



# LIVING BUDDHISM

July • 1997  
Vol. 1 • No. 7

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.



- 2** From Our Readers
- 4** Publisher's Commentary
- 6** Reply to Kyo'o: Study Material for July and August From The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin
- 12** Topics for Discussion—Buddhist Gods
- 14** A Model for Humanistic Education
- 18** Rule by Persons or Rule by Law?
- 21** Religions: Conflict and Resolution—An Educational Approach
- 24** Jeanne Alarcon—The Arts: A Tool for Education
- 28** Yuki Chen—International Student Promotes Global Understanding
- 32** Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra (20): A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century
- 50** Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures: Jutta Unkart-Seifert—Undersecretary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Sports
- 54** Expressions: Rowena Perkins

*On the Cover:* *Still Life With Orange and Yellow Lilies*, 1994, oil on canvas, 26 x 17 in. by Rowena Perkins.

LIVING BUDDHISM (USPS 385-750) (ISSN: 1093-5169)

Published monthly by SGI-USA Publications, 525 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, CA, 90401. Periodicals postage paid at Santa Monica, CA, 90401 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster — send address changes and returns to SGI-USA Subscriptions, P.O. Box 1427, Santa Monica, CA, 90401-1427. Copyright© 1997 SGI-USA. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A. Subscription rate: \$50.00 per year, \$90.00 for two years, \$125.00 for three years.

# LIVING BUDDHISM

## EDITORIAL STAFF:

Publisher: Fred M. Zaitso  
Executive Editor: Ted Morino

Managing Editor: Margie Hall  
Asst. Managing Editor: Dave Baldschun  
Art Director: Gary Murie  
Contributing Translators: Jeff Kriger, Shinsuke Yatomi  
Volunteers: Tobie Marsh, Patti Brundige, Marianne Winfield, Alice Ross, Kitty Scalzo, Lisa Chune

## BUREAU CHIEFS:

Atlanta: Sam Harris  
Boston: Anne Hudson, Beth Zimmerman  
Chicago: Bill Endsley  
Florida: Terry Ellis  
Hawaii: Joanne Tachibana  
Los Angeles: Tesfaye Abagaz, Kathleen Slattery, Laura Aved  
Midwest: Jim Celer  
New York: Nikki Amdur, Brigid Witkowski, Steve Piontek, Leslie Wines, Paul Grossman  
Philadelphia: Claude Lomden  
Rocky Mountain: Rodney Richards  
San Diego: MJ Frazier  
San Francisco: Ron Baird  
Seattle: Aaron Franklin  
Texas: Nellda Gallagher  
Washington, D.C.: Patricia Elam Ruff

## DOMESTIC SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES:

\$50 per year, \$90 for two, \$125 for three  
Subscriptions Department: (800) 835-4558  
Subscriptions: SGI SUBS@aol.com

## INTERNATIONAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Canada, Mexico & Caribbean: U.S. \$65 per year  
Latin America: U.S. \$75 per year  
Europe and Africa: U.S. \$83 per year  
Asia, Oceania and India: U.S. \$90 per year  
Send money order in U.S. funds to:  
525 Wilshire Blvd. Santa Monica, CA 90401

## WRITTEN/ARTISTIC CONTRIBUTIONS:

Send all written, photographic or fine art submissions to your local Living Buddhism Bureau Chief or to the above address or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

Contributors assume liability for all copyrighted material. All written submissions become property of SGI-USA.



## FROM OUR READERS

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

## ARTICLES ON ART

I REALLY enjoyed the article on Dennis McGonagle, "Finding the Meaning in Everyday Surroundings" (May 1997 *Living Buddhism*).

I have an AA degree in art and had a few art jobs when I was in my 20s. I wanted to be in an "art environment" at any cost.

I now have a high-paying job as an alarm installer and service person. I still paint a little and have enjoyed helping in the past with the SGI-USA stage crew and set work when there were large conventions and shows.

I'm proud Dennis has become a successful artist and teacher. He is showing actual proof and community pride in Whittier. His paintings remind me of Gauguin—they are painted with passion.

Keep up the art articles. In the city of Ventura, we have "Art City," a sculpture work site and gallery next to an industrial junkyard. Many fine, dedicated artists create work in alabaster and marble. I've shown my artist friends the fine art articles and quality color prints of art work. I've used

*Living Buddhism* as a means to introduce people to the practice. Keep it up.

PHILIP RAY  
Ventura, Calif.

## OPPORTUNITY FOR DIALOGUE

AM I the only one who felt electricity crackle off the pages of your June issue, especially the "From Our Readers" section? Please print more letters and more responses to letters!

While I can sympathize with readers who were offended by Mr. Towery's letter about the Confederate flag, I don't think that *Living Buddhism* should be taken to task for having printed it. If Mr. Towery hadn't been given an opportunity to express his views, no one would've had the opportunity to respond to those views and, consequently, the opportunity for an important dialogue would have been missed.

The letters in the June issue confirm what I've suspected for a while: The SGI is full of smart, deep-feeling people who all have something valuable to say, regard-

**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>

less of how unpopular or inflammatory some of their views may be. I hope that more readers will write letters to *Living Buddhism*. I hope they'll express themselves freely and honestly, saying exactly what they feel needs to be said.

So here's my two cents' worth. Lately a great deal of emphasis has been placed on healing racism within the SGI. I support all these efforts. At the same time, I understand that racism is a form of oppression and that all oppressions are linked by four common elements.

First, there is a defined norm, a standard of rightness or righteousness against which all others are judged (e.g. white, male, heterosexual, Christian). Second, this norm is backed up by institutional power, such as courts, schools, and governmental policies that favor the norm. Third, the norm is rewarded with economic power, such as tax breaks, loans and higher-paying jobs. Fourth, the norm is enforced through individual violence such as widespread violence against women, and institutional violence such as police harassment of people of color.

If all oppressions are linked by these common elements, how can we effectively eradicate one form of oppression without simultaneously working to eradicate them all? Homophobia, heterosexism, sexism and racism are all equally repugnant, and deserve to be dismantled with equal measures of

commitment and dispatch. If you have something to say about that, I'd really like to read it in *Living Buddhism*.

LISA JONES  
West Hollywood, Calif.

WHEN I read Jeffrey L. Towery's letter in the April 1997 *Living Buddhism* in which he portrayed the Confederate flag in honorable terms, because his ancestors were Confederate soldiers, I knew right away it would be a controversial letter that would stir up negative emotions for many African Americans like myself.

I, like James Tramble and Pamela Spratlen whose letters appeared in the June edition of *Living Buddhism*, believed that Mr. Towery was mistaken if he truly thought that the Confederate flag, which has come to symbolize so strongly hatred and disunity, can be disassociated from the racially based human bondage it originally represented. Systematized slavery was condoned by people who flew the Confederate flag as a societal right of those who profited from the buying and selling of people.

To me, Mr. Towery's assertion that the Confederate flag represented anything noble was ludicrous, and I wondered just who were those blacks who he claimed were proud members of the Sons of Confederate Veterans.

Nevertheless, after reading the letter, unlike Mr. Tramble and Ms. Spratlen, who felt that it should not

have appeared in our magazine, I concluded that it was brave of *Living Buddhism's* editors to print such a letter. I feel the same way about the editors' decision to print the responses to the letter.

Only two pages a month are reserved for unofficial letters from readers; this seems to me to be sufficient. The bulk of the magazine is devoted to more formalized study material. Therefore, anyone who reads the magazine can get a fairly good idea of the basic philosophy the magazine upholds.

I believe that those two readers' pages afford us an opportunity to allow the different voices that make up the SGI-USA to be heard, so that we can truly discover who we are as an organization and what we need to do to become better. After all, we are all originally Buddhas—whether we prefer singing “Yankee Doodle Dandy” or whistling “Dixie.”

As long as each of us continues to strive in our practice to do our own human revolution, fight injustices that appear from within our own lives and those that attack from without, and work with others to achieve unity in purpose based on daimoku and a sincere prayer for peace, we have nothing to fear if our individual opinions differ. This, I believe, is what unity through diversity is all about.

LA VORA PERRY  
East Cleveland, Ohio

### 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.

# OUR EVOLVING SELVES: EMBRACING CHANGE

THESE past few months, you may have noticed that I have focused on SGI President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal, which was published in the April issue of *Living Buddhism*. Each time I read it, I find more ideas that are relevant to our movement of peace, culture and education, not just intellectually, but on a practical, day-to-day level. For instance, I can think of few subjects as difficult to embrace as the idea of change. Moving from the familiar and comfortable to a new concept or way of doing things is, for many, one of the most difficult things in the world. But, as we know, change is as inevitable as each day moving seamlessly into the next.

In looking at the evolution of our organization, we have witnessed many changes these past several years—from weekly discussion meetings to meetings held monthly in many places I've visited; from having to travel long distances for gatherings to just “walking down the block” (as we gradually implement the neighborhood system); from countless individuals involved in collecting our SGI-USA publications subscriptions to the current direct-mail system employed nationwide, and so on.

As I've listened to your voices throughout my travels across the country, I find that many of you look forward to and embrace these changes with enthusiasm, while others find them somewhat uncomfortable. In examining the changes my own life has undergone over the last fifty-odd years, I realize that when I was younger I anticipated and accepted change readily; as a youth, in general, I couldn't wait to “grow up.” I relished exploration and discovery, learning new

ways of doing things. My heart and mind were open and active.

I like to think that I'm still that way.

However, sometimes when I think I'm being very flexible, I am actually expressing my conviction that things should always be as I've known them to be. As an old saying goes, “When you're in a warm bath, you never want to get out.” But all I need do is listen to my sons and daughter, who are now in their 20s. How quickly they can see beneath the obvious and find an unheard-of way to achieve an outcome. While I use words like *diversity* and *inclusiveness* and *equality*, as if they were somehow new concepts that we'll get to someday if we but work hard enough, I find that my children have been living those concepts for years; that they're fully integrated into their worldview. In other words, what I'm learning from my children is that rejecting change is an indication of inflexibility, which, to me, is the loss of a youthful spirit—no matter what our age. But where to begin to learn true flexibility?

In his 1997 peace proposal, President Ikeda writes:

The twentieth century has thus far been a time of obsessive and reckless pursuit above all of solutions to contradictions through social reform, that is, through remodeling of “external forms.” Now the primary task we cannot avoid as we enter the twenty-first century is to attend to the revolution within ourselves, what I described [in his 1970 poem to youth] as “a sound revolution carried out within ... gradually and in an atmosphere of peace.” I entrusted to

this poem my strong belief that the point of departure for everything we attempt from now on must be the redirection of our primary goal. (April 1997 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 10–11)

The answer to how to deal with change can be found in “a sound revolution carried out within.” Our determination to change from within — challenging our human revolution in a manner that is true to ourselves — as the key to changing the world outside is crucial to the tasks at hand, for, as novelist Chingiz Aitmatov of the former Soviet Union says: “Evolution demands more time and patience, more compromises than revolution. It requires the building and cultivating of happiness...” (Ibid., p. 11).

By giving sincere consideration to the diverse opinions of our membership in ever-improving our organization, we can develop a broad, flexible outlook and make stable progress toward construction and growth. For in practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we learn that the important thing is not how much knowledge of Buddhism we can accumulate, but how we can practice and make changes for the better in our daily lives and in the lives of others.

During his 1990 visit to the United States, President Ikeda told us:

Change, unceasing change, is one of the distinguishing characteristics of America. Change occurs more rapidly here than it does elsewhere. This could be said to be an indication of the vitality that this country possesses.

The late U.S. statesman Adlai Stevenson (1900–65) once said: “There is a New America every morning when I wake up. It is upon us whether we will it or not.”

Similarly, Buddhism holds that everything is in a constant state of flux. Thus, the question is whether we are to accept change passively and be swept away by it, or whether we are to take the lead and create positive changes on our own initiative. While conservatism and self-protection might be likened to winter, night and death, the spirit of pioneering and attempting to realize ideals evokes images of spring, morning and birth....In other words, we advance with hope and youthful vitality —

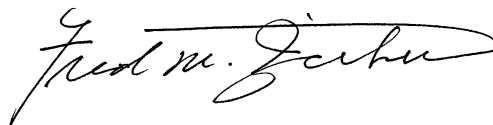
the vital energy of spring, morning and life — throughout our entire existence. It is in enabling us to realize this limitless improvement in our lives that the greatness and brilliance of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism lies. (March 1990 *Seikyo Times*, p. 52)

The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, encouraged members attending a New Year's gathering in 1948, saying:

Everything in the universe, from the heavenly bodies to the smallest creature, constantly changes. Nothing can be just as it was even a moment before. It is an illusion to think that you can remain the same. This being the case, what is most important is how you change, for better or for worse. If you do not constantly consider this fact, then you are practicing merely from habit and you have become completely indifferent to whether you are changing for better or for worse....

Faith is a practical activity to help you change rapidly for the better. The basic power to reform all phenomena in the universe is called Buddha.... Nichiren Daishonin further defined this power as Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and materialized this profound Law as the fundamental object of worship in the form of the Gohonzon for the sake of all posterity. (*The Human Revolution*, vol. 3, no. 5, p. 6)

As our organization continues to evolve, with everyone's support I believe we can progress toward fulfilling our dream to make it the best it can be.



Fred M. Zaitso  
SGI-USA General Director

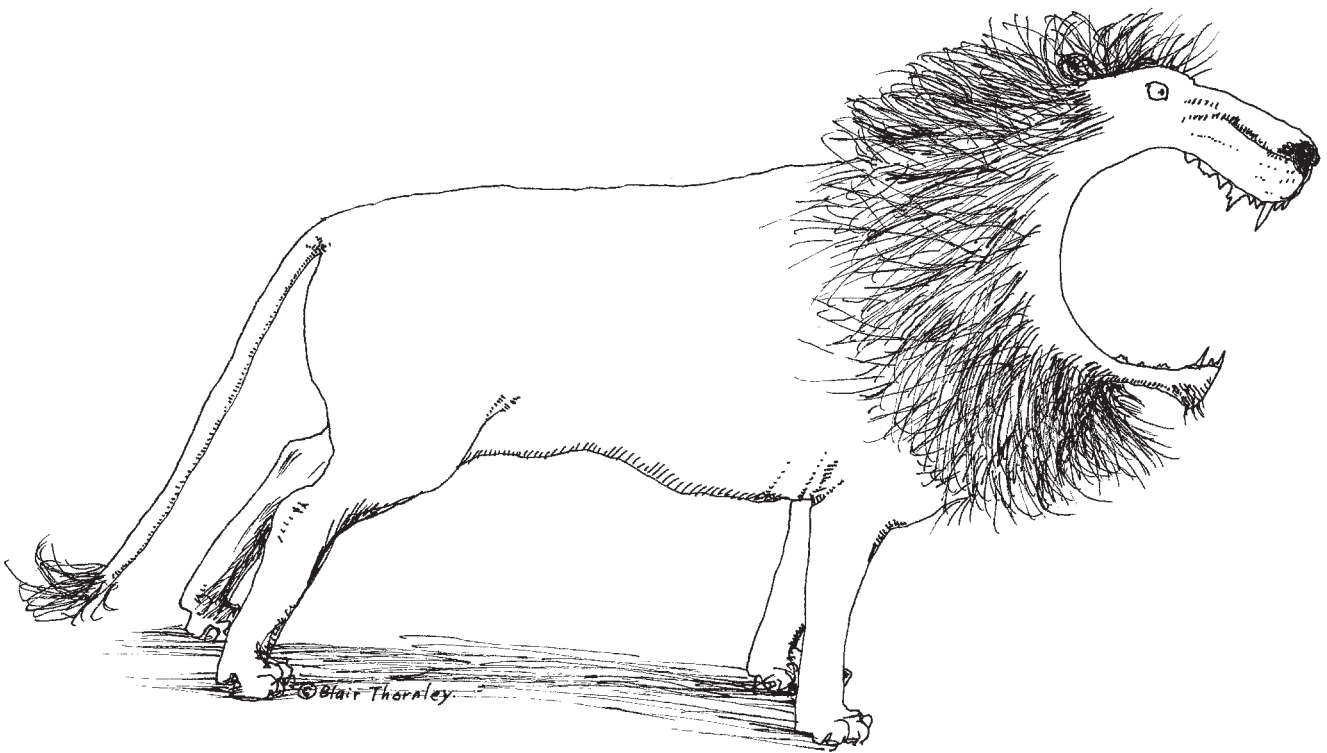
## “REPLY TO KYO’O”

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

**B**ELIEVE 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?

It is written that those who embrace the daimoku of the Lotus Sutra will be protected by Kishimojin and her ten daughters. They will enjoy the happiness of Aizen and the good fortune of Bishamon. Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will be free from fear like the lion king. Among Kishimojin’s ten daughters, the protection of Kodainyo is the most profound. But your faith alone will determine all these things. A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff.

*(The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1. p. 119–120)*  
*(Gosho Zenshu, [The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, in Japanese], p. 1124)*



Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion.

### Background

**I**N August 1273, Shijo Kingo sent a messenger to Nichiren Daishonin, who was in exile at Sado Island. He brought an offering of money and a report that Kingo's infant daughter Kyo'o had fallen seriously ill. "Reply to Kyo'o" was the Daishonin's response to Shijo Kingo and his wife Nichigennyō.

The couple had two daughters, Tsukimaro and Kyo'o. Nichigennyō gave birth to Tsukimaro in 1271, the turbulent year when the Daishonin was nearly executed and then exiled to Sado. It was around this time that the government began to pressure the Daishonin's followers in Kamakura, where Kingo and his wife lived.

Kyo'o was born the following year in 1272. Kingo was already 40 when

the first daughter was born, so these children were especially dear to the couple. When young Kyo'o fell seriously ill, the atmosphere in Kamakura continued to be oppressive for the Daishonin's followers while he continued his exile at Sado.

"Reply to Kyo'o" is a relatively short letter, but significant because in it the Daishonin explains the importance of faith in the Gohonzon. Before his exile to Sado, the Daishonin encouraged his followers to discard their attachment to the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings of Shakyamuni and chant the title of the Lotus Sutra—*Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*—and take faith in his teachings. But the basics of faith and practice were not yet clearly defined and many of his followers continued to worship statues or images of Shakyamuni.

After the attempted execution at Tatsunokuchi, however, the Daishonin began to inscribe Gohonzon as the basis of faith and practice. Since the inscription of Gohonzon came later, letters in which he clearly defines it are rare. "Reply to Kyo'o" is one of these important writings in which he explains the importance of faith in the Gohonzon.

In this letter, the Daishonin declares that the Gohonzon is the embodiment of his enlightenment to the fundamental law of life. He states, "I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi, so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart.... The soul of Nichiren is nothing other than *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*" (MW-1, 120). He explains that through their faith in the Gohonzon the couple will overcome any obstacle and be protected from any harm.

A sword  
will be useless  
in the hands  
of a coward.



#### Commentary

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?

