they are reflected on: the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.”²⁰

The universe and the inner law—Buddhism teaches that these are not two but one. This has

Nuclear weapons symbolize the devilish nature of power.... The devilish nature of power functions to disintegrate and divide. It cuts people off from the universe, alienates them from other people, divides one country from another, and sunders people's bonds with nature.



something in common with Goethe's comment that "Nothing's outside that's not within." Moreover, these both reflect the "law of compassion," the power that unifies everything.

Ikeda: Norman Cousins, whom I mentioned at the start of this discussion, also wrote, "I see no separation between the universal order and the moral order"; and "I may not embrace or command this universal order, but I can be at one with it, for I am of it."²¹

The moment I met Dr. Cousins, I intuitively felt, "This person is a bodhisattva." He was a great man.

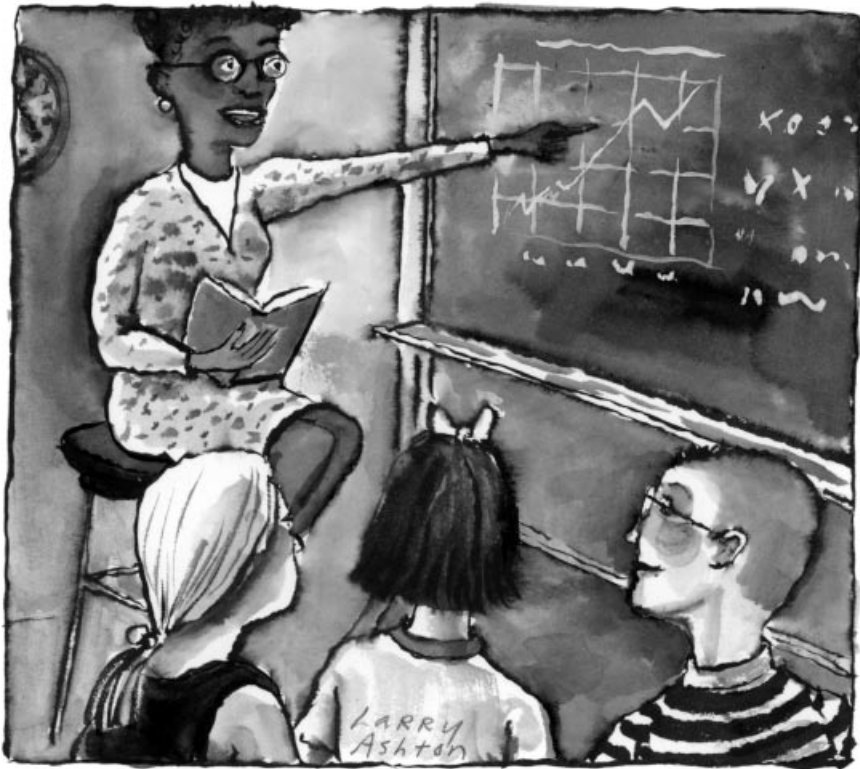
Suda: Dr. Cousins is famous for having worked very hard to get medical treatment for the "Hiroshima Maid-

ens," young girls who were victims of the atomic-bombing of Hiroshima. He also worked to get psychological and medical treatment for a group of Polish women on whom the Nazis had conducted gruesome experiments.

Ikeda: The devilish nature of power is hideously cruel. Its antithesis is to love each person as an irreplaceable entity. It is to exert oneself and suffer on others' behalf, and to regard doing so as a joy.

In a speech, the famous psychologist V. E. Frankl (author of *Man's Search for Meaning, an Introduction to Logotherapy*), a survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, introduced the following passage from a letter by a mother:

While in the uterus, my child's skull formed prematurely. As a result, when she was born on June 6, 1929, she was already fatally ill. I was eighteen years old at the time. I worshipped my baby like a god and loved her boundlessly. My mother and I did everything we could to help the poor baby. But it was no good. The child could neither walk nor speak. Still, I was young, and I did not abandon hope. I worked day and night, just so that I could buy nutritious food and medicine for my dear daughter. I would wrap my daughter's frail arm around my neck and ask her, "Do you love Mommy, dear?" And she would hug me tight and smile, and awkwardly pat my face. At those



There is no hierarchy or pecking order when it comes to life. All life has infinite worth. We have to educate children and adults alike so that no one is made to feel powerless. We have to provide nourishment for the heart. And we have to create true human solidarity.

moments I was really happy. No matter how difficult things were, I felt boundless joy.²²

This is the exact opposite of the devilish nature of power that “turns people into a means.”

Saito: I feel as though I have come to understand a little of the profound meaning of the “Treasure Tower” chapter.

Ikeda: To put the devilish nature of power into more familiar terms, one example of it would be a leader who foists hard work on others, making them do things that are unpleasant or difficult, while taking it easy himself. Such a person makes others take responsibility, and then claims all the credit.

Someone has written:

There is bound to be a certain

amount of trouble running any country if you are president the trouble happens to you but if you are a tyrant you can arrange things so that most of the trouble happens to other people.²³

The difference between a leader and a tyrant is that a leader works hard for everyone else, while a tyrant makes others work hard for him.