THE Daishonin clearly states his confidence in the power of the Gohonzon. Believing “with all your heart” can be interpreted from several perspectives. It means that we overcome any doubts in the Gohonzon especially when we experience hardships. Strong faith in the Gohonzon is to have strong faith in our innate Buddha nature. It is easy to believe in our potential when things are going smoothly. But when we face unexpected

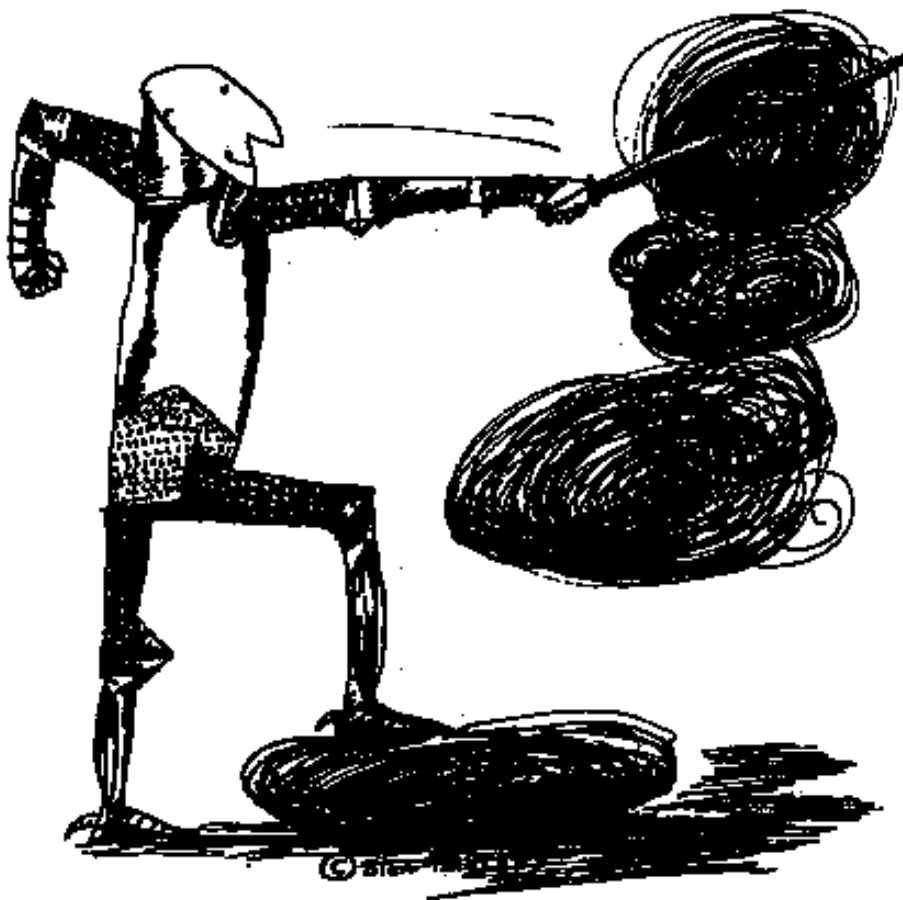
obstacles in health, relationships, finances and so on, we become unsure of our inner strength. This is precisely the moment when we must summon forth hope in our unlimited ability to surmount any obstacle. Limitless hope is what believing in the Gohonzon “with all your heart” means.

“With all your heart” also means to have courage in the face of obstacles, see them for what they are and challenge them. It does not mean that we depend on the Gohonzon as a shield to hide from our problems. The Gohonzon is not a deity or magical charm that solves problems for us; the Daishonin inscribed it for us to see what potential we possess within. He encourages us to be positive

and self-reliant rather than dependent on the Gohonzon as an external object. This will bring forth life’s fundamental strength to overcome all our problems, so the Daishonin says, “What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?”

He does not mean that people do not get sick when they practice Buddhism. Many people rely on God or the Buddha to prevent them from becoming ill or experiencing hardships, believing these to be the cause of unhappiness. The Daishonin explains that sickness or hardships are not the direct cause of people’s unhappiness. Rather, their misery starts when they are defeated by them — when they lose hope and courage.

Buddhism does not guarantee



The mighty sword  
of the Lotus Sutra  
must be wielded  
by one  
courageous  
in faith.

us a life free of sickness or accidents. The Daishonin, however, promises us here that no sickness will be an obstacle to our happiness. “Sickness” in this passage may be interpreted not only as health problems, but also as life’s hardships in general — problems of family, relationships, money, career and so on. Through our Buddhist practice, no hardship will hinder us from becoming happy and fulfilled. Instead, it will become a springboard for us to change our negative karma and elevate our life-condition.

Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will be free from fear like

the lion king.

**B**UDDHISM explains that our lives and environment are essentially one and the same. So when we develop our Buddha nature within, the same life-affirming power will manifest in our environment. The positive forces in the environment that nurture and protect life are called Buddhist gods. The Daishonin goes on to say, “Wherever your daughter may frolic or play, no harm will come to her; she will be free from fear like the lion king.” Likewise, those who embrace the Gohonzon can overcome fear or worry because if they develop confidence, they can overcome whatever problems they face in the course of

their lives. When the Daishonin states “frolic or play” in this passage, he is indicating a state of freedom that defies any external restrictions.

When the Daishonin wrote “Reply to Kyo’o,” he was in exile on Sado. Besides all the restrictions and inconveniences of being an exile on a remote island, he was also lacking in basic necessities such as food and clothing. His circumstances were extremely dire. However, he did not allow his environment to become an obstacle to his spiritual freedom and happiness. He continued to write letters encouraging his disciples living far away while introducing his teaching to many native to the island. From Sado he says, “I, Nichiren,

## From SGI President Ikeda's speeches

**W**E all face various problems and obstacles. But Nichiren Daishonin writes, "Kyo'o Gozen's misfortunes will change into fortune. Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?" (MW-1, 120)

The first thing is to pray. From the moment we begin to pray, things start moving. The darker the night, the closer the dawn. From the moment we chant daimoku with a deep and powerful resolve, the sun begins to rise in our heart.

Hope — prayer is the sun of hope. To chant daimoku each time we face a problem, overcoming it and elevating our life-condition as a result — this is the path of "changing earthly desires into enlightenment" taught in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

Suffering and undergoing hardships for the sake of friends

and for the sake of spreading the Law is a manifestation of the great sense of responsibility of a genuine leader and the behavior of a bodhisattva. There is no suffering or hardship that a Bodhisattva of the Earth cannot surmount. So no matter what happens, I would like you to steadily advance, one step at a time, always chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with a vibrant voice (July 5, 1996, *World Tribune*).

• • •

**T**RUE and lasting happiness only and always comes from our own efforts, our own wisdom, our own good fortune. This is a fundamental truth. Faith is the key to strengthening our efforts, wisdom and good fortune; SGI activities are the key to strengthening ourselves...

The Daishonin indicates that wherever those who uphold the Mystic Law frolic or play, no harm will come to them; they will be

free from fear, like the lion king. Each of us will be able to savor such a state of life of perfect freedom throughout eternity. That is why we practice faith (March 29, 1996, *World Tribune*).

• • •

**T**HE Devil of the Sixth Heaven is the manifestation of the fundamental darkness inherent in human life. The Daishonin teaches that only with "the sword of faith" can we cut through this fundamental darkness. We must boldly draw this sword as the Daishonin taught: "A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith" (MW-1, 120).

Courage is what counts. The spirit of faith is to fear nothing. The majesty and power of the Buddhist gods will increase for a person of abundant courage (Dec. 9, 1991, *World Tribune*).

am the richest man in all of present-day Japan" (MW-2, 175).

The Daishonin teaches us that ultimately freedom must be established from within the life of each person regardless of social, political or environmental circumstances.

**But your faith alone will determine all these things. A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one**

**courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff.**

**A**LL the wonderful benefit from the Gohonzon — happiness, good fortune and freedom — depend upon nothing but our own courageous faith. No matter how great the power of the Gohonzon, if our faith and practice are weak and we act cowardly in the face of obstacles, the Gohonzon is no more than a piece of paper.

Our powers of faith and practice to the Gohonzon will determine the extent to which we can draw the powers of the Buddha and the Law from within. "The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith." □

(Background and commentary by SGI-USA Study Department)

*Illustrations by Blair Thornley*

## Glossary

**Mandala:** (Skt.) An object of worship on which Buddhas and bodhisattvas are depicted or on which the mystic doctrine is expressed. Mandala originally meant a round or square altar on which Buddhas are placed. It is translated in China by terms meaning “perfectly endowed” or “cluster of blessings.” In Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, mandala indicates the Gohonzon because it embodies all the practices and resulting virtues of all the Buddhas in the universe.

**The daimoku of the Lotus Sutra:** The title of the Lotus Sutra or the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

**Kishimojin** (Skt. Hariti) **and her ten demon daughters:** A female demon. She had 500 (some sources say 1,000 or 10,000) children, including the ten daughters who appeared in the Dharani (twenty-sixth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. According to the Kishimo Sutra (Sutra of Kishimojin) and the Binaya Zoji (Monastic Rules with Respect to Various Matters), she killed the babies of other people to feed her children, and the terrified and grieving populace begged Shakyamuni for help. The Buddha then hid Kishimojin’s youngest son, Binkara. She sought him throughout the world for seven days, but to no avail. In despair she finally asked

the Buddha where he was. Shakyamuni rebuked her for her evil conduct and made her vow never to kill another child. Then he returned her son to her. According to the Nankai Kiki Naiho Den, Kishimojin was revered in India as a goddess who could bestow the blessings of children and easy delivery. Kishimojin worship was later introduced to Japan. In the Dharani (twenty-sixth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, she and her ten daughters pledge before the Buddha to safeguard the votaries of the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin talks about the protection from Kishimojin and her ten demon daughters in “Reply to Kyo’o,” partly because they were well known as guardian deities of children and childbirth.

**Aizen:** (Skt. Ragaraja) A Buddhist deity who is said to purify people’s earthly desires and free them from illusions and the suffering accruing from earthly desires. In the esoteric teaching his true identity is regarded as Dainichi (Skt. Mahavairochana) Buddha or Kongosatta (Vajrasattva). Aizen is pictured on the Diamond World mandala and is depicted as being red in color with three eyes, six arms and a furious expression. In his hand he has a bow and arrows. His name is inscribed in Siddham, a medieval Sanskrit orthography, on the left-hand side of the

Gohonzon as one faces it, signifying the principle that earthly desires lead to enlightenment. In “Reply to Kyo’o,” the Daishonin uses Aizen to indicate a state of happiness through the fulfillment of all desires.

**Bishamon:** (Skt. Vaishravana) One of the Four Heavenly Kings, who lives halfway down the northern side of Mount Sumeru and protects the north, accompanied by the two classes of demons called yaksha and rakshasa. Bishamon is a transliteration of the Sanskrit Vaishravana. This name is also translated as Tamon (Listening to Many Teachings). This god is said to always protect the place where the Buddha preaches and listen to the Buddha’s teachings. In the Dharani (twenty-sixth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he pledges to protect the votaries of the sutra. In Japan, he is regarded as one of the seven beneficent deities. In “Reply to Kyo’o,” the Daishonin uses Bishamon to represent workings to bestow good fortune to those who practice the Mystic Law.

**Kodainyo:** One of Kishimojin’s ten demon daughters, who is considered as being a good demon from the beginning. In the Dharani (twenty-sixth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, she is named as she represents her sisters when they are entrusted with the protection

# PROTECTIVE FORCES EXIST WITHIN US

**Q**UESTION: When we perform the morning prayers, we face east for the first prayer, then turn to face the Gohonzon for the remaining prayers. What if the Gohonzon is on the east side of the room—which way do we face? And what is the significance of facing east?

**A**NSWER: In the first prayer, we offer appreciation for the protection of the Buddhist gods by facing east toward the sun. If you are already facing east when facing

life possible. But it is just a formality. It is not crucial whether we face east or not. The substance of the first prayer is to acknowledge the great compassion of the universe that protects life.

Sometimes we say we thank the Buddhist gods or the Gohonzon for protecting us; but in reality we appreciate the existence of the Mystic Law within the universe and within our lives.

The names we use to refer to Buddhist gods originated within Indian and Japanese folklore and

environment are one, not two separate entities. Therefore, our environment reflects our inner condition of life. Our inner, life-affirming conviction will manifest itself in our surroundings.

President Ikeda explains:

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

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

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

**This “Topics for Discussion” column is intended to stimulate discussion on the principles and practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. To spark dialogue, questions based on the material can be formulated prior to gathering.**

the Gohonzon, it is not necessary to change directions. We can express appreciation to the Buddhist gods by facing the Gohonzon because they are represented in it. Buddhist gods are forces or phenomena in the universe that protect or aid human life. A prime example is the sun. Without it, life would cease to exist.

Nichiren Daishonin viewed the sun symbolically as the center of the universe and representative of the Buddhist gods. Because the sun rises in the east, we face that direction to show appreciation to all functions in the universe that make

religious traditions. Because the Daishonin realized that Nam-myoho-renge-kyo permeates all natural forces, he felt comfortable incorporating in his teachings these traditional gods which people of the time were familiar with. They were not originally “Buddhist” gods.

**T**HE important thing to realize is that regardless of what we call them, the ultimate source of these forces is within us, not outside of us. The protection of Buddhist gods is a function of our Buddha nature. Buddhism teaches that our lives and the surrounding

entire universe bathes you in the light of good fortune.

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

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

"When we worship the Gohonzon, right then and there the doors of the microcosm within us open completely to the macrocosm, and we can experience a sense of serene and great happiness, as though gazing out over the entire universe. We sense tremendous fulfillment and joy, and gain access to a great and inexhaustible source of wisdom. The microcosm that has been embraced by the universe in turn embraces the universe" (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, pp. 20–22).

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

PRESIDENT Toda often told us that when we go to Eagle Peak, we should proudly declare ourselves "disciples of Josei Toda, the leader of kosen-rufu." The names of those who bravely and vigorously

dedicate themselves to kosen-rufu are known to all Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the ten directions, and to Bonten and Taishaku and all Buddhist gods. Their reputation extends throughout the universe.

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

In "Emergence of the Treasure Tower," the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni says: "This sutra is hard to uphold; if one can uphold it even for a short while [after I have entered extinction] I will surely rejoice and so will the other Buddhas. A person who can do this wins the admiration of the Buddhas" (LS11, 180–81) (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, pp. 61–62).

THE discussion meeting is a wonderful forum of life. Where there is such joy, excitement, bounding vigor and solidarity of faith in the Gohonzon, the Buddhist gods of the universe all assemble, and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas envelop everyone in good fortune and benefit. Through such vibrant life-to-life interaction, the SGI is rapidly increasing in brilliance and strength.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, no doubt rejoice at this harmonious solidarity. And

Nichiren Daishonin surely praises all of you (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 3, p. 104).

GONGYO, in the morning and evening, is a ceremony fusing the microcosm of our own lives in choral melody with the macrocosm of the universe. The sound of the Mystic Law, the sound of voices chanting daimoku, is the song of the universe.

Each morning and evening we immerse ourselves in the symphony of the Mystic Law that resounds throughout the universe. The Buddhas, bodhisattvas and Buddhist gods existing over the three existences and in the ten directions shower us with their praise and protection (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 3, p. 114).

**From *The Major Writings  
of Nichiren Daishonin***

EACH of you has continued your faith in the Lotus Sutra and can therefore rid yourselves of your heavy sins from the past. For example, the flaws in iron come to the surface when it is forged. Put into flames, a rock just turns to ashes, but gold is rendered into pure gold. This persecution more than anything else will prove your faith genuine, and the Jurasetu (Ten Goddesses) of the Lotus Sutra will surely protect you.

You must endure this trial and see for yourselves the blessings of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren will also loudly call upon the Buddhist gods. Now more than ever, you must neither show nor feel any fear (MW-1, 138–40).□



# A Model for Humanistic Education

By Amanda Rivera, Bilingual Program Coordinator, Chicago

Soka University, Japan.

SIENKO PRESS

*This article is based on a presentation made before the Society for Buddhist-Christian Studies Conference held August 2, 1996, at Chicago's DePaul University.*

As an educator in the public school system for the past seventeen years, it gives me great pleasure to share a brief historical perspective on the development of a model of humanistic education developed by the Soka Gakkai and how this foundation has impacted the Soka Gakkai and society today. This model focuses on the development of the learner as a whole person, one who is not only an active participant in society, but who is also a value creator. As a global society, we are facing a multitude of issues and crises that appear to be growing faster than the solutions. In a speech given at the Teachers College of Columbia University in June 1996 entitled "Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship," the international president of the Soka Gakkai, Daisaku Ikeda, stated that he believed the "root cause of today's

problems was our collective failure to make the human being and human happiness the consistent focus in all fields of endeavor."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Ikeda further stated, "The human being is the point to which we must return and from which we must depart anew," and what was required was a human transformation or human revolution.<sup>2</sup> The Soka Gakkai has had a strong commitment to education since its inception as an organization in the 1930s. This commitment was primarily developed and reaffirmed by the respective Soka Gakkai presidents, who each experienced the cruelty, stupidity and waste of war. Humanistic education or value-creating education, which will be used interchangeably throughout this paper, is perceived as the way "to enable human beings to be fully and truly human to fulfill a constructive mission in life with composure and confidence."<sup>3</sup>

The first president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was born in an impoverished fishing village in Japan in 1871. He became an educator and served as a

principal for twenty years in Japan's public school system. Greatly displeased with the school system, he became a strong advocate for educational reform and a strong critic of the Japanese educational system. Makiguchi believed Japanese teachers and education were bound by traditional ideas and practice, and felt new educational ideas or theories were accepted with little thought, reflection or analysis. These sentiments can be compared to those of contemporary educators, such as Paulo Freire. Freire advocates the importance of teachers being critical thinkers and implementing the use of reflection in their quest to guide learners. He also advocates that teachers engage students in the same process for effective education.<sup>4</sup>

Makiguchi believed that methods such as "drill and repetition were mental gymnastics and memorization of material was often unrelated to the lives of the learner."<sup>5</sup> Similarly, present-day school systems find themselves struggling to address these same issues —

how to make learning meaningful and engaging with the advent of rapid technological advancements and infusion of so much information. Fortunately, newer methodologies of instruction that challenge children to think, question and to integrate knowledge and information are being devised and implemented. Approaches and/or philosophies of instruction such as the whole language approach and integrative instruction can help learners to see the interconnectedness of all the disciplines of learning as well as providing the forum to help learners transfer that knowledge to the realities of their daily existence. Makiguchi would probably be pleased to see such methodologies implemented in schools, for they appear to address the issues he felt compelled to criticize and change.

Makiguchi also felt that education was very fragmented, providing students with little understanding of life in society; this type of traditional education being worse than no education at all, for it failed to nurture or develop the potential of children.<sup>6</sup>

His frustrations with the educational system caused him to seriously ponder and evaluate the purpose of education. Influenced by contemporaries such as John Dewey, Makiguchi developed his own philosophy of education.<sup>7</sup> He thought the aim of education ought to be the development of people with the capacity to create value through meaningful experiences with their environment. Their experience would also contribute to the betterment of society. Makiguchi stressed that the highest objective in life was happiness and that the goal of life should be to create value. Happiness was not something that was gained alone or inherited.



Amanda Rivera with her students at Funston School, Chicago.

THE guiding principles in my work have been the philosophy of Nichiren Daishonin, for they have helped me to see that faith and daily life are one and the same. Daily life is the arena to implement and develop my faith and humanity. My involvement with citywide school reform initiatives has helped me to see how politics, economics and power struggles can overshadow the goal of educating children. Serving on the Chicago Annenberg Collaborative, which is responsible for helping to fund creative and innovative school reform initiatives, I have been gratified to meet with schools and organizations who are collaborating to impact student learning.

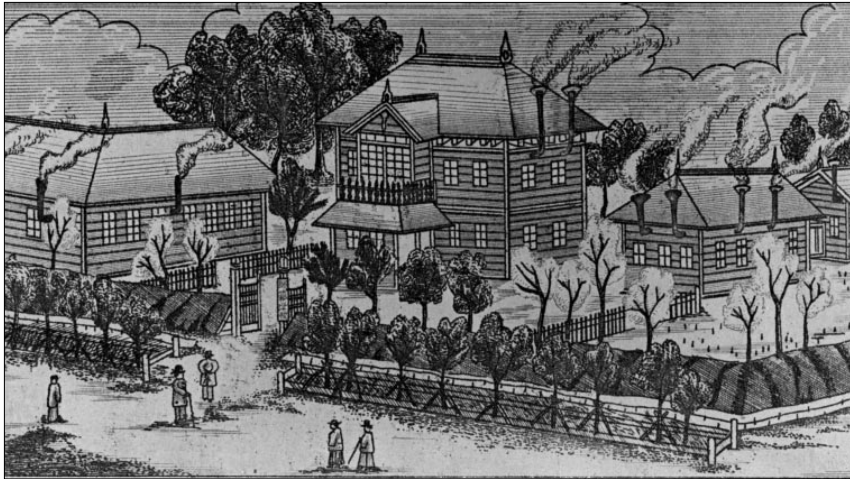
Recognizing the important roles parents can play in education, I helped to develop a parent involvement program in collaboration with schools and community-based organizations. Its focus has been to help develop parents as leaders in the school and community. It supports the value of working with parents, community organizations, agencies and leaders to develop the community and to connect community resources that impact the quality of life for children and their families.

In the past three years, I challenged my academic and career endeavors by enrolling in a doctor-

al program and by completing three degrees — M.A., M.S. and Ed.S.—in educational leadership. Working fulltime and being enrolled in simultaneous programs at different institutions along with my civic and SGI activities proved to be one of the most challenging times of my life.

In 1995, I was a fellow of the National Hispana Leadership Institute, and earlier this year I was a regional finalist for the White House Internship Program. Both programs recognized my contributions to my profession and the Chicago community. My graduate work and each of these programs reemphasized the importance of quality, creative, humanistic and leadership. Each class, seminar and institute reaffirmed the principles expounded within the SGI through President Ikeda about the importance of knowing ourselves, challenging the pain to transform ourselves and taking the action necessary to create value.

When we can remember to place the child, the student, the person “at the center of our endeavors,” as President Ikeda has encouraged us, we will find the way to make a difference in the lives of those we are called to serve and will become more human in the process. □



Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), the first president of the Soka Gakkai and proponent of value-creation education, was a self-taught student admitted to the prestigious Hokkaido Teachers School in 1889.

Consistent with his belief that happiness consisted of two elements, the personal and the social, Makiguchi developed a pedagogy, which evolved in the early 1930s, based on his forty years of experience in the public school system. This pedagogy focused on two aspects: happiness and value creation. An important component was the integration of the curriculum with experiences and the fostering of learning that had purpose and meaning to the learner.

The second component of his pedagogy focused on teaching the learner to be socially responsible. Makiguchi referred to the concept of “community study” as a strategy in helping to actualize this component. He suggested making community study the “central unifying and integrating focus of children’s education. Community study would facilitate learning by providing a forum to relate the things taught in schools to the actual life of a community of people, and the social economic and political structures of the community.”<sup>8</sup> Like Dewey, Makiguchi placed emphasis on the community as an arena to

develop global citizens, the community becoming an extension of the classroom setting.

Makiguchi perceived this as useful living knowledge. His premise was that children needed to acquire a deep understanding and awareness of the structures of their local community and that of the larger national world communities. As can be noted, he was quite visionary in promoting an awareness by his students of themselves as global citizens who are rooted in the local community. Today a number of public school systems as well as universities are developing educational programs that focus on Makiguchi’s concept of community study; more commonly used terms are *full-service schools*, *community schools* or *community-based schools*. These types of schools combine classroom instruction with community involvement or service, making learning more holistic and practical and meaningful for children and educators.

Makiguchi was convinced that to be an effective value creator, one had to have a thorough grasp of the meaning and significance of social

or civic life. He proposed that the right methodologies could help actualize such human beings and such learning. In order to provide such an education, he thought it was necessary to nurture teachers who comprehended life, education and society. These types of teachers could then serve more in the role of facilitators or guides in helping students develop their potential, as opposed to the all-knowing providers of information. Here again it can be noted that present-day educator Freire holds similar beliefs to those of Makiguchi. Freire also believes that the role of the teacher should be that of a facilitator for the learner.

Freire developed a concept called the “banking concept of education.” This concept presupposes that education can be perceived as an act of depositing (knowledge), in which the students are the depositors and the teacher the depositor. Freire, like Makiguchi, viewed this as dehumanizing for it failed to respect the knowledge and potential the learner brings to the learning environment.

Makiguchi’s reforms received

initial political support from the prime minister and some local scholars. It was, however, short-lived after the prime minister was assassinated. Makiguchi's focus of interest was never the state, but always the people, or the individual human being. He was very vocal about his criticisms of the educational system as well as the imperialist government of his time. Unfortunately, his attempts to have an impact on the Japanese school system with his reforms were not successful during his lifetime.

In 1928, Makiguchi learned of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, which he found to be consistent with his beliefs and conclusions about life. It also provided a deep philosophical basis for him to pursue his movement for social reform through education. Makiguchi went on to establish the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai or Value Creating Education Society in 1939 (*so*, meaning creation and *ka*, meaning value). In 1943, during World War II, Makiguchi and his disciple and fellow teacher, Josei Toda, were imprisoned as pacifists. Makiguchi died in prison of malnutrition and witnessed the dissolution of his organization by the Japanese authorities. Two years later, Toda, upon his release from prison, resurrected the organization with a strong religious foundation.

Makiguchi's death marked a new departure. Toda transformed his anger with the Japanese authorities into a determination for creating a new movement based on peace. He formed a new organization based on the solidarity of ordinary citizens. Using a grass-roots method, one-to-one dialogue and small-scale discussion meetings, he was instrumental in developing the foundation of the Soka Gakkai organization

today, giving priority to education using Makiguchi's theory of value creation as a basis.

Today the Soka Gakkai International, the largest Buddhist lay organization in the world, is led by Josei Toda's disciple, Daisaku Ikeda. Mr. Ikeda has been instrumental in advancing the value creation philosophy of Makiguchi through his commitment in the areas of education, peace and culture. The SGI has a membership of 12 million (from 3,000 at the end of WWII) in 128 countries. It is officially recognized as a non-governmental organization of the United Nations promoting peace through cultural festivities, initiating multiple artistic and educational exchanges, international public sharing of innovative studies and dialogues related to world crises, and host to world leaders to discuss issues of education, peace and culture.

Mr. Ikeda is a recipient of the United Nations Peace Medal and founder of the kindergarten-through-university Soka Schools system. He was motivated to develop the Soka Schools system by a desire to provide students with the experience of a humanistic form of education, as advocated by Makiguchi. Mr. Ikeda recently remarked that education was his final and most crucial undertaking, education being a human privilege that allows us to become fully and truly human so that we can fulfill our constructive mission in life with compassion. In his travels to promote peace, Mr. Ikeda often refers to the theme of education as a vital area in creating peace. In an address he delivered at Ankara University in Turkey in 1992, Mr. Ikeda states that education is the most direct and certain path to universal or world peace. He states that "education lets us transcend different backgrounds and discover

commonalties and that it enables us to think on a higher plane, that is, as human beings...."<sup>9</sup>

As was postulated earlier in this presentation, our collective failure to value human beings and human happiness must be addressed for the prosperity of humankind. Humanistic education, where the individual is the focus, is a way to begin this process. Although Makiguchi was not successful in impacting the Japanese educational school system of his time with his school reform initiatives, it is evident that his beliefs and reforms have found a place not only in the Soka school system but throughout the world through the arduous and consistent efforts of Daisaku Ikeda. Makiguchi's spirit to reform education has become the basis for a movement based on individual happiness and value creation. □

- 
1. Daisaku Ikeda, "Thoughts on Education for Global Citizenship," August 1996 *Seikyō Times*, p. 8.
  2. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
  3. Daisaku Ikeda, *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc., 1996), p. 18.
  4. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publications, 1989), p. 58.
  5. Joy G. Drsfoos, "Full Service Schools," *Educational Leadership*, April 1996.
  6. Hope C. Bliss, *Creating Value in Education: Past, Present and Future*. SGI-USA Culture Department Booklet Series, No. 4., 1994, p. 20.
  7. Dayle M. Bethel, *Makiguchi the Value Creator: Revolutionary Japanese Educator and Founder of Soka Gakkai* (New York: Weatherhill, Inc., 1994), p. 56.
  8. Alfred Birnbaum (translator) and Dayle M. Bethel (editor), *Education for Creative Living: Ideas and Proposals of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1989), p. 61.
  9. Daisaku Ikeda, *A New Humanism: The University Addresses of Daisaku Ikeda* (New York and Tokyo: Weatherhill, Inc., 1996), p. 18.

# Rule by Persons or Rule by Law?



By Dayle M. Bethel, Professor of Education and Anthropology, International University, Missouri

THE PURCELL TEAM/CORBIS

**T**HROUGHOUT the history of human society, human beings have been subject to the autocratic rule of a person (or elite groups of persons) in charge, not to the rule of law. No human

collective, with perhaps a few minor exceptions, has succeeded in developing a social system based on rule by law. This, unfortunately, is as true of our so-called “democratic” societies, which are suppos-

edly based on “constitutional” governments, as of other forms of collectives. In other words, we must face up to the reality that the hopes and aspirations of the founders of the democratic soci-

eties of the world have not been realized. We are ruled today, not by law, but by persons.

If we need verification of this conclusion, we have but to look closely at the inner workings of our governments whether it be the Japanese government, the American government, or any one of the other democratic societies of the world. There we find rule by persons, not rule by law. In Japan a nearly complete absence of any semblance of rule by law can be seen in the nearly continuous stream of scandals and corruption at the highest levels of the nation's political and business leadership.

**L**IKEWISE, the incident involving the Aum Supreme Truth sect provides an especially tragic example of rule by persons. Here we have some of the brightest and most promising products of Japan's leading educational institutions unthinkingly carrying out the most hideous and brutal crimes in response to the whims of one person. As the Japanese public watched this gruesome drama unfold on TV screens throughout the nation, they asked themselves repeatedly, "Why?" "How could this happen?" To search for answers to these perplexing questions is the purpose of this article. And since Soka Gakkai's founder, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, discussed this issue at length in his *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei* (Value-creating educational theory), I suggest that we begin our inquiry with his writings.

Makiguchi began his comments on this subject by recalling Shakyamuni Buddha's admonition to "heed the law, not persons." This, Makiguchi suggested, is the greatest guidance that Buddhism has to offer to the advancement of humankind. "Here," he wrote, "we are shown the

way up from dependence to true freedom, from living in obedience to charismatic power figures to living in unison with universal order." To blindly follow the will of others is a form of personality worship. In our unthinking worship of and obedience to charismatic power figures, Makiguchi contends, we are "self-sold into bondage" (*Education for Creative Living*, pp. 84–85).

Especially dangerous, in Makiguchi's view, are those religious leaders who offer exclusive truth to their followers. Persons who respond to such claims, he warns, have no chance to rise above a life of "person dependence". Just like the lover who has no eyes for anyone but his love, the devotee of a personality cult has not the least inclination to assume an objective scientific stance to calmly compare the various religions, hail the greater similarities, and reject the trivial differences."

Erich Fromm (1900–80), writing in our own time, supports Makiguchi's insights in this regard when he describes the psychological and spiritual emptiness that leads a person to follow blindly the will of another person or group. He first observes that faith, whether in a religious, political or personal sense, can have two entirely different meanings, depending on whether it is used in the "having mode" or in the "being mode." In the being mode, faith is, in essence, an inner orientation, an attitude. It is a healthy, thoughtful, caring approach to every aspect of life. It is life lived lovingly and mindfully. Faith in the having mode, on the other hand,

is the possession of an answer for which one has no rational proof. It consists of formulations creat-

ed by others, which one accepts because one submits to those others — usually a bureaucracy. It is the entry ticket to join a large group of people. It relieves one of the hard task of thinking for oneself and making decisions. One becomes one of the *beati possidents*, the happy owners of the right faith. Faith, in the having mode, gives certainty; it claims to pronounce the ultimate, unshakable knowledge, which is believable because the power of those who promulgate and protect the faith seems unshakable. Indeed, who would not choose certainty if all it requires is to surrender one's independence?" (*To Have or To Be*, Bantam Books 1976, 1981, p. 30)

**T**HIS kind of person dependence, and the blind, unreasoning behavior that it produces, leads inevitably to catastrophe for both persons and societies. A crucial question, then, is: How can person dependence and rule by persons be avoided in human experience? For Makiguchi, the answer to this question was very clear. Every human being, he believed, needs to be "awakened to consciousness of an underlying order and a commitment to rule by law rather than by persons." It was in this "awakening to consciousness" that Makiguchi saw hope for the future of humankind. And the key to this awakening, he maintained, is education; not the twisted education of his day, which he deplored and cited as one of the causes of widespread person dependence in Japanese society, but holistic education capable of producing creative, aware, responsible members of society. Thus, he wrote in *Soka Kyoikugaku Taikei*: "As we move through the process of acquir-

Erich Fromm (1900–80), writing in our own time, supports Makiguchi’s insights in this regard when he describes the psychological and spiritual emptiness that leads a person to follow blindly the will of another person or group. He first observes that faith, whether in a religious, political or personal sense, can have two entirely different meanings, depending on whether it is used in the “having mode” or in the “being mode.” In the being mode, faith is, in essence, an inner orientation, an attitude. It is a healthy, thoughtful, caring approach to every aspect of life.



CORBISEITMAN

ing ever more knowledge, the subjective emotional elements give way to more rational considerations. We gain a certain distance from the charismatic figure as our consciousness of an underlying order grows more pronounced. The realization dawns that even that person we had so revered only shortly before is but one ordinary human being. At that moment, like a sunrise outshining the stars that appeared to gleam so brightly, the focus of that consciousness driving our very being shifts from person ... to the natural order and social laws that work equally for all without favor or discrimination.”

**R**ULE by persons, then, leads ultimately and inevitably to divisiveness, egocentric individualism, and strife in human affairs. But Makiguchi believed that as ordinary people—through creative, learner-centered, holistic educational experiences—gain awareness of their

alienation from the power that is rightfully theirs and realize the impotence of a divided, noncollective existence, they will be able to unite to seek release from their former bondage. Efforts to transform education should be viewed and understood in this context. Our present traditional educational systems were intentionally designed to strengthen and perpetuate rule by persons, even though on the surface they honor and proclaim the merits of rule by law. They were created in order to produce non thinking individuals capable of obediently and mindlessly carrying out the desires and wishes of those they recognized as their superiors. Not only Makiguchi, but more recently Alvin Toffler, Yoshio Kuryu and a host of other scholars and researchers have made this crystal clear and have described how it was accomplished in the early history of the industrially advanced societies, particularly Japan and the

United States.

A closer look at the implications of rule by law, as against the rule by persons that has characterized societies and their institutions during much of human history, will enable us to understand more clearly and to deal more intelligently with bullying, school drop outs, youth suicides, drug addiction, teenage gang behavior and the other daunting education-related problems our society is confronted with today. The counsel of Shakyamuni, and Makiguchi, to “heed the law, not persons” is especially relevant at this juncture in the history of human civilization. □

---

*Dr. Dayle M. Bethel is professor of education and anthropology at the International University, Missouri. Study of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi has been one of his chief concerns. He published Makiguchi the Value Creator in 1973.*

# Religions: Conflict and Resolution—An Educational Approach

By Aldo Visalberghi, Professor of Education,  
University of Rome La Sapienza, Italy



CORBIS BETTMANN

As palentological evidence shows, religion seems to be a spontaneous need of humankind. (Above) Stonehenge, a circular arrangement of prehistoric megaliths on Salisbury Plain, England, probably set up in the Neolithic period (c. 8000–3500 B.C.E.).

**C**ONFLICTS between human groups or communities have many different roots, both historical and in existing situations. But they reach tragic and bloody levels only when several factors interact synergistically in causing them. In most cases one factor is religious intolerance. Ethnocentrism, racial prejudice, country loyalty and land-owning ambitions, social class struggle and ideological polarization are also prominent factors. But very seldom, throughout history and in the contemporary world, can we find examples of cruel and inhuman conflicts

between large groups of people where the religious factor does not strongly operate. Bosnia, the Middle East, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Northern Ireland and Sri Lanka are among the most obvious examples. Note that in Sri Lanka the conflict is between Hindu Tamils and the Buddhist majority, in spite of the fact that Buddhists usually refrain from violence.

If the previous statements are correct (as I firmly believe), we must ask how it is possible that religion can play such a destructive role in human interactions. Religions usu-

ally preach peace and mutual understanding, hope in a happy future for all—usually for all “true believers.” And for others? During the ages of Enlightenment and humanism, the concept of “tolerance” did not imply real equality, but only advice to tolerate people who professed faiths different from the dominant one and not to persecute them. People not professing any faith (atheists) were often not to be “tolerated.” This was nonetheless an important achievement, of course, but was far from representing a general order of mutual understanding. Such an



Palestinian boys hurl stones toward Israeli security forces. "The most heated antagonism," Professor Visalberghi says, "is presently between Judaism and Islam, which are divided by mythical and ritual differences, but have a very large and common core of beliefs."

order would imply appreciation of religious faiths different from our own, and even of people not believing in any specific religion, but only in a general moral law. In some cultural spheres, such as China and in particular Japan, religious syncretism has largely developed. In Japan, for instance, one can be Shintoist and Buddhist at the same time. But even there in the recent past, religion and Buddhism repressed and even persecuted.

We have in the world a number of examples of syncretism, such as that in Brazil, between Christianity and old African polytheistic faiths. But in general we find that the paroxysms of conflict concern the monotheistic religions which, as the "religions of Abraham," have much in common: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The most heated antagonism is presently between Judaism and Islam, which are divided by certain mythical and ritual differences, but have a very large and solid common core of

beliefs. This can only be explained by considering that people tend to become emotionally attached to the ritual dimensions of religion rather than to its rational constructs.