Nichiren Daishonin says that fundamental darkness manifests as the Devil of the Sixth Heaven, while the fundamental nature of enlightenment manifests as Bonten, Taishaku²⁴ and the other Buddhist gods (cf. MW-3, 279). The devil king is a tyrant. Bonten and Taishaku are leaders. The outward difference between the two is decisive; it is like the difference between heaven and earth. At the

same time, in terms of a person’s inner state of life or *ichinen*, it is most subtle.

Saito: One has to exercise constant vigilance over one’s spirit and intentions. In this light, it seems that the sense of powerlessness we talked about at the beginning is a major reason why people in modern society tend to be viewed only in terms of their “function,” or as the “means” to some end.

Endo: Similarly, for children it is no doubt a source of great anxiety to be evaluated and ranked simply on the basis of their grades in school. Even in the home, which ought to be a place where children are accepted as precious and irreplaceable, there is a tendency for parents to evaluate their children on the basis of grades—a very partial and fragmentary indicator.

One has to exercise constant vigilance over one's spirit and intentions. In this light, it seems that the sense of powerlessness we talked about at the beginning is a major reason why people in modern society tend to be viewed only in terms of their "function," or as the "means" to some end.

Under such circumstances, it's probably only natural that children fail to develop true self-confidence, that they do not acquire a sense of inner strength — the feeling, "No matter what happens, I will deal with things to the best of my ability."

Ikeda: Yes. There is no hierarchy or pecking order when it comes to life. All life has infinite worth. We have to educate children and adults alike

so that no one is made to feel powerless. We have to provide nourishment for the heart. And we have to create true human solidarity. This will be the key to the present age. In that sense, the "Treasure Tower" chapter, which calls out to all, "You are a tower of treasure. Your life contains limitless strength and potential," offers a wealth of inspiration for this age.


"Embracing the Lotus Sutra" means continually fighting against

all manifestations of the devilish nature of power. When we carry out this difficult task, motivated by love of humanity, our life truly shines as a Treasure Tower; we live each day in the presence of the Ceremony in the Air, in rhythm with eternity; and each moment brilliantly glows with the sheer joy of living.

Illustrations by Larry Ashton

(To be continued)

1. Currently only available in Japanese: published by Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1991.
2. Norman Cousins, *Present Tense: An American Editor's Odyssey* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), p. 373.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 374.
4. *Ichinen sanzen*: Three thousand realms in a single moment of life. Actual *ichinen sanzen*, in contrast to theoretical *ichinen sanzen*, indicates the practical application of this principle to life.
5. "Sanze Shobutsu Sokanmon Kyoso Hairyu" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 558–75), written in October 1279 when the Daishonin was fifty-eight.
6. Goethe, *Poems and Epigrams*, trans. Michael Hamburger (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1983), p. 90.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 71.
8. Translated from Japanese: Shigeo Miki, *Seimei Keitai no Shizenshi* (Life Forms Natural Journal) (Tokyo: Ubusuna Shoin, 1989), pp. 5–9.
9. Editor's note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
10. *Nayuta*: An Indian numerical unit corresponding to 100,000,000,000.
11. *Saha* world: A land where people have to endure many hardships and trials.
12. Eight directions: North, south, east, west, northwest, northeast, southeast and southwest.
13. Six paths: The first six of the Ten Worlds — Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity (or Tranquillity) and Heaven (or Rapture). The six paths indicate states of delusion or suffering. One who is in these states is governed by his reactions to external stimuli and is therefore never really free but constantly at the mercy of changing circumstances.
14. *Hokke Mongu*: (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 8.
15. Editor's note: Quotes from volume 2 of the *Major Writings* are from the revised edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
16. *Eppur si muove*. Attr. to Galileo after his recantation in 1632. The earliest appearance of the phrase is perhaps in Baretto, Italian Library (1757), P. 52.
17. Three powerful enemies: Three groups of people whom the "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra predicts will persecute those who propagate the sutra in the future.
18. Max Picard, *Hitler in Our Selves*, trans. Heinrich Hauser (Hinsdale, IL: Henry Regnery Company, 1947), p. 266.
19. Immanuel Kant, *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Lewis White Beck (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., 1969), p. 54.
20. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason and Other Writings in Moral Philosophy*, trans. Lewis White Beck (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 258.
21. *Ibid.*, *Present Tense*, p. 196.
22. Translated from Japanese: V. E. Frankl, *Soredemo Jinsei ni Iesu to Iu*, trans. Kunio Yamada and Mika Matsuda, (I Still Say "Yes" to Life) (Tokyo: Shunjusha: 1993), p. 104.
23. Don Marquis, *The Lives and Times of Archy and Mehitabel* (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1942), "Archy Does His Part," p. 18.
24. Bonten (Skt. Brahma), Taishaku (Skt. Shakra Devanam Indra).



The Human Revolution Vol. XII

By Ho Goku

The Human Revolution is a novel based on fact, written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda under the pen name Ho Goku. It recounts the early days of the Soka Gakkai in Japan under the second president, Josei Toda, President Ikeda's mentor. The character of Shin'ichi Yamamoto represents Daisaku Ikeda. The theme of the novel is summed up in the foreword, as the author writes, "A great human revolution in just a single individual will help achieve a change in the destiny of a nation and further, will enable a change in the destiny of all humankind." The following is an excerpt from "New Dawn" chapter, volume twelve.