#### Religion As Humanity's Spontaneous Need

**I**N order to understand all of this, I think we must go deeper in analyzing the anthropological foundations of religious experience. Otherwise it is difficult to see how education can overcome the potential and often tragic emergence of conflicts between different religious allegiances.

As palentological evidence shows, religion seems to be a spontaneous need of humankind, at least of Homo sapiens. The explanation is not difficult to understand even from a naturalistic point of view of human evolution. A key factor in people's survival lies in their capacity to imaginatively anticipate the consequences of their

own behavior. Other main traits that enhance this value are the capacity to learn through playful exploratory activities not directly useful in practice as well as strong pro-social attitudes and affective family links. Therefore, the human being is the only animal that: (1) worries about the uncertainty of the future; (2) is aware he will die, (3) is painfully stricken by the deaths of parents and relatives; (4) is inclined to conceive through his rich imagination some continuity of life beyond death, and also (5) finds relief and even gratification in the complex interplay of rituals, stories and legends (including funerary banquets) that accompany ceremonies related to death.

But life, not only death, is also an important impetus toward religious beliefs because (6) as social beings, humans develop a sense of responsibility toward other beings, and need rules from a parent-like authority. As *homo faber* (human as craftsman), (7) humans have developed

conceptions about cause-effect relations, and a Supreme Cause, of either personal or cosmic nature, seems necessary to them.

Religions, even the animistic ones, give answers to all or to a majority of the different needs listed above. They often promise to help believers in fulfilling their hopes and defeating their enemies. A frequent outcome of this last characteristic, which is certainly not essential to religion, consists in identifying enemies with "nonbelievers." And thus religion becomes one prominent factor of the warlike, often cruel and destructive, human group behavior.

#### Toward a "Common Faith" for Humanity?

CAN education prevent such a perversion of religions? Can it do this without denying any true religious value? I think this is possible and therefore a duty for all people involved in educational activities, first of all teachers and professors. But this is not an easy task. I refer to the list of seven natural human needs very sketchily outlined above. In order to make students fully aware of these, we should develop different subject matters in the framework of a large inter- and multi-disciplinary approach, possibly eliciting interests through research and problem-solving group work.

History (and particularly the history of religions), geography, civic and political concepts, natural history, evolution theory, anthropology, philosophy and even astronomy and cosmology would have their place in such an endeavor. But some families and religious groups in society are against such teachings. Fundamentalists with similar

attitudes exist among Jews, Muslims and also Christians. And even in many religious schools, both Koranic and Hebraic, closed sectarianism often prevails. Most fanatic "kamikaze" terrorists come from these.

HOWEVER, the recent trend of such perversion of religions does not represent the worldwide mainstream of religious life. On the contrary, recent decades, especially the last few years, have seen a series of more or less "official" initiatives oriented toward mutual acceptance and even cooperation among different faiths. Sometimes this involves only Christian denominations, sometimes all "the religions of Abraham," and has recently included virtually all of the world's religions, including Buddhism. The theologian Hans Kung has published a book, *Toward a Global Ethic (An Initial Declaration)*, about the common ethical rules adopted at the 1993 convention in Chicago of the unofficial representatives of about 100 different religions. More recently, at conventions in Assisi and Rome, official representatives of the major religions of the world agreed on a set of common values. In December 1995, several thousands of believers and nonbelievers convened in St. Giovanni in Laterano (the oldest cathedral in Rome) to compare their views on the question of world peace.

As long as such processes of interfaith dialogue continue to develop, formal education will have a successful lateral role in solving conflicts among religions, in affirming their right to diversity, within a context not only of full tolerance but also of mutual understanding and appreciation. This will also mean that the

spirit of secularization and laicism will no longer be in conflict with religion, and that the "common faith" proposed by John Dewey, the American philosopher and educator, and somewhat later by the English writer Aldous Huxley under Leibniz's expression "perennial philosophy," will permeate more and more of humanity. (As was recently mentioned in a lecture by Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, the founder of the association, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, was a deep admirer of Dewey's thought.)

Of course this is difficult to promote a "common faith" for humanity, its premise being a large, almost universal diffusion of the type of scientific knowledge specified above and the consequent attitudes of openmindedness and human brotherhood among people. A difficult task, but not a utopian one. My personal faith is centered on the possibility we have of achieving it. □

---

*Professor Aldo Visalberghi has taught at the Universities of Turin and Milan. Since 1942, he has been a professor of education at the University of Rome La Sapienza. He is the author of many books and articles on the philosophy of education. He has been one of the major advocates in Italy of experimental education, through the European Center for Education of which he was the director for many years, and as the coordinator of an interuniversity doctoral program of which he currently directs. He edits School and City, one of the most important Italian journals on education. He has promoted the study and translation of the works of John Dewey in Italy.*

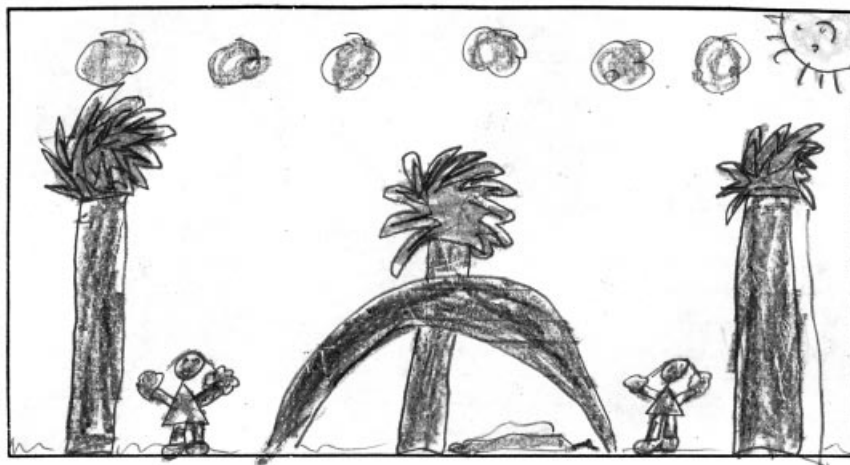
# The Arts: A Tool for Education

By Jeanne Alarcon  
Palm Desert, California



As an artist who has been practicing Nichiren Dai-shonin's Buddhism for about twenty years, I have found that my art background and faith are two of my best qualifications for the job I've undertaken recently—teaching elementary school; this year I taught my first class of second graders. People thought I should be glad to have my first paid summer vacation, but I wasn't so anxious to say good-bye to the children; I wondered if I had done all I could to prepare them for next year.

Our world has become increasingly complex—on the one hand there are students using computers at school and at home whose parents read to them while still in the womb. On the other there are students who live in poverty, who are never read to at home and who suffer from abuse or neglect. Many have trouble understanding English. This is where my practice of Buddhism has helped me, for I



*“We like Aundras Canyon and we saw a snake and we saw a palmtree and we saw the steam of water and it was a rattle snake and we saw a lizards and we fell in the water and some of are friends fell in the water to and we saw a orange lizard.”*

*—Stacey*



“If I were king  
this is how I  
would look  
and dress.”

Students on a field trip to San Andreas Indian Canyons in Palm Springs, Calif.

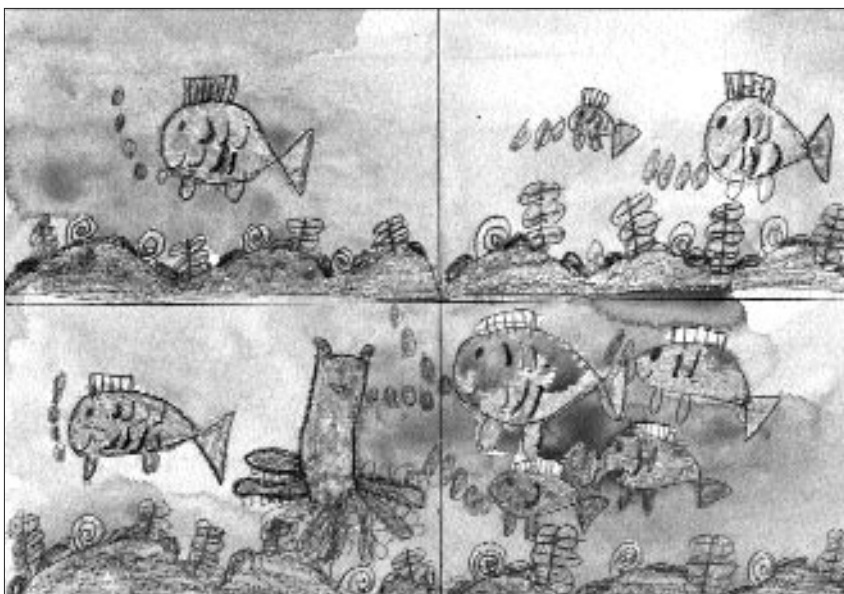
know that anything is possible for all students and their families, no matter what their backgrounds. I believe the answers lie in education, in cultural exchange through the arts and in respect for the dignity of each individual.

The arts can be a wonderful stimulus as well as an equalizer; not only are they enjoyable but they are powerful tools for education. Our lives are enriched by creativity—either by appreciating what others have created or by expressing ourselves in

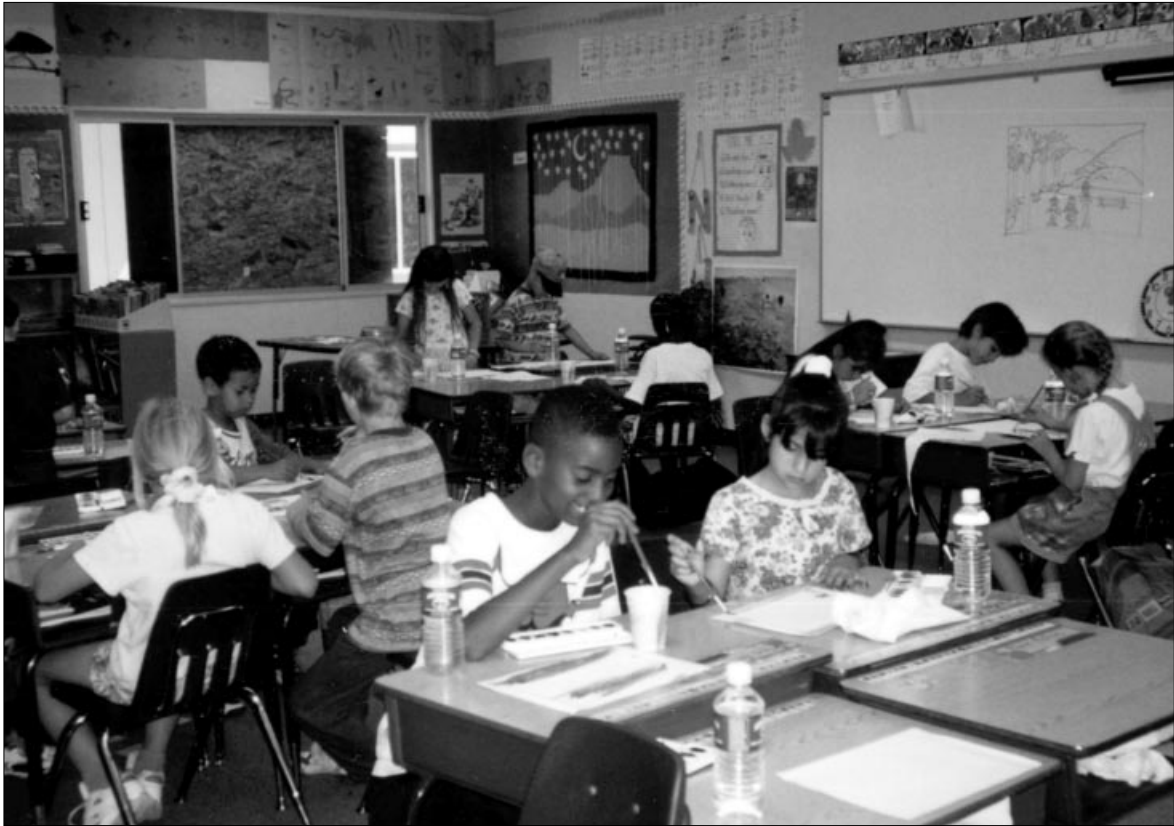
a creative manner. Through music, art, drama and dance, we can communicate with youth and they with us. Students begin enjoying actively participating in school even before they acquire basic reading and writing skills.

The school where I teach is located in a fairly remote community where the majority of the students are underprivileged. Many have never been read to until they attended school; at home they have no books, paper or pencils. They also experience a variety of distracting situations at home that children shouldn't have to deal with. But they do, and they come to school eager to find out what I have planned for them.

In the classroom, capturing and keeping my students' interest is the



This book report on rainbow fish shows sequencing: first the character, followed by the setting, the problem and the solution.



JEANNE ALARCON

Jeanne Alarcon's elementary class at Julius Corsini School.

most important part of my job as an educator. Almost any subject can be more stimulating if I present it in a way that adds interest and pleasure rather than “just the facts.” By using visuals and allowing my students to draw pictures to present their ideas, many details and explanations that are beyond their ability to communicate orally, much less through the written word, can be expressed and understood. Through play-acting, skits, puppet shows and so on, a lot of wonderful ideas can be shared.

In no way are any of these a substitute for reading, writing or arithmetic. But even when a student has a command of the written language, lessons can be enhanced in a number of ways through some form of art. For example, when students are asked to write a book report, it is

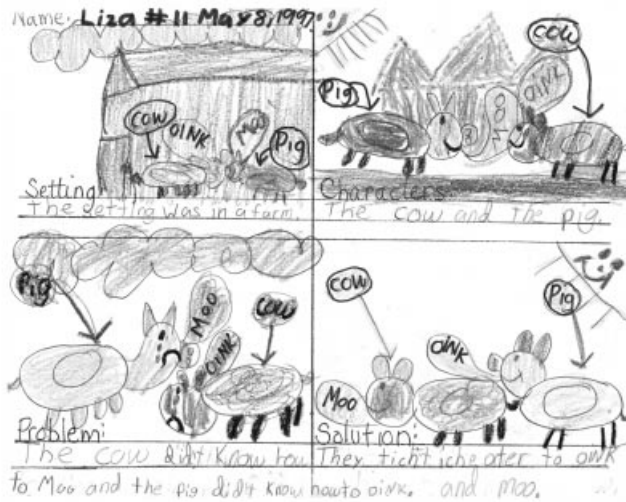
much more interesting if they also illustrate their favorite scene or write their reports on “cut-out shapes” of construction paper.

It is not necessary to have a background in art in order to put

these methods into practice. All the methods classes I took recently stressed finding something that appeals to the students to capture their interest first, then incorporating the heart of the lesson into a



How water is recycled.



A book report on *The Cow That Went Oink*.

particular project or activity. It is difficult to teach students if they aren't paying attention.

One of the challenges I face is encouraging students to write something original and creative. They always say, "But teacher, I don't know what to write."

I didn't invent the following idea but I've used it effectively. I give each student a copy of a tangram, a square divided into different shapes (squares, triangles, parallelograms) that can be used as a math lesson. The students cut and use these to create a flower, robot, bird, etc., that they incorporate into a drawing. Only after they tell one another about their picture do I ask them to write a story about their drawing. Some of the best creative writing all year came out of this project and the students loved it.

Another way I use art to teach is

"For Halloween I am going to be a witch. I like Halloween."

to conduct an art lesson in which I ask my students to divide their paper in quadrants and follow my instructions in drawing either straight lines, angles, curves or squiggly lines specifically where I tell them to. I explain to them that all drawing consists of these shapes. This exercise results in very unique drawings whose elements we label as mountains, lakes, rivers and the ocean, and can be a science lesson to teach about how water is recycled.

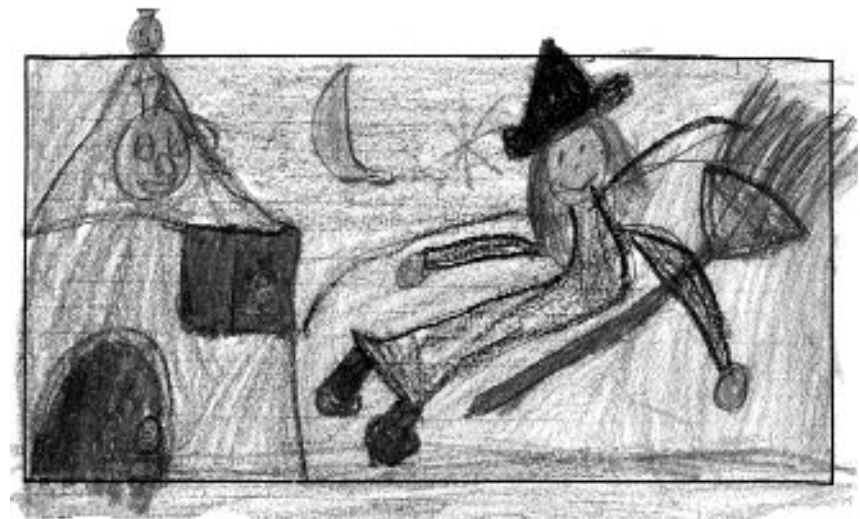
I also use a form divided into four sections that are labeled *char-*

*acters, setting, problem and solution.* There is a place to draw and a place to write in each section. I use it to teach the elements of a story and we do a book report together.

Song is another wonderful tool for capturing and holding students' interest. Using movement and dance makes it even more fun. Memorization can be fun when the information is put into a song. A story can be memorized if it is put to music. An entire social studies unit can be written into a performance and performed for parents. The students feel such pride that the ideas and information presented will never be forgotten. Even classroom skits and theater make the material more important to the students—what's important to them is what they will remember.

Some people may think much of this is a waste of time. Some say, "Back when I was a kid, we sat and listened or we got a ruler across our knuckles." Others will say that this is the age of technology and we need to feed them all the information they can use.

My students' faces and the progress they make tell me otherwise. □



# International Student Promotes Global Understanding

By Yuki Chen  
Pasadena, California



Yuki Chen (center) with classmates Abby Huang (left) and Nancy Wang in front of the Shanghai Petro Chemical Company Limited, one of ten companies in China they researched for their MBA project.

**A**s a student, I feel strongly about planting seeds toward global understanding. The better we understand the world, the more we can appreciate the differences and embrace ourselves. It is truly an advantage to cultivate a global vision in people as young as possible and nurture it throughout their lives.

As a first-year MBA (master of business administration) student at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles (USC), I

recently traveled with forty-nine other students to Shanghai, China — from April 26 to May 4— through a Pacific Rim program sponsored by USC; it was mandatory that first-year MBA students visit a Pacific Rim city to conduct an analysis of the business prospects of specific industries. With its strong economic growth, companies all around the world are rushing into China to grasp the best opportunities, bidding on long-term business contracts.

Shanghai, one of China's leading ports and a major commercial and manufacturing center, is said to become the most important center of finance, commerce and trade in the Far East and the Pacific Rim for the next century. While there I also had the great opportunity to visit Fudan University where we attended lectures on Chinese management style. (SGI President Ikeda lectured at Fudan University in June 1984; his lecture was titled "History Is Made by Human

Beings.” In it he said that the question “How should life be lived?” is a primary consideration for the Chinese when studying history.)