It couldn't be helped; there was no way to avoid it, Shin'ichi told himself.

President Toda had raised him as his direct disciple; he had rigorously trained and taught him. What was there to fear? The time had come at last to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor.



New Dawn 14

SHIN'ICHI now felt as if his inescapable destiny were raging like a storm in his heart. Emotions arising from an awareness of his heavy mission surged turbulently within him. It seemed as though his very life was being firmly and fiercely bound by the thick, invisible fetters of his karma.

No matter how many times he refused the presidency, was it not an unavoidable eventuality? In his heart, he appealed to President Toda, wondering if he might not be allowed some sort of reprieve. Agonizing over what to do, he sensed that it was the Buddha's will for him to become president. Yet when he thought of actually assuming that responsibility, he felt indescribable pressure. He wondered whether, in his weakened physical state, he could really mount the kind of struggle that would be required. He knew the power of the Gohonzon was infinite and unfathomable. Was there no choice, then, but to simply leave

everything to the Gohonzon and earnestly devote himself to leadership so long as he might survive?

On the morning of April 14, Shin'ichi set off from home for the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, his feet heavy.

There, in one of the small conference rooms, he met with General Director Takeo Konishi and directors Koichi Harayama, Hisao Seki and Katsu Kiyohara.

Konishi earnestly restated how fervently everyone wished for Shin'ichi to accept the presidency. It was clear from his tone that he was unwilling to take "no" for an answer.

"President Toda," Konishi said, "deeply regretted that during the period he had declined to take the presidency, erroneous teachings spread like wildfire throughout Japan. Similarly, your turning down the presidency will only delay kosen-rufu. Is that what you want?"

Shin'ichi didn't know what to say. He could not argue with Konishi's point.

"I'm sure you are aware that President Toda himself wanted you

to become the third president, that he resolved in his heart to make this so and devoted himself to training you for that purpose. We, too, know that this was Mr. Toda's wish. Your becoming president is something that all our leaders are seeking, out of their sincere desire to accomplish kosen-rufu. Please accept the presidency."

Shin'ichi ultimately had no choice. He had to agree.

"If this is how strongly you all feel, then...."

The moment he uttered these words, the light came back into Konishi's eyes.

"You'll accept, then? Thank you very much," the general director said. "Now the Gakkai can make great progress. The members will be overjoyed." Beaming, he bowed deeply to Shin'ichi to convey his appreciation.

The clock indicated 10:10 in the morning.

It couldn't be helped; there was no way to avoid it, Shin'ichi told himself. President Toda had raised him as his direct disciple; he had rigorously trained and taught him.

He remembered the day in January 1949 when he started work at Toda's publishing company, Nihon Shogakkan, as an editor of a children's magazine, fulfilling a cherished dream to work and challenge himself under Toda's tutelage.



What was there to fear? The time had come at last to repay his debt of gratitude to his mentor. There was nothing left for him to do but to advance with youthful courage and dignity toward the awesome challenges that lay ahead.

Shin'ichi would now officially command the helm of the movement to spread the Law. The young lion had arisen.

One of the directors hurried off to convey the news to the other leaders and staff in the building and an excited cheer went up outside the room. Directors and staff exchanged handshakes, sharing their unbridled delight. Konishi clasped Shin'ichi's hand, his eyes brimming with tears.

On the evening of April 19, an emergency nationwide leaders meeting convened at the Gakkai Headquarters. There, Shin'ichi's appointment as the Soka Gakkai's third president was officially announced. Thunderous cheers and applause filled the meeting room and the entire Headquarters

rocked like a ship sailing through surging waves of joy.

New Dawn 15

NOW, the baton of kosen-rufu had finally passed in form and in function from the mentor, Josei Toda, to his direct disciple, Shin'ichi Yamamoto.

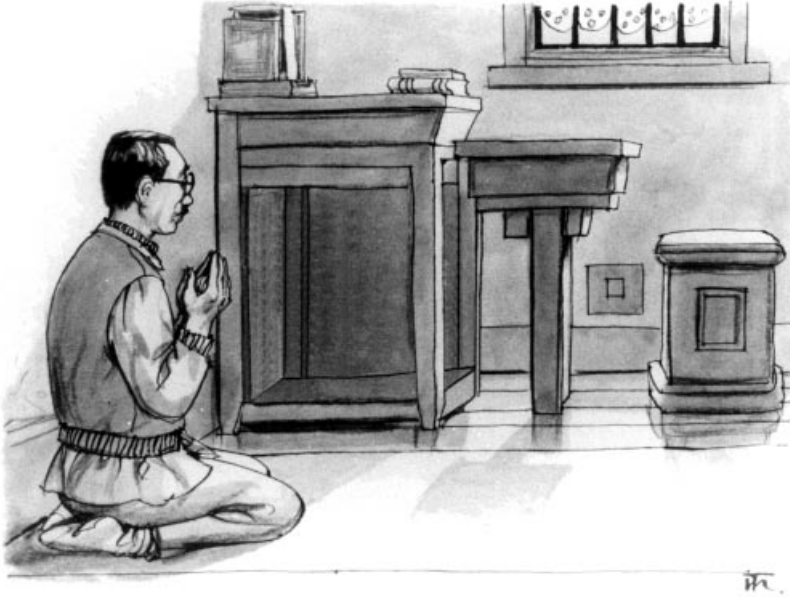
Shin'ichi deeply sensed that this was the mission he had pledged to fulfill in the remote past, what he had been meant to dedicate his youth and his entire life to.