After sixteen hours flying over the Pacific Ocean, our group landed in Shanghai. On the way to the hotel, which took about an hour and a half, I was stunned by the endless row of skyscrapers on both sides of the beautiful, wide freeways. I also learned that construction of Shanghai’s new indoor baseball stadium that seats 100,000 people is nearing completion. The density of the populace is even more amazing; masses of people crossed the streets like busy bees swarming around a beehive and crowded the escalators in what seemed to be an endless chain of department stores.

The city has even more charm at night. My friends and I enjoyed the delicious Shanghai cuisine, the Hard Rock Cafe and, along the Huangpu River—one of the major branches of the Yangtze River—the magnificent buildings whose architecture is reminiscent of buildings in London, Berlin and Chicago. It was amazing to see the clubs filled with the local citizens who paid for tickets that cost the same as those in Los Angeles. The young people wear the latest fashions and use the most expensive foreign cosmetics. Each household has at least one color TV and two phone lines. Among college students, the Internet is popular—the world is becoming smaller and smaller.

It was truly exciting to see China turning around at the dawn of a new millennium and to walk on the land of unlimited potential and prosperity. Most important, I believe that with President Ikeda’s vision and hope for China’s future, I am thrilled to be on the pulse of

### Yuki Chen: My Greatest Treasure

I AM fortunate to be the third generation in our family that practices Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. My mother and I left Taiwan when I was 5 years old to visit my mother’s family in Osaka, Japan. I would watch my grandmother doing gongyo every day. She has been very devoted to her practice, which helped her in raising seven children through World War II and facing the early death of my grandfather.

My mother also practiced alongside my grandmother, although she struggled with it when she got married in Taiwan. But in 1983, when my two sisters and I moved to San Diego from Taiwan with my mother, we were reintroduced to the practice when two SGI members—one from Italy and the other from Japan—knocked on our door one day and shared their experiences in faith with us.

My greatest treasure since I started practicing this Buddhism is how I changed my outlook toward everything in life; I know I have developed a greater degree of compassionate and broad-mindedness. Also, I truly believe that everyone has the power to conquer each day with happiness and turn all hardship into nourishment and growth. Nothing can stop me from living a fulfilling life.

My practice helps me to understand other people, love them and learn from them;

everyone is so unique. My interest in people extends beyond any other interests.

As I look over writings authored by SGI President Ikeda, I am always inspired by his poem “To the Shining Queens of Youth,” which he dedicated to the young women’s division.

His 1997 peace proposal also stands out. What I have learned from it is that human beings turn a land of peace into tragedy due to misunderstandings, greed, hatred and fear. That is why human revolution is so necessary, to change from within—so that we can better understand one another, have the courage to communicate what we feel and learn from our differences.

For me, President Ikeda is the most influential person to plant the seed for a global vision in my life. His world is so big with his compassion transcending the universe. The more I travel, the more I appreciate the world and the more I understand people.

To me, global understanding is not only exciting but fulfilling. Once on a bus ride from France to Germany, I remember a French-Canadian lady who sat next to me. She told me that because of her passion for African culture, she had attended a school in France for two years to learn an African language. “Seeing is believing”—thus the firsthand experience of travel and making new friends on each journey stimulates me. □



Yuki Chen (second from right) at a restaurant in Shanghai with classmates from Argentina, South Africa, the United States, Taiwan and Japan.

exciting moments at the turn of the century of the Pacific Rim.

#### Involvement With AIESEC, an International Student Organization

IN my junior and senior years in college, I was intensively involved with AIESEC (Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales), which is the biggest international student organization in the world today. To join this organization, I had to pass a written test on international affairs; my skill in the English language and knowledge of the AIESEC organization and its history were also tested. I learned that AIESEC was formed in Europe after World War II when there was

a crucial need for youth committed to rebuild the continent—a student from Prague, Czechoslovakia, initiated an international student exchange program to promote understanding of other countries and their cultures. Later, in 1949, students from seven countries—Germany, Sweden, Belgium, Finland, France, Holland and Norway—gathered in Stockholm, Sweden, for the first AIESEC International Congress and determined their guidelines to build a peaceful world.

In 1992 while living in Taiwan, I was invited by the AIESEC committee of Nagoya University (Japan) to attend a weeklong conference. I made many new friends with students from twelve countries. One friend from Zimbabwe

told me that she can walk with the giraffes at sunset and see the elephants walking around close to her house. My Turkish friends really stunned me with how friendly and fun they are. So many people shared their uniqueness and made the international group fun, fun, fun! Then I participated in another exchange at Kobe University with AIESEC representatives from Moscow University.

In 1994, I had an opportunity to attend Braunschweig University in Germany as an exchange student and do an internship at a big firm, Brodde Trading GmbH. At the same time, I exchanged ideas with students from France, Switzerland, Mexico, Japan, Hong Kong and other parts of the world. Our discussions ranged from problems in

education and social welfare to women's status and role in the next century; we also discussed how we spend our leisure time and how the European Union is going to work. It was truly exciting to see problems from different perspectives; those that I thought were so crucial were not of concern to other students. It seems that each country gives different educational models that stimulate students to think in their unique ways.

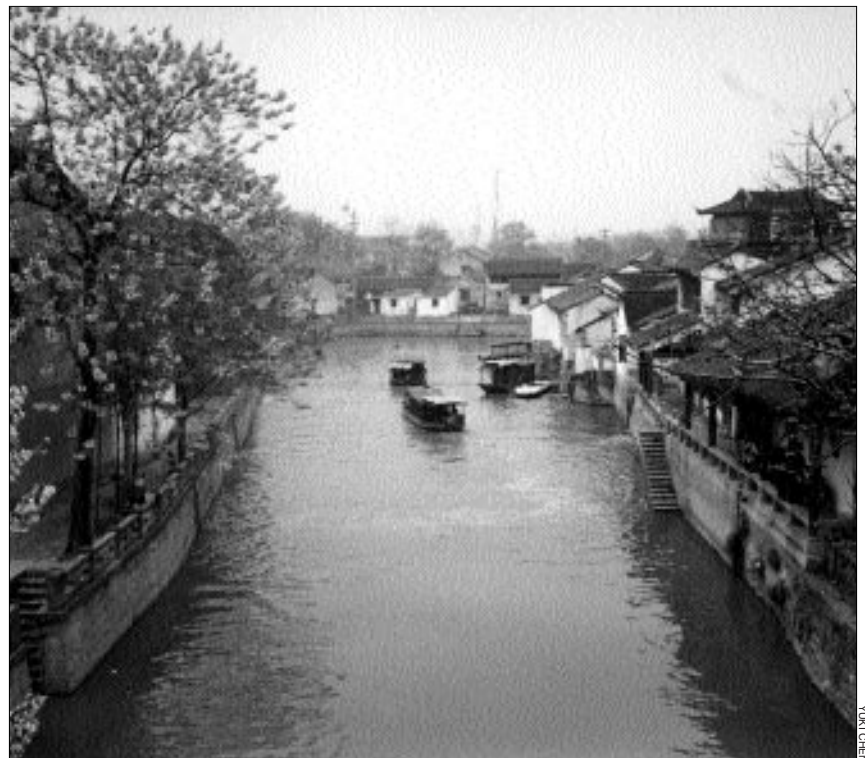
What inspires me the most is that AIESEC is an all-student-run, non-profit, non-political, independent, educational association composed of students and recent graduates of institutions of higher education who are interested in economics and management. Believing in the mutual respect for cultures and equality of all people, its purpose lies in contributing to the development of countries and their people with a commitment to international understanding and cooperation. Thus it creates opportunities for exposure and interaction among young people of different cultures and nations, and offers people the opportunity to interact with their social and economic environment and assist them in acquiring skills and knowledge through management education and practical experience. AIESEC also has a seat in the United Nations, and has local university committees in seventy countries (every three weeks it acquires a new member-university).

In a world full of cynicism and resignation, we truly need the fire to ignite the future with peace ambassadors and strong action-takers. At the dawn of the new century, I want to cheer everyone on, especially the young people, to bring peace and fulfillment to the world. The century is ours! □



JOE KAO

Downtown Shanghai, one of China's leading ports and a major commercial center.



YUKI CHEN

A serene suburb of Shanghai is reminiscent of another era.

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

*In this installment they discuss the significance of the teaching in the "Devadatta" (twelfth) chapter of the dragon girl's enlightenment, the Buddha's spirit to equally treasure all people and battle discrimination in society, and the greatness of the Lotus Sutra to enable people to construct lives of absolute happiness and help others do the same.*

**Takanori Endo:** This time, let's take up the enlightenment of the young lady known as the dragon girl,<sup>1</sup> which is described in the latter half of the "Devadatta" (twelfth) chapter.

**Haruo Suda:** The dragon girl is best known for having provided all women a model of attaining Buddhahood.

**Daisaku Ikeda:** The enlightenment of women is one of the key themes of the Lotus Sutra. For us, a group

of men, to discuss the enlightenment of women may prove quite a challenge.

**Katsuji Saito:** Yes. Let's do our best to treat this subject with sensitivity and earnestness and not make it one-sided. Otherwise, we'll certainly earn the ire of members of the women's and young women's divisions.

**Endo:** The real issue, a woman astutely pointed out to me, is not whether women can attain Bud-

dhahood, but whether men who skip gongyo can!

**Ikeda:** By the looks of it, I'd say that you've been fairly overwhelmed by the strong seeking spirit of the women's division.

President Hassan Gouled Aptidon of Djibouti, Africa, whom I met in 1995 (September 7), told me that should there ever be a war between men and women, he would have no problem deciding which side to take—that of the women.

# DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA



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



“You can count me in, too,” I told him.

When I mentioned this incident to Dr. Alexander Yakovlev of Russia and his wife (on April 25, 1996), Dr. Yakovlev remarked that before it came to a war, he would raise a white flag and surrender. Against a phalanx of women, men wouldn’t stand a chance, he said; humorously confiding that during fifty years of married life he had not once managed to sway his wife once she had made up her mind. They are a delightful couple who

have passed the seasons of their lives together.

From one standpoint, the discussion of the dragon girl in the “Devadatta” chapter is a tale about how arrogant men are defeated by women. Even Shariputra, known as the foremost in wisdom, is no match in faith for the dragon girl. It is also a grand declaration of human rights that refutes, by means of actual proof, ideas and beliefs that discriminate against women.

It seems that misunderstanding still lingers about the enlighten-

ment of women as taught in the Lotus Sutra. Let’s try to get an accurate grasp of the concept.

**The Dragon Girl’s Buddhahood  
Is Met with Disbelief**

At that time Shariputra said to the dragon girl, “You suppose that in this short time you have been able to attain the unsurpassed way. But this is difficult to believe. Why? Because a woman’s body is soiled and defiled, not a vessel for the Law. How could you attain the unsurpassed bodhi?”...

At that time the dragon girl had a precious jewel worth as much as the thousand-million-fold world which she presented to the Buddha. The Buddha immediately accepted it...

The girl said, “Employ your supernatural powers and watch me attain Buddhahood. It will be even quicker than that! (*The Lotus Sutra*, ch. 12, p. 188)

Suda: First, let’s consider the flow of the “Devadatta” chapter. After Shakyamuni completes his prophesy that the great villain Devadatta would attain enlightenment, one of the followers of Many Treasures Buddha (Jp. Taho), known as Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated, suggests to Many Treasures that they return home to the land of Treasure Purity. Wisdom Accumulated, judging from his name, must have been not only perceptive, but also highly intelligent. He must have thought that the teaching was finished, having just heard Shakyamuni preach the doctrine of the enlightenment of evil people and urge his followers to “make certain the Law will long endure” (LS11, 177), i.e., spread the Lotus Sutra after his passing.

**Endo:** But he was premature in coming to this conclusion. Shakyamuni had not yet finished his instruction.

**Ikeda:** That's right. There was more to the story, something even Wisdom Accumulated did not comprehend; namely, the doctrine of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form.

**Suda:** Yes. Thereupon, Shakyamuni Buddha says to Wisdom Accumulated, "Good man, wait a little while. There is a bodhisattva named Manjushri<sup>2</sup> here whom you should see. Debate and discuss the wonderful Law with him, and then you may return to your homeland" (LS12, 185). Manjushri, who had just arrived from the palace of the dragon king in the ocean where he had been spreading the Buddha's teachings, appears at the Ceremony in the Air accompanied by many bodhisattvas under his instruction. A discussion between Wisdom Accumulated and Manjushri ensues.

Wisdom Accumulated starts out by asking Manjushri, "When you went to the palace of the dragon king, how many living beings did you convert?" (LS12, 186) Manjushri explains that in the palace of the dragon king he had "constantly expounded the Lotus Sutra of the Wonderful Law alone" (LS12, 186), converting countless beings, and that the 8-year-old daughter of the dragon king heard the Lotus Sutra and immediately attained *bodhi*, or enlightenment.

Wisdom Accumulated doesn't believe a word of this. Convinced that Buddhahood can only be attained by bodhisattvas after they have carried out difficult and painful practices for immeasurable *kalpas*, he cannot believe that the

dragon girl could have attained Buddhahood in the brief time of Manjushri's stay at the dragon king's palace.

**Saito:** The Daishonin says in the Goshō that Manjushri's propagation at the palace of the dragon king took place during the short interval while Shakyamuni was expounding the "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (eleventh) chapter. He explains that the fact that Manjushri could convert many beings and that the dragon girl could attain enlightenment during that brief interlude is indicative of the power of the Lotus Sutra.

[Nichiren Daishonin writes: "And yet, contrary to all expectations, through the instruction of Monju [Manjushri], in the short space of time between the Hosshi ["Teacher of the Law" (tenth)] and Devadatta (twelfth) chapters when the Buddha was preaching the Hoto ["Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (eleventh)] chapter, in the midst of the ocean she [the dragon girl] attained Buddhahood. This was a most wonderful happening! If it had not been for the power of the Lotus Sutra, the foremost among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, how could such a thing have come about?" (MW-7, 38)]

**Ikeda:** Wisdom Accumulated obviously did not understand the power of the Lotus Sutra. That's why he couldn't believe it when he heard Manjushri relate that the dragon girl had attained Buddhahood in her present form.

Nichiren Daishonin says that such disbelief in the Mystic Law is a manifestation of "fundamental darkness." In this context, funda-

mental darkness means we have a mistaken notion about the true nature of our existence, and, ultimately, the potential of our own life. Also, the Daishonin characterizes the disbelief of Wisdom Accumulated as according with the "spirit of the specific teaching"<sup>3</sup> (cf. *Goshō Zenshu*, p. 746). In other words, Wisdom Accumulated represents the rather limited point of view that one can only attain Buddhahood by first passing through many stages of practice, for example, the fifty-two stages of bodhisattva practice.

By contrast, the dragon girl represents the perfect teaching of the Lotus Sutra. The dragon girl reveals with her life "new thinking" that flies in the face of the patriarchal old way of thinking. The "Devadatta" chapter can be likened to a "philosophical drama." It presents profound ideas in the form of a dramatic narrative with deep meaning. I think that is why one never tires of hearing it.

**Endo:** That's true. Before Wisdom Accumulated has even finished stating his disbelief, the dragon girl herself suddenly appears.

**Suda:** And what a dramatic entry it is!

**Endo:** She greets the Buddha, vowing that "the Buddha alone can bear witness to this [the fact of my having attained Buddhahood]. / I unfold the doctrines of the Great Vehicle [of the Lotus Sutra] / to rescue living beings from suffering" (LS12, 188).

**Ikeda:** "I unfold the doctrines of the Great Vehicle to rescue living beings from suffering"—these are notable words. It's a wonderful passage.

Manjushri, who had just arrived from the palace of the dragon king in the ocean where he had been spreading the Buddha's teachings, appears at the Ceremony in the Air accompanied by many bodhisattvas under his instructions.



She says, in other words: "Everyone might ridicule me. But that does not concern me in the least. The Buddha knows the truth. I will simply devote myself to helping people become happy through the power of the Mystic Law that has saved me." Attaining Buddhahood in one's present form means developing in oneself the Buddha's strong spirit to unhesitatingly lead all suffering people to happiness. It is to take action cheerfully and with composure to help those who are suffering, even though one might be subject to ridicule or discrimination. Those who carry out such a practice shine as Buddhas just as they are.

**Suda:** Still the men, hopelessly stubborn and missing the point, continue to express disbelief.

This time it is Shariputra who voices doubts after hearing the dragon girl's determination. There are two reasons for Shariputra's

disbelief. In the first place, Shariputra, like Wisdom Accumulated, has the fixed notion that the Buddha's enlightenment can only be attained by carrying out painful practices over an extremely long period of time. The second reason relates to the "five obstacles"; the view that a woman cannot become a (Brahma) heavenly king, a King Shakra,<sup>4</sup> a devil king, a wheel-turning sage king<sup>5</sup> or a Buddha. Therefore, he criticizes the dragon girl, declaring it impossible that in her form as a woman she could have quickly become a Buddha.

**Saito:** The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China says, "Shariputra argues employing the provisional teachings of the Tripitaka."<sup>6</sup> The Tripitaka, or Hinayana, are provisional teachings, in which the five obstacles are discussed.

**Endo:** In this "scene," Shariputra, as a proponent of the Hinayana teach-

ings, plays the role of "bad guy."

**Ikeda:** That the dragon girl has attained Buddhahood in her present form is a wonderful refutation of both the view that attaining Buddhahood requires practice over an extremely long period and the doctrine of the five obstacles.

**Suda:** Yes. Next the dragon girl takes up a jewel that the sutra says is equal in value to the thousand-millionfold world, a metaphor for the entire universe, and offers it to Shakyamuni, who accepts it immediately. The dragon girl then declares to Shariputra, who has watched this, that her own attainment of Buddhahood will be accomplished in less time than it took for her to present the jewel to Shakyamuni and for Shakyamuni to accept it.

**Ikeda:** This gesture, while highly symbolic, does indeed amount to a



The dragon girl takes up a jewel that the sutra says is equal in value to the thousand-millionfold world, a metaphor for the entire universe, and offers it to Shakyamuni, who accepts it immediately.

fundamental refutation of the previous, prevailing understanding about the nature of enlightenment. The “jewel worth as much as the thousand-millionfold world” represents the Mystic Law, which is the wellspring of the universe and of all life. We can also say that it symbolizes one’s own life, which is an entity of the Mystic Law. Offering the jewel to the Buddha means offering one’s own life, which is infinitely precious and irreplaceable. In other words, it is to devote one’s life, in the sense of the term *namu*;<sup>7</sup> it is to have faith.

The Buddha’s acceptance of the jewel indicates that the lives of the dragon girl and the Buddha have become one. In other words, by this action Shakyamuni provides actual proof of the dragon girl’s attainment of Buddhahood.

We could also say that the jewel is the jewel of *ichinen sanzen* (or three thousand realms in a single moment of life). By making

this offering to the Buddha, the dragon girl indicates she has awakened to the mystic principle of *ichinen sanzen*.