With a touch of nostalgia, he recalled all that had passed since that summer of 1947, when as a young man of 19 he had encountered Buddhism and become a disciple of Josei Toda. He also remembered the day in January 1949 when he started work at Toda's publishing company, Nihon Shogakkan, as an editor of a children's magazine, fulfilling a cherished dream to work and challenge himself under Toda's tutelage.

But before long, Toda's publishing business had run aground, the mag-

azine folded, and his other newly launched enterprises were not doing as well as expected. The company fell behind in paying its wages. Because of this dire financial situation, Shin'ichi gave up the idea of going back to night school to complete his education. The other Gakkai members who worked at the company, meanwhile, began to resent Toda and to leave him one after another. This marked the start of Shin'ichi's bitter struggle against a daunting onslaught of obstacles.

Toda stepped down from his position as Soka Gakkai general director, not wanting his personal business failures to compromise the organization in any way. The resignation took place on precisely the third anniversary of Shin'ichi's joining the Soka Gakkai. In the midst of these troubles, Shin'ichi had made a personal pledge: "No matter what kind of hardships may beset me in the future, for as long as I live I will always regard the honor of having Mr. Toda as my mentor as my greatest happiness and joy in life."



After chanting daimoku continually in his prison cell, Toda came to the awakening that “the Buddha” means “life itself.” At that moment, the difficult teachings of Buddhism were revived in modern times as a living philosophy.

Shin’ichi desperately devoted himself to protecting, supporting and serving Toda. Afflicted by tuberculosis, tormented by fever and sometimes even coughing up blood, he continued to fight, prepared to give his life in the process. He devoted his entire being to Toda, working alongside his mentor in their sublime struggle to spread the Law. He was resolved to die fighting for kosen-rufu while Toda was still alive. Otherwise, he felt, he would be unable to serve as a model of a true disciple — as a modern example of a follower of the Daishonin — for the generations to come.

Perceiving Shin’ichi’s almost tragic earnestness, Toda had told him:

You’re trying to kill yourself, aren’t you? You’ve decided to give me your life. But I won’t have it! You must live — live out your life to the fullest. I will give you my life so that you may do so.

When Shin’ichi considered that he had managed to survive to the age of 32 and was now to lead the kosen-rufu movement as Soka Gakkai president, he could not help feeling that his late mentor had indeed given him his life.

His mentor had thoroughly tutored and trained him, given him the supreme treasure of faith, and taught him to live for the highest mission — for kosen-rufu; he had even given him his very life. Shin’ichi could not hold back his tears at the thought of how fortunate he was to have had such a mentor and how deeply indebted he was to him. He made a heartfelt pledge:

My future is decided. I will repay my great debt of gratitude to President Toda and dedicate my entire life and being to accomplishing his cherished dream, kosen-rufu. I will protect the members, Sensei’s children. I will do so until the last moment of my life.

New Dawn 16

SHIN’ICHI Yamamoto felt deep joy and pride in living as a disciple of President Toda. The way of mentor and disciple — this was the noble path he had walked in his youth.

Many in contemporary Japan, however, viewed the term *mentor and disciple* as an anachronistic relic of feudal times. Yet a teacher or mentor is vital in mastering any field. This is all the more true when it comes to understanding the law of life propounded in Buddhism. Indispensable to this endeavor is a teacher with a profound grasp of this law who can inspire and encourage us in our Buddhist practice.

It takes a human being to raise and foster another human being.

The mentor and disciple relationship had been a core element of Buddhism from its earliest days. Buddhist practice has its origins in those who decided on their own accord to embrace the Buddha,

Shakyamuni, as their mentor, following him and listening to him preach the Law he had become enlightened to within his own life.

The mentor-disciple relationship of Buddhism is different from any societal system or contract. It is always based on the free and spontaneous will of the individual, an expression of that person's seeking spirit. It has nothing to do with personal gain or self-interest. It is a spiritual bond of the purest kind, arising from a desire to pursue a life dedicated to the highest truth. Because of this, the bond of mentor and disciple is as strong and imperishable as a diamond.

Shin'ichi had looked up to Toda as a mentor and earnestly followed him, but not because Toda or anyone else had asked him to do so. It came out of a personal commitment: He had vowed to become Josei Toda's disciple because he was convinced that there was no other leader genuinely committed to realizing kosen-rufu or who embodied Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism as Toda did.

The martyrdom of first president, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, and the profound awakening in prison of his disciple, Josei Toda, represent the key elements that have shaped the Soka Gakkai's direction.

At a time when the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu, fearing oppression from the wartime military government, enshrined a Shinto talisman in transgression of Nikko Shonin's admonitions against slander, Makiguchi stood up resolutely to preserve and uphold the purity of the Daishonin's Buddhism. He then remonstrated with the leaders of the nation in accord with the instructions of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. He

fought oppression, was arrested and died while in prison. Mr. Makiguchi most certainly read the Lotus Sutra with his life and carried out the practice of a Thus Come One — of a Buddha.

His martyrdom was proof of his selfless dedication to propagating the Law even at the cost of his life and a clear indication that he had inherited Nichiren Daishonin's spirit. As a result, the lifeblood of the True Law, then on the brink of perishing amid the darkness of a society defiled by the "five impurities," was preserved. In this way, the Gakkai became directly connected to the Daishonin, thus carrying on the heritage of faith.

Toda, who had chosen Makiguchi for his mentor and had supported and served him, also accompanied him to prison. The profound joy of offering his life as an ordinary mortal for the sake of the Law and of reading the Lotus Sutra with his life coursed through his being.

After chanting daimoku continually in his prison cell, Toda came to the awakening that "the Buddha" means "life itself." At that moment, the difficult teachings of Buddhism were revived in modern times as a living philosophy capable of enabling all people to achieve human revolution.

As he continued to chant, Toda eventually attained a wondrous state of life. He felt himself seated with his palms pressed together in reverence before a glowing, golden Dai-Gohonzon, participating directly in the Ceremony in the Air depicted in the Lotus Sutra. This was the ceremony at which the Daishonin, as Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Jp. Jogyo), leader of the countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth, was entrusted by Shakyamuni Buddha with the

propagation of the Law after his passing.

New Dawn 17

As a deep inner joy and delight deriving from the Law welled up inside him, Josei Toda perceived that, as disciples of Nichiren Daishonin, he and his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, were Bodhisattvas of the Earth who had been entrusted with the mission to spread the Mystic Law in the Latter Day. The true purpose of a Bodhisattva of the Earth is to accomplish kosen-rufu. Toda now profoundly understood the mission he had possessed since the remote past and which was the reason he had been born in this world.

"I now know what I must do," Toda had thought. "I will never forget this day! I will spend the rest of my life spreading this wondrous Law!"

This was the essence of Toda's enlightenment in prison, the driving force for his subsequent great achievements.

As a result of his deep awakening, Toda personally perceived within his own life the truth of the statement in the Daishonin's "Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings" that "the assembly at Eagle Peak has not yet dispersed" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 757).

When he thought of how he had been able to reach this profound awakening as a result of following his mentor and encountering great persecution for their beliefs, he was filled with a sense of wonder. He also realized that the bond of mentor and disciple he shared with Makiguchi was an eternal one, existing since the remote past as implied by the passage from "The Parable of the Phantom City" chapter of the Lotus Sutra: "those persons who had heard



Nichiren Daishonin's spirit had been inherited by just one person—Josei Toda, President Makiguchi's disciple. In the depths of his life, in his innermost resolve, had resided the vision for kosen-rufu's future.

the Law / dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, / constantly reborn in company with their teachers" (LS7, 140).

However, around that same time, as the frosty chill of autumn descended on Tokyo, Toda's mentor drew his last breath in the prison infirmary.

Later, at the third memorial service for Mr. Makiguchi (commemorating the second anniversary of his death), Toda had turned to his mentor's photograph on display before the altar and addressed him in tears as he fought back sobs of emotion:

In your vast and boundless compassion, you let me accompany you even to prison. As a result, I could read with my entire being the passage from the Lotus Sutra, "those persons who had heard the Law / dwelled here and there in various Buddha lands, / constantly reborn in company with their teachers." The benefit of this was coming to know the essential purpose of a Bodhisattva of the Earth, and to absorb with my very life

even a small degree of the sutra's meaning. Could there be any greater happiness than this?

The mentor, Makiguchi, had passed away in prison, leaving as a legacy his supreme spirit to spread the Law even at the cost of his life. The disciple, Toda, had survived to inherit that spirit and, upon his release from prison, rose alone to the challenge of accomplishing kosen-rufu. The Soka Gakkai spirit was to be found in this united and inseparable struggle of mentor and disciple, a struggle transcending life and death.

What enabled Toda and Makiguchi to attain this state of oneness? It was their powerful, deep-seated resolution in faith, their determination to offer their lives for kosen-rufu—the decree of their original mentor, Nichiren Daishonin.

Deep in his life, Shin'ichi Yamamoto felt that neither kosen-rufu, happiness for all people, nor world peace would be possible without a teacher like Josei Toda. In fact, Nichiren Daishonin's spirit had been inherited by just one

person—Josei Toda, President Makiguchi's disciple. In the depths of his life, in his innermost resolve, had resided the vision for kosen-rufu's future development.

A Buddha is not a fantastic other-worldly being. Buddhas cannot exist apart from the people. A person who spreads the Law is an emissary of the Buddha. And to protect and support such a person is to staunchly protect Buddhism. That is why Shin'ichi had tenaciously served and protected Toda, his mentor. And it was through this intense struggle—in which he exerted a hundred million of eons of effort in each single moment of life—that he had brought his own mission and capability to blossom. In this way, he had absorbed and embodied Toda's spirit and was approaching the same state of life his mentor had attained.

Illustrations by Teikichi Miyoshi

(To be continued)

Dennis McGonagle: Finding Meaning in Everyday Surroundings

Los Angeles Painter

I LOVE to make art, I always have. From the time I could first hold a pencil or crayon in my hand, I have considered myself to be an artist. I have been a painter for more than 20 years. Although my main area of concentration is the urban landscape, I also like to paint murals, still life paintings, figures, portraits, abstract and non-representational works.