**Endo:** The “Ongi Kuden” (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) says: “At the time when the precious jewel was still in the hands of the dragon girl, it represented the attainments that were inherent in her nature. But when the Buddha accepted the precious jewel, it became representative of the attainments acquired through religious practice” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 747).

#### The Dragon Girl’s Enlightenment Means That Men Can Become Buddhas, Too

**Ikeda:** Everyone, men and women alike, possesses the “attainments inherent in her nature.” It is a jewel that exists in the lives of all living beings. This is the meaning

of the “mutual possession of the ten worlds” and *ichinen sanzen*; this is the Lotus Sutra’s fundamental revelation.

The ten worlds include the world of Animality. The dragon girl has the form of an animal, and naturally the world of Buddhahood is also inherent in the world of Animality. Her Buddhahood is invisible, however, to an eye that is colored by prejudice.

The Lotus Sutra teaches that all living beings possess the world of Buddhahood. There is not even a hint of discrimination toward women. If it were true that women could not become Buddhas, then the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* would fall apart. And to deny *ichinen sanzen* is to deny the possibility of anyone’s attainment of Buddhahood. Therefore, the dragon girl’s enlightenment signifies not only the enlightenment of all women, but the enlightenment of all men as well.

If there are men who deny the enlightenment of women, they are denying the possibility of their own attainment of Buddhahood. This is a point that male chauvinists seldom grasp.

**Saito:** Earlier when we discussed the enlightenment of voice-hearers and *pratyekabuddhas*, we noted that the bodhisattvas had thought that while they were capable of attaining Buddhahood, the people of the two vehicles<sup>8</sup> were not. But once they grasped the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*, it dawned on them that if the people of the two vehicles were incapable of attaining Buddhahood, then they, too, could not attain Buddhahood. For it would mean that the worlds of Learning and Realization in their own lives did not contain, and so could not manifest, the condition of Buddhahood. This parallels the case of the enlightenment of women.

**Suda:** “If others fail to attain Buddhahood, then I fail to attain Buddhahood. If others attain Buddhahood, then I attain Buddhahood, too” (GZ, 401). The bodhisattvas had failed to understand this.

**Ikeda:** They thought that whether or not other people could become Buddhas had nothing to do with their own attainment of Buddhahood. But to discriminate against others—in any way—is to discriminate against your own life.

Therefore, the dragon girl exhorts Shariputra and Wisdom Accumulated to: “Employ your supernatural powers and watch me attain Buddhahood” (LS12, 188). The Daishonin comments on this as follows: “Shariputra thinks she is referring only to her own attain-

ment of Buddhahood, but this is an error. She is rebuking him, saying in effect, ‘Watch closely! This is how you attain Buddhahood’” (GZ, 747).

**Endo:** Shariputra and Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated take quite a drubbing.

A bodhisattva, in the original sense of the term, is someone who has vowed to attain Buddhahood only after enabling all other beings to do so. Since half the people in the world are women, if women were incapable of attaining Buddhahood, then it would naturally follow that no bodhisattva could attain Buddhahood.

**Suda:** But the roots of discrimination run deep. It is very difficult to let go of one’s attachments to such views merely through logic and reasoning. In that sense, I think the purpose of the metaphors and analogies found in the “Devadatta” chapter is to drive home the principle of women attaining Buddhahood with actual proof.

**Ikeda:** That may be so. The dragon girl next transforms into a man, thereby, concretely revealing her attainment of Buddhahood.

**Suda:** Yes. She tells them, “Watch me attain Buddhahood,” and then straightaway turns into a man before everyone’s eyes. She immediately carries out all the practices of a bodhisattva and then proceeds southward to a land called Spotless World. To cause everyone to understand the actual proof of her enlightenment, she manifests the Buddha’s thirty-two features and eighty characteristics,<sup>9</sup> and preaches the Mystic Law to all people in that land. The beings of the *saha* world,

seeing her from afar, greatly rejoice and bow with deep reverence. And they, too, attain the stage of “no regression” and receive prophecies of future enlightenment.

Confronted with such actual proof, Bodhisattva Wisdom Accumulated and Shariputra “silently believed and accepted these things” (LS12, 189). This brings us to the close of the “Devadatta” chapter.

### The Dragon Girl’s Transformation Into a Man Is an Expedient Means

**Saito:** Regarding the description of how the dragon girl “in the space of an instant change[d] into a man” (LS12, 188), some have suggested that if she has to take on the form of a man in order to attain Buddhahood, then the Lotus Sutra still presents a discriminatory view of women.

**Ikeda:** That’s an incorrect reading of what happened. The dragon girl’s enlightenment indicates the principle of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form. You must remember that she had already become a Buddha in her female form.

The dragon girl’s changing into a man is nothing more than an expedient means that she employs to drive home the fact of her Buddhahood to Shariputra and the others, who were convinced only men could attain Buddhahood. It does not mean that a woman can only attain Buddhahood by first turning into a man. This has been clear from the first with Bodhisattva Manjushri’s introduction of the dragon girl.

**Endo:** It’s a bit lengthy, but since it’s an important passage I’ll read Manjushri’s remarks in their entirety:

"There is the daughter of the dragon king Sagara, who has just turned eight. Her wisdom has keen roots and she is good at understanding the root activities and deeds of living beings. She has mastered the dharanis, has been able to accept and embrace all the storehouse of profound secrets preached by the Buddhas, has entered deep into meditation, thoroughly grasped the doctrines, and in the space of an instant conceived the desire for bodhi and reached the level of no regression. Her eloquence knows no hindrance, and she thinks of living beings with compassion as though they were her own children. She is fully endowed with blessings, and when it comes to conceiving in mind and expounding by mouth, she is subtle, wonderful, comprehensive and great. Kind, compassionate, benevolent, yielding, she is gentle and refined in will, capable of attaining bodhi" (LS12, 187).

**Ikeda:** This truly describes the Buddha. I think we could say it also presents an ideal not only for women but for all human beings.

**Saito:** Since she has "thoroughly grasped the doctrines," "reached the level of no regression," possesses the compassion, wisdom and power to lead people to happiness, and is "capable of attaining bodhi," she has already in fact attained Buddhahood. The dragon girl herself says, "I have attained bodhi" (LS12, 188).

**Endo:** In terms of the ordinary view of attaining Buddhahood that we find in sutras expounded before the Lotus Sutra, the circumstances of the dragon girl would suggest

that, among all the Buddha's followers, she has the dimmest prospects of attaining Buddhahood. Namely, she (1) has the form of an animal; (2) is a woman; and (3) is very young in years, being only 8 years old.

Even if it were said that this dragon girl had become a Buddha, her outward appearance alone would have definitely prevented people from understanding and believing this. And so, for the benefit of Shariputra and the others, she manifests a form that will be convincing to those who are obstinate and a bit slow to understand. That is the reason for her changing into a man.

**Ikeda:** Indeed.

Speaking of women changing into men, we find similar accounts in many Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra. In light of the truth of nonsubstantiality (Jp. *ku*), which is one of basic principles of Mahayana Buddhism, for one to fixate on superficial differences between men and women is pointless and unnecessary from a doctrinal standpoint.

However, Shakyamuni must have foreseen that at the time there would be great resistance to the idea that women could become Buddhas in their present form.

**Endo:** Indian society at the time was highly discriminatory toward women. And in Buddhism, too, in the Hinayana teachings, discrimination toward women is very much in evidence. Therefore, it may be that by explaining that women would first become men and then attain Buddhahood, Mahayana Buddhism sought to cushion the blow, as it were, and make it easier for people to accept the idea of

women attaining Buddhahood.

**Suda:** The doctrine of women transforming into men could therefore perhaps be characterized as a "product of compromise."

**Ikeda:** That's certainly one side of the story.

Fundamentally, Buddhism views all living beings as individual manifestations of a single great, golden life. This is the truth to which Shakyamuni had become enlightened. This is what is illustrated by the principles of dependent origination and nonsubstantiality. This, in essence, is the Mystic Law. From this enlightened standpoint, it would be ludicrous to assert that one sex is superior to the other.

However, in order to cause that Law to spread and take root in society, the Buddha had to consider how to explain it in terms people would accept. Under certain circumstances, Shakyamuni, while fundamentally determined to teach the Law "according with the Buddha's own mind," had to employ wisdom and adapt his teaching to the capacities of his listeners simply to get a hearing; he had to draw others gradually toward his own enlightened state of life.

The explanation we find in Mahayana sutras of women turning into men could, therefore, be seen as a revolutionary doctrine refuting the Hinayana notion that women could never become Buddhas.

**Saito:** Had Shakyamuni simply told people the truth from the outset, the resistance would have been too great. When he expounds the Lotus Sutra, he declares for the first time the teaching "according with the Buddha's own mind" that

The dragon girl's changing into a man is nothing more than an expedient means that she employs to drive home the fact of her Buddhahood to Shariputra and the others, who were convinced only men could attain Buddhahood.



women can attain enlightenment without changing form.

**Ikeda:** The problem, however, is that when explanations are tailored to the biases of society in this fashion, there is a danger that even people of sincere faith will become attached to those biases, leading to a distorted interpretation of the teaching. The effect often is that when a distorted teaching gets handed down it does nothing but exacerbate and harden the discriminatory attitudes of society. If we were to trace the historical view of women in Buddhism, we would probably find many such instances.

**Endo:** I think so. The five obstacles that Shariputra mentions are a good example.

This doctrine is thought to have appeared after Shakyamuni's passing during the period when Hinayana Buddhism (the Theravada school) prospered. Monks and

the Buddhist order became highly authoritarian; and, in a reflection of the bigotry of Indian society at the time, there was open discrimination against women and lay people. Many of the Buddhist monks were from Brahman families; and it may be that their inability to completely discard the discriminatory and elitist assumptions of their class was a factor in Hinayana Buddhism taking on such a discriminatory character.

#### Shakyamuni Fought Discrimination in Society

**Suda:** Discrimination against women goes directly against the spirit of Shakyamuni. Indian society in Shakyamuni's day was disparaging toward women in the extreme. The Brahman scriptures, too, teem with abuse and vilification of women.

In such an age, Shakyamuni did not discriminate against women in

the least. After deliberating the matter, he allowed women to become nuns and carry out monastic practice. And both Mahaprajapati, who had raised him, and Yashodhara, his wife from before renouncing the world, became nuns. This is said to have been a landmark development for the time.

**Endo:** That's because in Brahmanism only men could take up the monastic life.

**Suda:** In Buddhism, however, during Shakyamuni's lifetime and the period shortly after his death, many women left secular life and were active in the *sangha*, (the Buddhist order). We get a glimpse of the situation at the time from a Pali text titled the *Therigatha*, or *Confessions of Nuns*.

In the epilogue, the renowned Japanese Buddhologist Dr. Hajime Nakamura writes: "The appearance [in Buddhism] of an order of nuns



There is a famous saying: "Not by birth does one become an out-caste, not by birth does one become a brahman. By (one's) action one becomes an outcaste, by (one's) action one becomes a brahman."

was an astonishing development in world religious history. No such female religious order existed in Europe, North Africa, West Asia or East Asia at the time. Buddhism was the first tradition to produce one."<sup>10</sup>

The women who became nuns had a variety of different backgrounds. Dr. Nakamura explains:

Formerly, when they lived in the secular world, the nuns had been ordinary women. Living in a polluted age, they had fully experienced the pain and hardship of life in this world. Some had lost husbands, some had lost children, some had been ostracized, and some had been so destitute that they had only just managed to survive. Some had experienced bad luck with men, and been married a number of times, only to have the relationship always end in disaster. And there were women who were

simply poor and ill-fated.... There were also women who had at one time determined to take their own lives on account of the overwhelming hardships they faced."<sup>11</sup>

Of course, the order also included women who had been wealthy, and who had been endowed with intelligence and beauty. But even such women could not avoid the suffering of aging and the problem of death. Shakyamuni taught many such women the path to happiness.

**Ikeda:** People's worries are still the same.

Since Shakyamuni did not discriminate between cloistered and lay people, he also taught laywomen the path to happiness. Shakyamuni's laywomen followers included Vaidehi, the wife of King Bimbisara of Magadha and mother of Ajatashatru; and Shrimala, the queen of Ayodhya, an ancient city

in central India. But Shakyamuni treated these prominent women the same way he treated women from ordinary backgrounds.

There is a famous saying: "Not by birth does one become an out-caste, not by birth does one become a brahman. By (one's) action one becomes an outcaste, by (one's) action one becomes a brahman."<sup>12</sup> In a fiercely discriminatory society, Shakyamuni staunchly refused to allow his actions to be colored by distinctions of class, gender and birth, or of lay and cloistered. As a result, he was seen as a dangerous person by conservative elements of society who stood by the status quo.

**Endo:** At the outset, the samgha pulsed vibrantly with Shakyamuni's spirit of equality. A nun gives an account of calmly rebutting someone who had been whispering that women could not attain enlightenment. Pointing out that

women are able to quiet their minds, manifest wisdom and attain awakening, she asks, "How is it possible, then, that being a woman could be an obstacle to attaining enlightenment?"<sup>13</sup>

Teachings of Shakyamuni that seem to back up the words of this nun have also been handed down. One text cites him as saying: "There are differences between men and women, but there is no basis for discriminating among people in terms of the essential nature of life. Just as a man can practice the Way and attain enlightenment, if a woman practices and passes through the necessary courses of the heart, she will without a doubt arrive at enlightenment."<sup>14</sup>

**Ikeda:** Whether male or female, being noble or base depends entirely on what a person has done. It is one's actions and sincerity that count. That is Shakyamuni's spirit.

**Saito:** Early Buddhist texts attribute various negative statements regarding women to Shakyamuni. But these are thought to have been intended, rather, as admonitions to help male practitioners avoid being distracted.

**Endo:** Certainly, some point to the fact that Shakyamuni's teachings to monks and nuns regarding women are completely different from those addressed to lay people. Even if that's true, I think it would be a mistake to conclude that the Buddha was prejudiced against women. Shakyamuni's teachings to monks and nuns were obviously intended to help them maintain a strict practice.

**Suda:** Monks had 250 precepts, but

nuns had many more—348 or, according to some sources, five hundred. I think the fact that things were stricter for women could be related to the social conditions of the day.

**Ikeda:** At the least, we can say that there is some uncertainty as to how much the early Buddhist sutras represent what was truly in Shakyamuni's heart. In any event, it is a fact that Shakyamuni allowed women to take clerical vows and to carry out strict practice. The major premise of carrying out Buddhist practice naturally is that you can attain enlightenment. If that were not possible, he certainly would not have allowed women practitioners. From this alone, we get a sense of Shakyamuni's egalitarianism.

In Confessions of Nuns, there are many instances of nuns expressing their joy in attaining the state of inner calm and tranquillity that Shakyamuni taught: One says, "My heart was liberated."<sup>15</sup> Another says, "I have fully understood and cast aside the roots that give rise to all sufferings."<sup>16</sup> And a third nun says, "I have in fact awakened to peace of mind and have glimpsed the mirror of the truth."<sup>17</sup>

**Suda:** During the age when Hinayana Buddhism flourished, this original spirit of Shakyamuni all but disappeared. Generally speaking, Hinayana Buddhism deified Shakyamuni as a superhuman being. It asserted not only that most people could not become Buddhas, but that unless you were a monk you could not even attain the state of arhat, the highest enlightenment of voice-hearers. And it blatantly discriminated against both lay people and women.

The doctrine of the five obstacles is thought to have appeared at that time.

**Endo:** The decline of monastic Buddhism was evident already during the reign of King Ashoka, just a hundred years after Shakyamuni's death.<sup>18</sup> Hinayana Buddhism had strong authoritarian and discriminatory leanings, and had lost Shakyamuni's spirit. By contrast, a new current of Buddhism, known as Mahayana, gave rise to a "renaissance" aimed at returning to Shakyamuni's original spirit.

The Mahayana sutras explain women's attainment of Buddhahood in a variety of ways. For example, the Sukhavativyuha, which is variously translated as the "Sutra of the Buddha of Infinite Life" (Jp. Muryojukyo) and "Great Sutra of Amida Buddha" (Jp. Daiamidakyo), give "causing women to be reborn in the pure land" as one of Amida's vows. However, the idea was that women would be reborn in the pure land not as women but as men.

Also, the Shrimala Sutra (Jp. Shomankyo) and Vimalakirti Sutra (Jp. Yuimakyo), which emphasize the doctrine of nonsubstantiality, assert that to distinguish between men and women is itself an illusion and meaningless, and criticize the Hinayana teachings' discrimination against women.

**Saito:** Many other Mahayana texts similarly explain that women can attain Buddhahood after first transforming into men. These include the Hoshaku Sutra (Jp. Hoshakukyo), the Sutra of Great Assembly (Jp. Daijukurkyo), and the Wisdom Sutras (Jp. Hannyakyo). On the surface, the explanation of the dragon girl turning into a man in the "Devadatta" chapter can be

seen as an extension of these other Mahayana sutras.

But the Lotus Sutra teaches the principle of attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. In other words, it does not present changing into a man as a condition for women to attain Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra, therefore, fundamentally differs from these other texts.

**Ikeda:** The Lotus Sutra teaches that men and women are equal both in enlightenment and in practice. For example, the "Teacher of the Law" (tenth) chapter says, "These good men and good women should enter the Thus Come One's room, put on the Thus Come One's robe, sit in the Thus Come One's seat, and then for the sake of the four kinds of believers broadly expound this sutra" (LS10, 166). This amounts to a declaration that men and women are equally qualified to expound the Law in the Buddha's stead.

In the "Encouraging Devotion" (thirteenth) chapter, Shakyamuni bestows prophecies of future enlightenment upon a multitude of women. And the people to whom Bodhisattva Never Disparaging (Jp. Fukyo) bows in reverence (acknowledging their inherent Buddha nature), saying, "I have profound reverence for you, I would never dare treat you with disparagement or arrogance" (LS20, 266–67), include both laymen and laywomen, priests and nuns. The premise, here, naturally is that women equally can attain Buddhahood.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "The attainment of Buddhahood by women is not permitted except in this sutra" (GZ, 472), in reference to the Lotus Sutra. And:

When she [the dragon girl] attained Buddhahood, this does

not mean simply that one person did so. It reveals the fact that all women will attain Buddhahood. In the various Hinayana sutras that were preached before the Lotus Sutra, it is denied that women can ever attain Buddhahood. In the Mahayana sutras other than the Lotus Sutra, it would appear that women can attain Buddhahood or be reborn in the pure land. But they may do so only after they have changed into some other form. It is not the kind of immediate attainment of Buddhahood that is based on the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life [*ichinen sanzen*]. Thus it is an attainment of Buddhahood or rebirth in the pure land in name but not in reality. (MW-2, 152 [176])

**Endo:** The idea was that women could only become Buddhas after first changing their form, i.e., transforming into men. This notion reveals a lack of understanding of the doctrines of the mutual possession of the ten worlds and of *ichinen sanzen*. Without a correct understanding of the true entity of life, or *ichinen sanzen*, any claims of attaining Buddhahood or gaining rebirth in the pure land are just words without any substance — empty promises. That's why the Daishonin says that this is attainment "in name but not in reality."