My art is about contrast. Contrast and color are the most

important design elements in my work. For example, I like to contrast hot and cold. I like to show hot, blinding sunlight and contrast it against cool, luminous shadow. I like my paintings to describe great distances. That is one reason why I paint landscapes. I paint images of things that come tumbling out of the picture plane and others that are thousands of miles away.

My art is about manmade forms, patterns and colors existing



Self Portrait, 1990,
acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18 in.

in the natural world. Machines and plants. Buildings and sunsets. Cement and soil. I love to contrast the darkest darks with the lightest lights. I need to use a full range of color in order to translate what I see and feel and experience in the three-dimensional world onto a two-dimensional wall or canvas.

My art is about finding meaning in everyday surroundings. Through the process of painting, I can interpret my environment and learn the



Bow Willow Creek, 1987,
acrylic on canvas, 14 x 36 in.



Huntington Library I, 1996,
acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in.

carried my easel and canvas with me and would paint after I dropped off my passengers.

I was not cut out for bus driving. I got lost a lot and it seemed like I was driving night and day, seven days a week, for very little money.

My wife had been practicing Buddhism for about a year when she suggested I begin chanting for what would make me happy. So I chanted to have enough time to paint.

Within a few weeks, I lost my bus driver job and began a new career as an art consultant for elementary school children. This career began as a result of me volunteering to teach art to my son's kindergarten class. I found that I really enjoyed teaching children about art—I was inspired by their creative energy. Soon, the principal hired me to teach every art class in the school. Other schools sent people to observe my lessons, and I started teaching art throughout the entire school district. When things got slow in the first district, I added a second school district to my route.

I was now making more than twice the money I had made as a bus driver and working only half the hours. I also noticed that the process of studying and preparing for my art lessons had the effect of adding more dimension to my own paintings.

I now had the freedom to go out into the community and paint every day. I would set up my easel on the sidewalks, in the parks, in the hills, wherever I could find a landscape.

Around that time the local phone book publisher asked me to paint a landscape for the cover of the Whittier, Calif., telephone directory.

essence of my subject matter. I can then use the language of painting to communicate real and imagined aspects of my daily life.

I fell in love with painting when I took my first art class at Rio Hondo Community College. I made a lifelong pledge to never let a day go by without doing something to develop my capacity to paint. That was nearly 25 years ago, but I still hold to that commitment. I try to draw or paint or study art every day.

It was easy to be an artist back

when I was an art student. Since it was my job to study art, I could focus on it many hours a day.

As I took on the responsibilities of marriage, family, owning a home and paying bills, I found it harder and harder to find time to paint. Whatever job I had, I would try to bring art into it. As a beach maintenance worker, I carried a sketch book and drew the people on the beach. As a factory worker, I would do small paintings of the landscape out the doorway during my lunch break. As a bus driver, I



Christmas in Whittier, 1992,
acrylic on canvas, 56 x 52 in.

Thus my painting titled *View From the Hills* was used for the cover of the 1992 Whittier telephone book. Later, it was purchased by the City of Whittier Sister City Committee and presented as a gift to the city of Changshu, China.

I began doing paintings for other cities shortly afterward and have since created paintings for the covers of twenty-two California telephone books. Every year since 1986, I have painted *plein-air* landscapes for the covers of the phone directories for Whittier, Santa Fe Springs, Ontario and Upland.

I began to receive commissions for wall murals as well. I have completed fourteen murals since I began chanting in 1984.

I feel that a mural painter needs to have audience awareness. He or she needs to know the history, cul-

ture, hopes and dreams of the people who will be looking at his artwork. A mural needs to fit the community that it exists in. Since a mural is a public message, it must speak a language that its public can understand and appreciate.

In 1989, Whittier College officials had seen me painting around the campus and had noticed publicity about my murals and local art exhibitions. They offered me the opportunity to return to school and earn my bachelor's degree and teaching credential. To help pay for tuition, I was given the student job of campus mural painter.

Last spring I finished work on a painting on the back wall of Village Music in Uptown Whittier titled *Symphony in the Air*, which measures ninety square feet and features portraits of local musicians and

music teachers. The Whittier City Council passed an ordinance making it the first officially sanctioned mural in the City of Whittier.

Today I teach a bilingual fifth-grade class in a school that is only a ten-minute walk from where I live. I am also district visual arts mentor. It is my job to travel to different schools and assist with art instruction wherever needed.

At present, I am working on a large painting of a bicycle rider in Turnbill Canyon. I am also developing plans for a California history mural for Lincoln Elementary School, where I work. I am working with a team of students on a new mural for Whittier College and am designing panels for a bus shelter in the City of Brea. In addition, I am preparing for an exhibit of my work in Norwalk this summer. In the evenings and on the weekends, I have the freedom to work on my paintings and sculptures in my own backyard art studio.

It is because of my Buddhist practice that I can accomplish all of these things. By chanting I can live in the moment; whatever I am doing, I can concentrate on it more fully. I can balance the demands and responsibility of my family and career, while staying focused and inspired by my art. If I only have a couple of hours to paint, I chant to have the kind of focus necessary to make a week's worth of progress on my painting.