**Suda:** In Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, there is equality of the sexes through and through. In one famous passage the Daishonin says, "There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they

men or women" (MW-1, 93). He also says, "a woman who embraces this sutra not only excels all other women but also surpasses all men" (MW-5, 157).

**Saito:** Nichiren Daishonin gave some women the honorific titles of "sage" and "saint," such as Nichimyo Shonin (Saint Nichimyo) and Konichi Shonin (Konichi the Sage). This is still further evidence of the Daishonin's liberality.

**Ikeda:** The Daishonin's actions in this regard stand out as very much the exception in Japanese society and the Buddhist world of his day. Probably no other Buddhist figure of the time praised and respected women as highly as did the Daishonin.

**Suda:** At the time, women were prohibited from entering Mount Hiei and Mount Koya,<sup>19</sup> as well as Todaiji and Daigo-ji, the state-supported temples of the old Buddhist schools. Unlike these traditional schools, the Nembutsu (i.e., Pure Land) and Zen schools and other so-called new Buddhist schools of the Kamakura period (1185–1333) addressed the issue of the salvation of women; but they taught that to attain Buddhahood or gain rebirth in the pure land women had to first be reborn as men.

**Ikeda:** By contrast, the Daishonin declared, "Are not all practitioners of the Lotus Sutra, both men and women, World-Honored Ones?" (GZ, 813) In this we see his greatness.

#### The First Person in Japan To Leave Secular Life Was a Woman

**Saito:** As a matter of fact, it was not the case that women had always

The important thing is that both women and men become happy as human beings. Becoming happy is the objective; everything else is a means. Anytime someone decides the way people ought to be...what good is it if in the implementation people become miserable?



been excluded from Buddhism in Japan. For example, the first person in Japan to renounce secular life and take Buddhist vows was a woman.

**Ikeda:** That was the nun Zenshin-ni.<sup>19</sup>

**Saito:** Yes. She is thought to have been the daughter of Shiba Tatsuto, who came to Japan from China (in A.D. 522). Zenshin-ni became a nun in 584. There were two others who took their vows at the same time; and it seems that they, too, were women. I think this could be taken as evidence that there was little if any discrimination against women in early Japanese Buddhism.

**Endo:** It seems that women on the whole enjoyed high status in Japanese society around that time (between the sixth and eighth cen-

turies), because there was also a succession of empresses.

**Saito:** During the Nara period (710–794), temples for nuns were built in provinces throughout the realm. The famous Hokke-ji in Nara was one such temple. The nuns at these temples, known as “Temples of the Lotus Sutra for the Expiation of Sin,” were supposed to pray for women’s peace and security through the benefit of the Lotus Sutra. However, this institution declined after the ninth century, and the nunneries were either abandoned, turned into monasteries for monks, or became branches of major temples.

**Suda:** In attempting to account for this, I think we have to consider Buddhism’s development into a kind of national ideology, as well as its relation to the indigenous Shinto tradition. In any event, as in

India, we see that in Japan, too, the original egalitarian spirit of Buddhism proved extremely difficult to maintain.

**Ikeda:** We have to make continuous and unceasing efforts to return to the prime point and to the spirit of the founder. Religion ultimately comes down to people. The character of a religion is determined by the character of its adherents.

Also, from another angle, change is continuous. The present patriarchal society will not — must not — continue indefinitely.

**Saito:** Looking at the broad sweep of history, before the start of the common era, we find evidence of an extremely long period, in excess of several millennia, during which human society was predominantly matriarchal. Thereafter, society became patriarchal. By comparison, the period of patriarchal soci-



In the case of the enlightenment of evil people, the issue of good and evil pertains to the heart; that is, being good or evil does not make one physically different from anyone else.

ety has so far been of much shorter duration.

**Ikeda:** In the future, rather than a situation where either one sex or the other dominates society, it will be necessary to develop a completely new civilization in which there is balance and harmony between the sexes.

Nichiren Daishonin's teaching is thoroughly egalitarian. For instance, the Daishonin says that "all living beings possess the virtuous nature of the dragon girl" (GZ, 798). In that sense, the dragon girl represents all people. That's why the dragon girl proclaims that her attainment of Buddhahood is also Shariputra's attainment of Buddhahood.

#### First Strive to Shine as a Human Being

**Endo:** How, then, does Buddhism see the difference between men

and women? I understand the aspect of equality of the sexes — the fact that men and women alike are entities of *ichinen sanzen*. And yet, the existence of various differences between men and women is a reality.

**Suda:** In terms of gender differences, it has often been said that women, for example, are far more perceptive than men; which might explain why women are so much quicker than men to see through lies and deceit.

**Endo:** Whatever else may be said, the ability to bear children is an exclusive characteristic of female sexuality. Because women are directly involved with giving birth to life, some view women as being in some sense more closely connected to the real essence of life.

**Saito:** Researchers in the field of depth psychology have investigated

the characteristics of men and women fairly extensively. For example, the Jungian psychologist Dr. Hayao Kawai says that the maternal principle manifests in the faculty to embrace all things equally; whereas the paternal principle is evident in the faculty to divide and analyze things in terms of dualisms like subjective and objective, and good and evil.<sup>20</sup>

**Ikeda:** There are many different points of view. The key issue, however, is whether these differences, finally, are genetic or acquired. That is, are they universally held in common by people in all ages and all societies? Or are they acquired in life due to the culture and traditions to which people are exposed? When it comes to any particular trait, determining to which category it should be attributed is very difficult. I hope future studies will shed light on the matter.

In the meantime, an American

researcher points out that while men are raised from childhood to risk danger, women are encouraged to seek safety. She writes:

If a girl seeks out danger, people think that she wants to be like a boy. Even [the Austrian psychiatrist] Alfred Adler [1870–1937] says that a girl who climbs trees wants to imitate boys. It doesn't occur to him that girls might also find it interesting to climb trees. Nor does he realize that by seeking out danger as boys do, girls can develop independence.<sup>21</sup>

It is a fact that the images of “masculinity” and “femininity” we have in our consciousness are deeply influenced by cultural traditions that have developed over long periods of time. And the influence of these traditions thoroughly pervades every aspect of the social ethos, including language, religion, systems of organization, education and scholarship. Therefore, it seems to me that the important thing is not that society come up with a particular model for how men and women ought to behave, but that people first and foremost make tenacious effort to live as decent human beings, and allow others to do the same.

In Buddhism, too, there are various explanations about the roles of men and women. But these naturally are colored by the views of men and women that were prevalent at the times and in the societies where these teachings were expounded. They cannot be taken as having universal application. The important thing is that both women and men become happy as human beings. Becoming happy is the objective; everything else is a means.

Anytime someone decides the way people ought to be, no matter how correct the idea might seem, what good is it if in the implementation people become miserable? Nor is it possible that only one sex could become happy at the expense of the other.

**Endo:** I see. In other words, it's enough that men and women, through cultivating their humanity, come to exhibit the hues of masculinity and femininity that naturally permeate their lives.

**Suda:** One of the books that sparked the postwar movement for gender equality in the United States was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, which was originally published in 1963.

In the first chapter, which is titled “The Problem That Has No Name,” Friedan paints a picture of the suffering of many women in a climate where a woman was expected to be “concerned only about her husband, her children, her home.”<sup>22</sup> She writes:

Sometimes a woman would say “I feel empty somehow ... incomplete.” Or she would say, “I feel as if I don't exist.” Sometimes she blotted out the feeling with a tranquilizer.”... [She described her symptoms:] “A tired feeling ... I get so angry with the children it scares me ... I feel like crying without any reason.”... Sometimes a woman would tell me that the feeling gets so strong she runs out of the house and walks through the streets. Or she stays inside her house and cries.<sup>23</sup>

**Endo:** Middle-class American women in the 1950s were associated

with a lifestyle of brightness and abundance featuring such amenities as large lawns and gardens, and labor-saving electronic appliances. It seems to me that this was the stereotype that was conveyed even in Japan. But behind this facade, there were many who suffered owing to a spiritual void in their lives.

**Suda:** I think that reaction to the tendency to try to make women fit a particular stereotype played a major role in inspiring the movement for gender equality. The purpose must always be the genuine happiness of individuals.

**Saito:** Because there is also a great deal of diversity among women, there is sure to be a certain amount of difference of opinion. In Christianity, there is a school known as “feminist theology” that is the focus of considerable attention. Proponents criticize the tendency of mainstream theology to accord superior status to men, and argue that church teachings have been used by men as a tool to control women.

**Endo:** Identifying the concept of “God the Father” as the wellspring of discrimination against women, some assert that the deity should instead be referred to as “God our Mother and Father.”

**Saito:** Such revisionist movements certainly have their critics, but it seems to me that the sincerity of their proponents is commendable.

### Women and Men: From Opposition to Harmony

**Ikeda:** From the standpoint of life's eternity, distinctions of male and female are not set in stone. Rather,

we may be born as a man in one life, and as a woman in another. Moreover, all people have both male and female sides.

**Suda:** Physiologically, all people are born with both male and female hormones.

**Ikeda:** That's indeed a clear illustration. The point is that we must learn to balance these two sides. That's an important part of becoming a mature and self-actualized individual. In other words, if a man only possesses so-called "masculine" traits, he will be a boor. To be well-rounded, we need to give play to our feminine qualities as well; for example, we need to cultivate the sensitivity and openness to be able to understand another person's heart. By the same token, it's not enough for a woman to possess only so-called "feminine" traits. Otherwise she will not be able to bring her life to fruition.

In any society, certain qualities will be sought in men and in women according to the standards of that society. And the more closely people try to match those stereotypes, the more other traits within them will tend to be repressed.

That people will try to match such cultural norms might to some extent be inevitable. But wouldn't it be better if men and women both, recognizing the sort of gender-typing that is going on, instead strove to learn from each other and round-out their own character? I think that part of the significance of marriage lies in such self-completion. This is not, of course, to say that to develop character one has to be married.

**Endo:** A psychologist has said: "For both men and women, opposing fac-

tors of day and night, above and below, patriarchal and matriarchal consciousness fuse together; they complement each other, each gender manifesting its own productivity, and bring it to fruition together. Only then is wholeness attained."<sup>24</sup>

#### Poets Who Sought the Feminine

**Ikeda:** Since my youth, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Goethe's *Faust* have continued to hold a strong attraction for me. Both of these works, which I have spoken of on numerous times in the past, portray a certain longing and admiration for the feminine.

Needless to say, in the *Divine Comedy*, Beatrice (Dante's first love) is presented as a "star" to guide the character Dante to the world of heaven; and Mary, the mother of Christ, also figures prominently. Incidentally, it has been argued that the belief in Mary answers a need of Christians for the sanctification of the feminine.

**Endo:** Christianity on the whole is a religion in which the masculine side is the more pronounced. It has been suggested that the cult of Mary may have arisen to supplement this dominant aspect.

**Ikeda:** Perhaps Dante, for the sake of his own completion as a human being, required an ideal image of the feminine; and found this in Beatrice.

The following famous lines conclude Goethe's *Faust*: "Woman, eternally, / shows us the way."<sup>25</sup> It may be that Goethe, as a man, kept seeking the "eternal feminine" in a spiritual struggle to become a complete human being.

The Buddha embodies the principle of *ichinen sanzen*, which is

the culmination of "human completion." In that sense, it seems significant that the "Devadatta" chapter explains both the enlightenment of evil people and the enlightenment of women.

#### Each Person Has the Nature of Both Devadatta and the Dragon Girl

**Saito:** Yes. As to why these are both explained here, some have argued that there is no logical connection between the chapter's first and second halves. But it seems to me that only when we put these two sides together do we get an image of the total human being. When we say that each person has both a masculine and a feminine side, doesn't this mean that both the "Devadatta" side and the "dragon girl" side within each person have to attain Buddhahood?

**Ikeda:** That's right. Nichiren Daishonin says, "Devadatta represents the spiritual aspect of enlightenment, and the dragon king's daughter, the physical aspect" (MW-2, 253 [301]). And, "Devadatta represents the principle that our earthly desires are enlightenment. The dragon girl represents the principle that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana" (GZ, 746). Since we have these two sides, when we attain enlightenment we do so in both body and mind.

**Endo:** In the case of the dragon girl, the main point is that she attains Buddhahood in her present, animal form. That's why her Buddhahood symbolizes the physical aspect of enlightenment.

In the case of the enlightenment of evil people, the issue of good and evil pertains to the

Certainly, whether we're talking about the destruction of nature or the tendency of science to reduce human beings to machines, it can be argued that a masculine tendency toward control is the root cause of many of modern society's ills.



heart; that is, being good or evil does not make one physically different from anyone else. I think this is why, if we contrast it with the case of the dragon girl, the enlightenment of Devadatta symbolizes the spiritual aspect.

**Suda:** "Earthly desires are enlightenment" indicates attaining Buddhahood on a spiritual level; whereas "the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana" is enlightenment on the level of the totality of our being, including our physical form. Putting these together, we get the enlightenment of life as an entity of oneness of body and mind. Therefore, the "Devadatta" chapter in its entirety expresses the Buddhahood of both the physical and spiritual aspects; of both masculine and feminine dimensions.

**Ikeda:** That's right. But this is definitely not just a matter of theory. Attaining enlightenment comes

down to the question of how deeply we can close in upon the essence of the self. While he was in exile on Sado Island, facing the greatest difficulties of his lifetime, Nichiren Daishonin turned inward to reflect upon himself as a human being. In the Goshō, "Letter from Sado," he writes:

Nichiren, ... in this life was born poor and lowly to a chandala<sup>26</sup> family. In my heart I cherish some faith in the Lotus Sutra, but my body, while outwardly human, is fundamentally that of an animal.... Since my heart believes in the Lotus Sutra, I do not fear even Bonten or Taishaku.... (MW-1, 37)

The Daishonin was an exile; he had no status, wealth or power. His situation was exactly opposite that of the powerful figures of the day who were persecuting him. He lacked adequate food, clothing and

shelter. All he possessed was his life. In truth, he had been stripped down to his bare humanity.

Under such circumstances, the Daishonin declares that his body is "that of an animal." Certainly, when we get right down to it, in our physical form we belong to the animal family. In that sense, therefore, the dragon girl's "enlightenment in animal form" represents our own enlightenment; it does not pertain only to women. At the same time, the Daishonin says that he "does not fear even Bonten or Taishaku." With his powerful spirit, and that alone, the Daishonin pitted himself against the immense power of the Kamakura shogunate. In conclusion, after further self-reflection, the Daishonin proclaims that, because he has thoroughly and sincerely dedicated himself body and mind to the Lotus Sutra, he will attain enlightenment in both body and mind, and is certain to become a Buddha.

The fundamental point of the “declaration of women’s rights” arising from the Lotus Sutra is that each person has the innate potential and the right to realize a state of life of the greatest happiness.... The goal is for each person, like the dragon girl, to set out on a voyage to attain absolute happiness, while helping those adrift on the sea of suffering do the same—without anyone being victimized.

**Saito:** He says, “Since Nichiren is making the same cause as Fukyo, he is certain to become a Buddha equal to Shakyamuni” (MW-1, 41).

**Ikeda:** The Daishonin here teaches that encountering and fighting to overcome great persecution is the key to actualizing the principle of attaining Buddhahood in one’s present form. This is the point we have to bear in mind when we read the “Devadatta” chapter; otherwise it becomes merely abstract theory.

#### Women Acting in Solidarity Can Change the Tenor of the Age

**Ikeda:** The so-called “masculine side” has both positive and negative aspects. For example, the free exercise of power is key to construction and growth; but under certain circumstances it can manifest as thirst for power or be expressed as violence and destructiveness. This latter certainly represents the actions of an evil person, a Devadatta. On the other hand, the capacity to embrace all things, which some have suggested is a characteristically feminine trait, may sometimes manifest as avarice or profligate consumption.

**Endo:** The female demon Kishimōjin<sup>27</sup> typifies this.

**Ikeda:** Attaining Buddhahood, that is to say, showing actual proof of the principles that earthly desires are enlightenment and that the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana, causes the positive aspects of the lives of Devadatta and the dragon girl to shine most brightly.

Further, because the dragon girl is a woman, she can more easily understand the sufferings of women and lead them to happiness. All of her sufferings as a woman fuel her ability to help others also attain enlightenment. Such is the power of the Mystic Law. Herein lies significance of the dragon girl’s attainment of Buddhahood.

The dragon girl, who was perceived as having virtually no chance of ever attaining Buddhahood because she was a woman, was very young, and had the body of an animal, was in fact the first to attain Buddhahood in her present form. This is very significant. The dragon girl’s enlightenment in an oppressively discriminatory society amounts to a ringing declaration of human rights.

The human rights declaration of the French Revolution (“The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen,” 1789) is well known. Yet it defines “people” as meaning only men. A woman named Olympe de Gouges (1748–93) criticized this document and in 1791 announced a

“Declaration of the Rights of Women and Female Citizens.” However, she was branded an “anti-revolutionary” and sent to the guillotine. She was one of countless people who have lost their lives in the effort to secure rights for women.

The fundamental point of the “declaration of women’s rights” arising from the Lotus Sutra is that each person has the innate potential and the right to realize a state of life of the greatest happiness. Our realizing such happiness will ensure that this noble history of sacrifice and struggle has not been in vain. The goal is for each person, like the dragon girl, to set out on a voyage to attain absolute happiness, while helping those adrift on the sea of suffering do the same — without anyone being victimized.

“All women have the right to become happy. They have to become happy without fail.” That is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra.

The term *dragon girl*, in combining the word *dragon*, which stands for her father, the dragon king, and *girl*, which stands for herself, the daughter, expresses the oneness of parent and child. The child, through attaining enlightenment, leads the parent to happiness.

The land where the dragon girl attains Buddhahood and leads others to happiness is called Spotless World. This suggests that when one

woman attains enlightenment, it causes her surroundings to turn into a world of purity and beauty. A solidarity of women who are awakened to the nobility of their own lives will doubtless change the tenor of the age and the very character of civilization. The SGI women's and young women's division members are the pioneers and nucleus for the development of such a solidarity. They are infinitely respectable. They are truly irreplaceable individuals who can answer the expectations of the people around the world.

The Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941) characterized modern civilization as a “civilization of power” dominated by men, and yearned for the development,

through the efforts of women, of a “civilization of the spirit” based on compassion.<sup>28</sup>

**Saito:** Certainly, whether we're talking about the destruction of nature or the tendency of science to reduce human beings to machines, it can be argued that a masculine tendency toward control is the root cause of many of modern society's ills.

**Ikeda:** In that sense, the “Devadatta” chapter contains important suggestions for transforming the very make-up of modern civilization. Simply put, it is a shift from a material civilization, to a civilization of life; and from a society of control, to a society of cooperation

and compassion.