Every morning I chant to have a wonderful day in the classroom—to be the best teacher I can be; to inspire my students to want to learn. I love being able to make a contribution to my community as an artist, teacher and human being. □



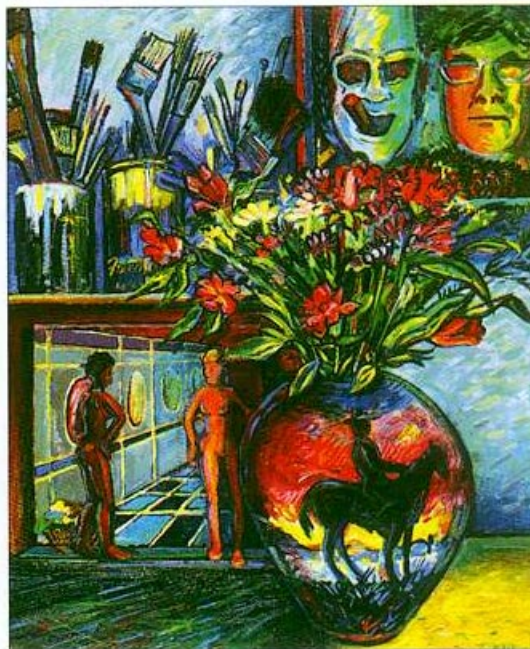
The Backyard Fence, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 36 in.



Huntington Library 2, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 48 x 36 in.



Turnbull Canyon, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 48 in.



far left,
My Water Tower, 1996,
acrylic on
canvas,
40 x 36 in.

left,
Father and Son, 1997,
acrylic on
canvas,
32 x 36 in.



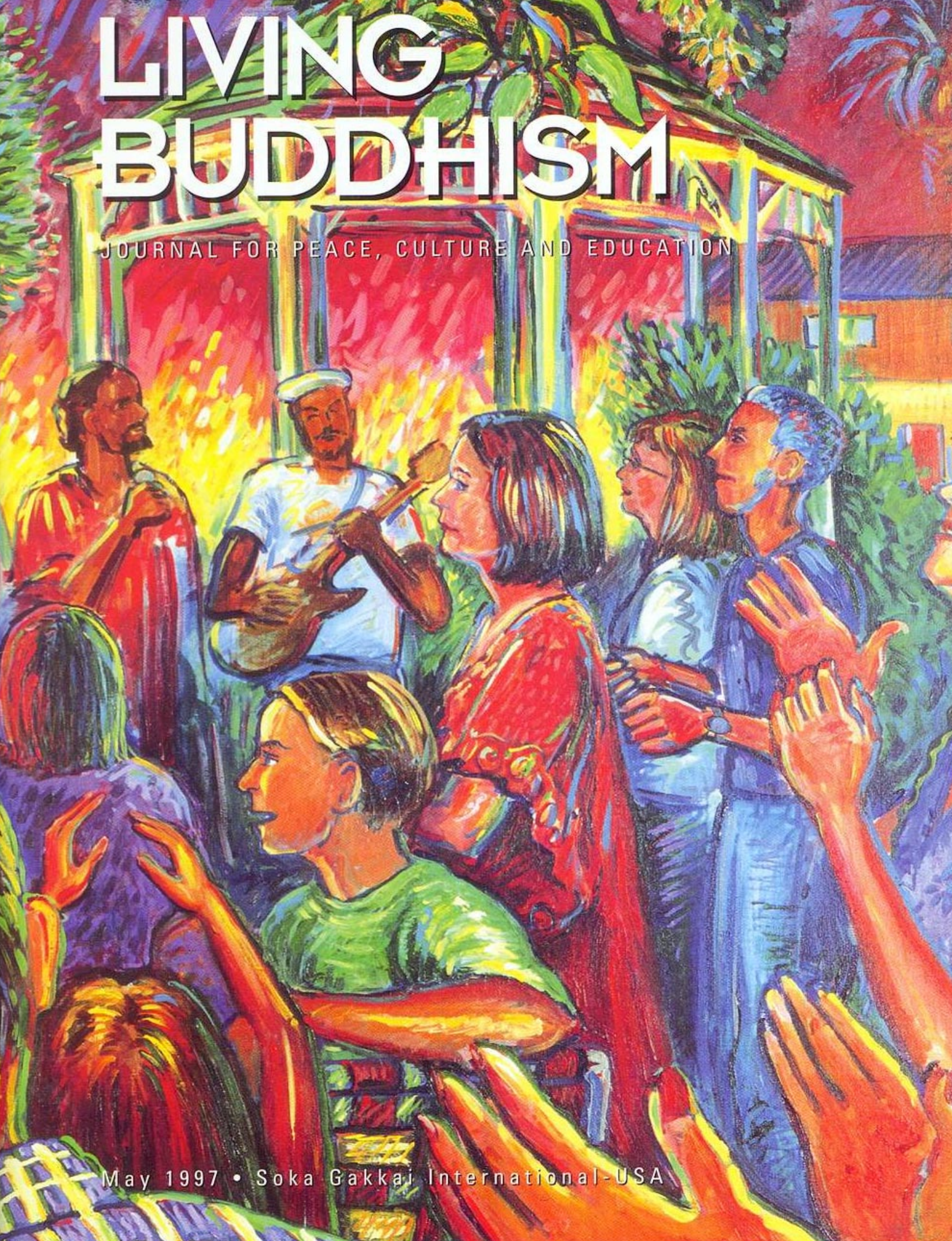
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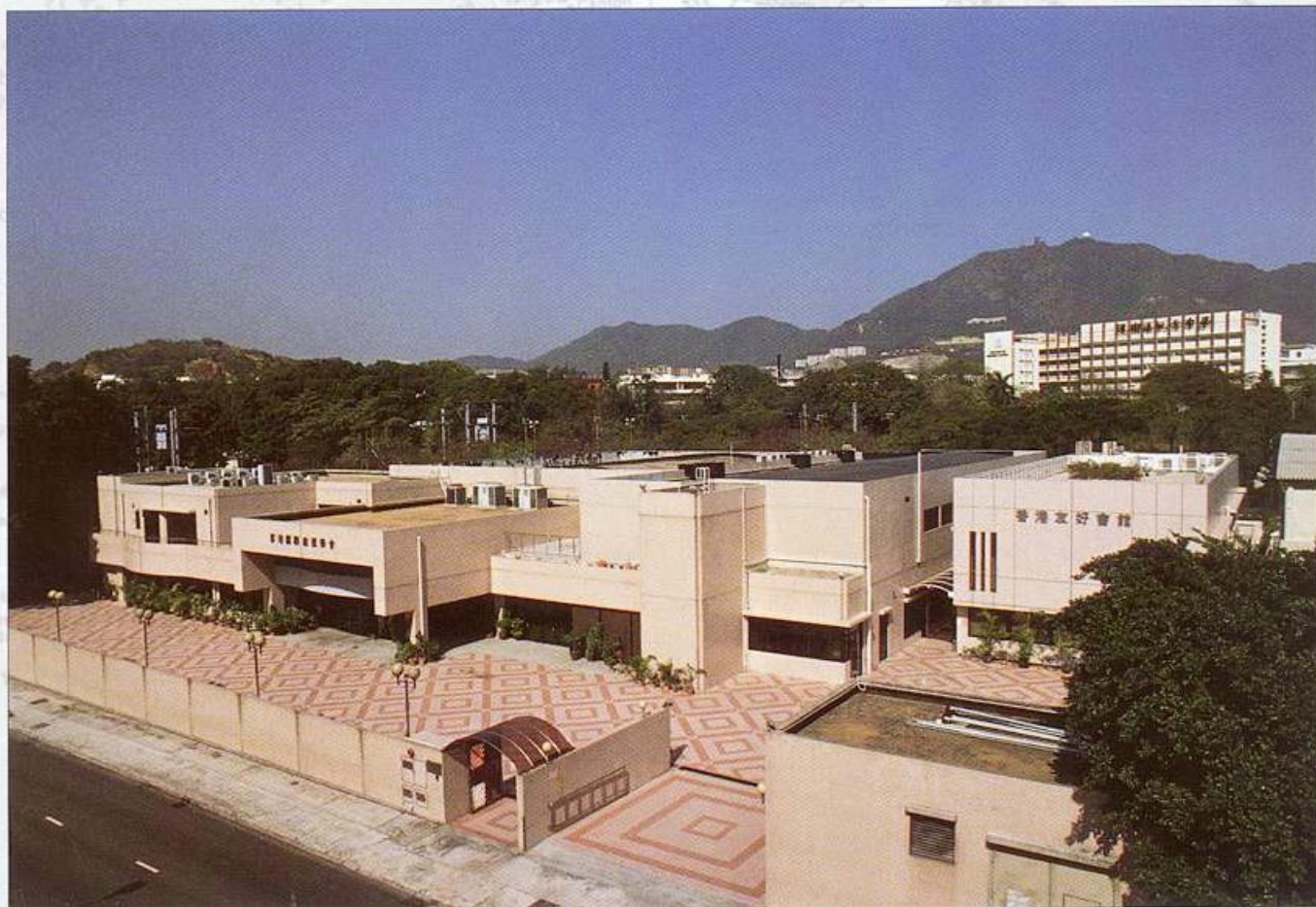
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Hong Kong Culture Center



LOCATED in Kowloon, the Hong Kong Culture Center was opened in January 1988 as a new focal point for promoting peace and culture. The ivory-colored, two-story building includes the Hong Kong World Peace Ikeda Auditorium that accommodates 1,200 people, meeting rooms, offices and conference rooms.

HKSGI members contribute to the community through activities including culture festivals and exhibitions open to the public (World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition, 1991; Welcome to the Wonderland of Dreams and Hopes: World Children's Tales Exhibition,

1992; Images of Nature and Peace III — Photographs by Daisaku Ikeda, 1993; Japanese Art Treasures from the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum Collection, 1994).

In the First SGI Hong Kong Peace Arts Festival held in 1994, leading entertainers from Hong Kong and China participated. In February this year, the members hosted the 16th World Peace Youth Culture Festival attended by SGI representatives from 100 countries and regions; during the finale, 1,600 performers from around the world gathered onstage.