I think that Bodhisattva Manjushri's words in praise of the dragon girl offer an important key to this transformation: “She thinks of living beings with compassion as though they were her own children” (LS12, 187). To compassionately embrace all living beings as one's own children—this is a state of life that all people, women and men alike, should strive to attain. Herein lies the true significance, for civilization and for the age, of the dragon girl's enlightenment. □

(To be continued)

*Illustrations by Larry Ashton*

1. Dragon king's daughter: The daughter of Sagara, one of the eight dragon kings said to dwell in a palace at the bottom of the sea.
2. Manjushri: A bodhisattva who plays an important role in the Lotus Sutra and other sutras. He is symbolic of the perfection of wisdom and is revered as chief of the bodhisattvas.
3. Specific teaching: One of the eight teachings in T'ien-t'ai's comparative classification of the Buddhist teachings. The eight teachings consist of four teachings of doctrine and four teachings of method. The four teachings of doctrine is a classification according to content and consists of the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, the specific teaching and the perfect teaching. These correspond to the Hinayana, the introductory Mahayana, the Mahayana teaching specifically for bodhisattvas, and the perfect teaching, which encompasses and unifies the other three.
4. Shakra: Originally the god of thunder in Indian mythology, he was later incorporated into Buddhism as a protective deity.
5. Wheel-turning sage king: An ideal ruler in Indian mythology. In Buddhism the wheel-turning kings are kings who rule by justice rather than force.
6. *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 8.
7. *Namu*: Or *nam*, the first syllable of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, which is a transliteration of the Sanskrit term *namas*, which means devotion.
8. People of the two vehicles: People of the Worlds of Learning (voice-hearers) and Realization (*pratyekabuddhas*).
9. The Buddha's thirty-two features and eighty characteristics: Extraordinary attributes described in the provisional teachings to represent the Buddha's wisdom, ability, compassion and so on.
10. From the Japanese translation of the *Therigata*: *Niso no Kokuhaku* (Confessions of Nuns), trans. Hajime Nakamura (Tokyo: Iwanami Bunko, 1982), p. 120.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
12. *The Group of Discourses* (Sutta-nipata), vol. 2, trans. K. R. Norman (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1995), p. 16.
13. *Ibid.*, *Niso no Kokuhaku*, p. 21.
14. Translated from Japanese: *Taishu Tagami, Bukkyo to Seisabetsu* (Buddhism and Gender Discrimination) (Tokyo: Tokyo Shoseki, 1992), p. 195.
15. *Ibid.*, *Niso no Kokuhaku*, p. 11.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–35.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
18. Two hundred years, according to some sources.
19. Mount Hiei and Mount Koya were the centers of the Tendai and Shingon schools, respectively.
20. Hayao Kawai, *Bosei Shakai Nihon no Byori* (The Pathology of Japan's Maternal Society) (Tokyo: Chuokoronsha, 1976), pp. 9–10.
21. Translated from Japanese: Grace Halsell, *Watashi ga Motometa Sozoinsei—Yume to Jiyu to Boken to* (Dreams, Freedom and Adventures: My Odyssey in Pursuit of a Creative Life), trans. Taoko Hori (Tokyo, Japan: The Simul Press, Inc., 1994), p. 73.
22. Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1963), p. 18.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.
24. Translated from Japanese: *Josei no Shinso* (The Psychology of the Feminine), Erich Neumann, trans. Yoichi Matsushiro and Teruo Kamata (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Shoten, 1980), p. 131.
25. *Goethe's Collected Works*, vol. 2, *Faust I & II*, ed. and trans. Stuart Atkins (Cambridge, MA: Suhrkamp/Insel Publishers Boston, Inc., 1983), p. 305.
26. *chandala* (Candala): A Sanskrit term designating the lowest social class, comprising those whose profession required them to kill living creatures. The Daishonin was born to a family of fishermen.
27. Kishimojin (literally, “Mother of Devil Children”): A demon whose children are known as the ten demon daughters. Said to have fed her children the babies of others, she symbolizes the selfish nature of a mother who protects her own offspring but cares nothing for other children. In the Dharani (twenty-sixth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, she and her daughters pledge to protect the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.
28. Cf. Rabindranath Tagore, *Personality* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1921), pp. 172, 182–83.

# DAISAKU IKEDA'S RECOLLECTIONS OF WORLD FIGURES





With a promise to promote cultural exchanges between their two countries, SGI President Ikeda and Dr. Jutta Unkart-Seifert reunited October 1995.

SHIRO PRESS

**Jutta Unkart-Seifert  
— Undersecretary  
of the Austrian  
Federal Ministry of  
Education, the Arts  
and Sports**

SHE is a person who lives life to the fullest. A singer and a government official. A doctor of philosophy and a warm, home-loving individual. When I think about the energetic life of Dr. Jutta Unkart-Seifert, undersecretary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Sports, two things come to mind — her unaffected smile and one particular scene from her past.

A small girl arrives at a cemetery in Vienna, leading her blind father by the hand. He is a professional vocalist, but in order to earn extra money for his family, he has taken a job singing at funerals. His daughter, although very young, listens solemnly by the grave with the mourners until the service is over. She watches protectively over her father with warm, loving eyes. The shadows of the trees change shape with sun's movement. Occasionally, she raises her face to the sun and gazes into the sky's infinite depths.

"That was my most fundamental school in life," Dr. Unkart-Seifert recalls. "There I was, only 5 years old, standing before coffins. I naturally came to wonder about the meaning of death, and as a result the meaning of life.... I still ask myself many of those same questions about the purpose of life.

Do we merely live to eat? Or to watch mindless TV programs? Or to speak ill of others? Or to fight wars? Surely this is not what life is all about. Those who do not avert their eyes from the question of death realize just how precious and irreplaceable life is. They cannot fail to devote every minute of their lives to developing and improving themselves."

When Jutta was young, her father was also her voice teacher. During World War II, a bomb had destroyed her parents' home except for the music room. Jutta's cradle was also placed in that room. Her father had many pupils and gave lessons from ten to twelve hours each day. From morning to night, young Jutta's cradle was rocked by the sweet hand of music.

Both her mother and father were visually handicapped. They faced dreadful discrimination. During the

PAUL ALMAYSCORIBIS



Vienna park: Schloss Belvedere.

ADAM WOOLFITZ/ORBIS

war, the threat that her parents might be sent to a Nazi concentration camp because of their disability hung over their heads. In addition, four of her relatives were killed in the war. Those were terrible times. Yet, somehow her parents always managed to remain cheerful. Perhaps they resolved to live that way for their daughter's sake.

"I had a truly wonderful childhood," recalls Dr. Unkart-Seifert. "Because I had to help take care of my parents and because of my music and voice lessons, I couldn't run around and play freely like other children, but I never once felt my lot to be hard or painful. Every day I lived in a beautiful world of song — in a palace of the spirit. Song is what nourished my heart. Today, I am deeply appreciative of my parents."

Dr. Unkart-Seifert has given concerts in Japan under the auspices of the Min-On Concert Association, and lyrics of "An die Musik" (To Music), one of the many songs in her repertoire, surely echo her own sentiments:

Thou lovely art, how often in  
dark hours,  
when life's tumult wraps me  
round,  
have you kindled my heart to  
loving warmth,  
transported me to a better  
world.

In Dr. Unkart-Seifert's mind, the odyssey of music and the odyssey of human existence are the same; a search for "a better world," a search for the divine. She says: "Art is the expression of the divine

within us. I always say that when I am performing it is not me singing but the divine spirit within me."

Art and religious feeling are like two sides of the same coin. Religion without art is cold and barren; and art that does not seek the eternal is lifeless and bereft of any power to move our hearts.

Later, Dr. Unkart-Seifert attended Vienna University, where she avidly studied German literature, classical linguistics, and anything and everything else that interested her. The dissertation for her Ph.D. was on the linguistic structure of the writings of German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860).

Her father, she remembers, seemed a little saddened that she had grown estranged from music. Then, he died, and a strange phe-

nomenon occurred. She suddenly felt the desire to sing again, and was unable to conceive of a life without music. Perhaps she felt that she didn't want to let her father's song end with his death. Now it was her turn to sing. After a ten-year hiatus from music, she had to start all over again from scratch. It was a difficult challenge

**S**TARTING out as a government official, Dr. Unkart-Seifert also encountered many arduous struggles. She was told time and again that a woman's place was in the home. "It was a battle against lack of understanding," she says of those early days. "I had to work five times harder than anyone else. I would never have made it if I hadn't been in possession of good health and the energy to bounce back from the hardships I faced."

"Where there's a will, there's a way" — using this motto as her guide, she continued making painstaking efforts day after day. Today, she is undersecretary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Sports and also director of the ministry's International Department.

For many years, even before the collapse of communism in the countries of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, she was committed to conducting exchanges with them. Today, the artists of those countries enjoy much greater political freedom, but in terms of financial support they are worse off because of the fiscal pinch many of the newly democratic governments are experiencing.

Dr. Unkart-Seifert works tirelessly to create opportunities for promising young artists. She does not think in terms of personal

advantage or gain; she does what has to be done when it needs to be done. This is her guiding principle in life.

"With each passing year, I come to feel more keenly how short life is and how I must leave something of value behind. I want to devote myself to those who need me. Today or tomorrow may be my last day; that is why I am seeking things that will last and endure."

Dr. Unkart-Seifert is not only a mother of culture full of love for humanity in her public role, but she is also the supportive and caring partner of her beloved husband, Dr. Ralf Unkart, a professor emeritus of Vienna Technical University. She has a message to share with other women: "Be confident and believe in yourself. The compassion of women who love humanity is stronger and deeper than the ocean."

Jutta Unkart-Seifert sings with warmth and feeling. Although she never speaks about her hardships, her life shines with a pristine brilliance that comes only after the cleansing rain of tears. Music is a message that passes from heart to heart, just as Beethoven wished. "From hearts may it go again to other hearts."

After a performance in Saitama, Japan, in 1993, Dr. Unkart-Seifert was presented with a bouquet of flowers. As an encore, she sang in Japanese the song "Mother," the lyrics for which I composed. The music passed from heart to heart — the singer's heart touching the hearts of the audience, until they became one. An elderly woman in the front row was weeping. After Dr. Unkart-Seifert finished her song, she stepped down from the stage and gave the bouquet to the elderly woman. When the concert

was over, she sought the woman out and spoke to her. Those who have known great hardship and suffering themselves are sensitive to others' feelings; they treasure people's hearts.

Dr. Unkart-Seifert also sang Wagner's "Schmerzen" (Pains) in her concert. In the song, dusk gradually turns to dawn, and a new day is born:

If only death gave birth to life,  
If only pain brought joy:  
How I should thank nature  
For giving me such pain!

**A**S long as we live, we will experience problems and sufferings. They are proof that we are alive. We encounter obstacles precisely because we are making progress. When we fearlessly forge ahead and overcome them, our life becomes brighter and richer and our horizons broaden. True happiness is, after all, the feeling that one's inner world has been enriched. The problems we face become our teachers, pointing out life's treasures to us.

"I have heard of the marvelous Buddhist expression, 'Winter always turns into spring,'" says Dr. Unkart-Seifert. "In Austria, too, we have similar phrases like, 'When morning comes the sun will rise' and 'The sun always shines after it rains.' My parents taught me to live in this bright, positive manner."

The little girl who once served as her parents' eyes now shines with the commitment to bring light to the lives of countless others. As if still clasping his father's big, warm hand in her own, Dr. Unkart-Seifert holds on firmly to his legacy, keeping alive the life, the song and the brightness that he gave her. □

# Rowena Perkins: Appreciating the Interconnectedness of All Life

Cape Cod, Mass., Artist

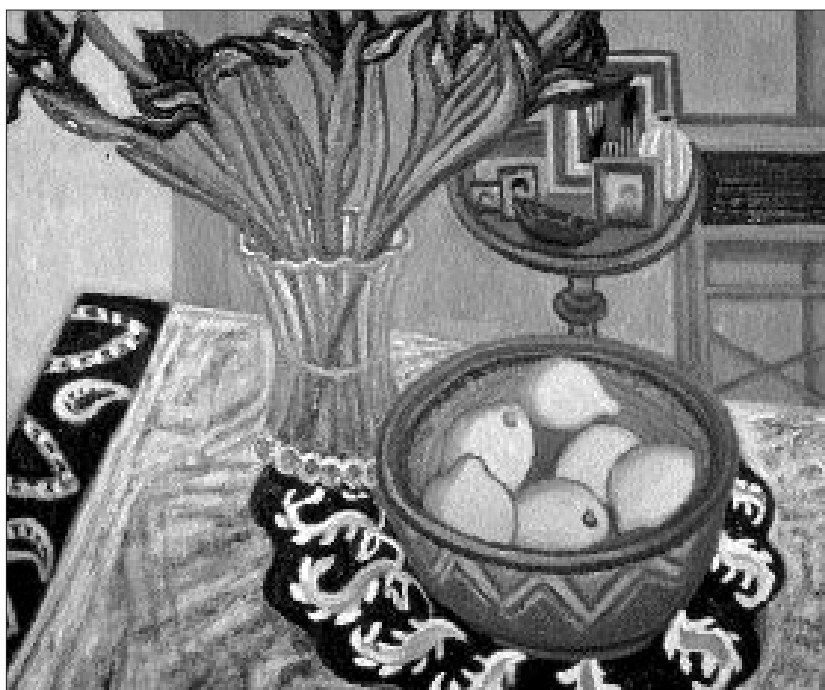
SINCE I began my practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in 1989, many changes have happened in my life and art. I had the experience of running a gallery in 1992–93 when I opened my studio to the public. This was a big challenge and a wonderful opportunity. My work is now included in many private collections,

and I'm currently showing in two galleries on Cape Cod. I have been teaching painting and drawing classes in my community over the last few months, and I really feel the bodhisattva energy flowing outward.

I have been drawing and painting for many years; the creative spirit has always been a large part of my life. When I started to practice

Buddhism, my creativity became much more positive and energetic. Now more than ever, I feel I understand President Ikeda's dream for world kosen-rufu.

Since I live in a rather isolated place—Wellfleet, Mass., on Cape Cod—I really appreciate the interconnectedness of all life, and the oneness of life and its environment.



(left) *Still Life with Lemons and Irises*, 1994, oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in.

(above) *Plums on Paisley*, 1994, oil on linen, 10 x 8 in.



DIANA WORTHINGTON

Rowena Perkins at an art show in North Truro, Mass., shown here with a couple of her paintings: *Summer House Still Life*, 1994 (above, left), and *Grape Hyacinth*, 1994 (above, right).

It is here that I have learned it is not where I am, but how I live my life as a human being that counts. The nearest large city is Boston, two hours away. Before, what I considered an obstacle—for instance, the distances between myself and others, like my father, who has lived thousands of miles from me for most of my life—I view now as an opportunity for improving my relationships. With this attitude, I try each day to make enlightened discoveries in my work as an artist and to effect a positive change in society.

Each year since the beginning of my practice, I have made goals and determined not to give in to discouragement or doubt. I am totally committed to my mission as an artist for *kosen-rufu*, and determined to show actual proof to my family and

friends of the greatness of the Gohonzon. It has been revealed to me over time how other people feel joy when viewing my paintings.

I have accomplished three ceramic tile commissions for homes, in which I designed and created the tiles. I installed one project myself, which was very challenging physically since there were a couple hundred tiles four inches square.

Recently I have been painting functional objects such as furniture. My first piece was a huge bureau that I painted and stenciled extensively. It will be included in an exhibit and auction titled “Furnishing the Future,” which will take place in Boston, and will partially benefit the Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless. The



*Still Life with Red Lilies and Plumeria*, 1994, oil on canvas, 24 x 14 in.



(far left) *Still Life with Mums and Japanese Fan*, 1994, oil on canvas, 20 x 24 in.

(left) *Artichoke on Silk Cloth*, 1994, oil on linen, 12 x 10 in.

coalition has a furniture program that aids the transition of homeless individuals, and I'm glad to contribute to their positive growth.

Each year ten artists are chosen to be included in the activities surrounding the local "Pops" concert. "Artists for Pops" activities benefit the high school scholarship program, providing a total of \$10,000 to a graduating senior, \$2,500 on completion of each academic year. For my part, I will be painting outdoors in one of the most beautiful properties on the lower Cape. Then, the painting will be exhibited and auctioned off, with a fifty percent share for each of us. I'm pleased that I was chosen to be a part of something in the community that will benefit the education of youth.

A new direction in my art has been making porcelain jewelry. There is something special about wearable art; it's close to the heart. The work was included in an annual fashion show several years ago on the upper Cape and is being shown regularly at the Wellfleet Artisans Cooperative and elsewhere.

For many years, I have been focusing on still life as subject matter. I have also been painting landscapes, with an occasional figure

painting. Through my intense exploration of still life, I have discovered true content in my work. It is because of the discipline of painting that I can carry over into other media smoothly.

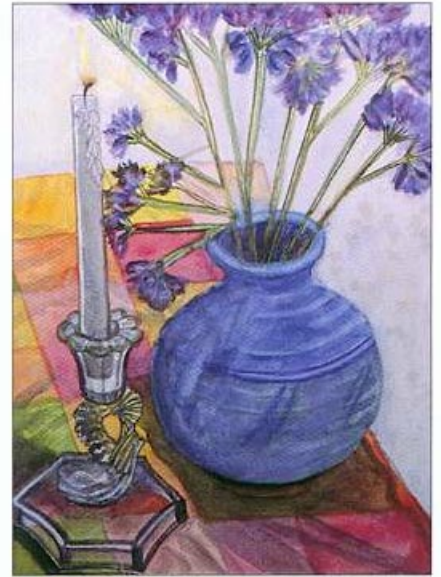
**F**LOWERS, fruit and unique objects have my focus for many years; there's a whole world in them depending on what one does with them. Oil continues to be my greatest love, with watercolor playing its way into my repertoire over the last few years. My oil monotypes are the latest effort reach out to humanity. They fuse the technique of oil painting, with the spontaneity of printmaking; hence the name "the painterly print" evolved. Oil monotypes are both studied and intuitive, with the paper showing through in places, like the sun. The viewer completes the equation; it is an ongoing drama.

My paintings are a reflection of what I feel and see. They are about the inherent possibilities of life. The personal language of painting contains private understandings. Through the observation of nature, the mysteries of life's rhythms are revealed. Painting seeks to analyze and define what it means to be

human. My ability has convinced me to continue steadfastly in the pursuit of my own development. My influences are varied, but they center on the greatest modern masters who devoted themselves passionately to their art—Picasso, Matisse, Bonnard, Braque, Cézanne, Gauguin, Klimt, Munch and Schiele, to name a few.

But the greatest influences in my life have been: SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, who has taught me how to practice Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism with the correct attitude and a vigorous spirit; my grandmother, who taught me about life and diligence; my mother, from whom I inherited the ability to produce art; and my father, whose quiet, scholarly ways have been a source of inspiration. I really have a lot of appreciation for exactly who I am now.

Due to my Buddhist practice, I have come to realize the mystical bonds that exist between family members. The SGI has been like a family to me, showing me respect, and teaching me to respect others. I am truly indebted to my family and the SGI for the encouragement I have received, and the courage to continue under any circumstances. □



above, *Candlelit Static*, 1996, watercolor, 14.25 x 10.25 in.

left, *Medaeglia D'Oro Caffé*, 1994, oil on canvas, 18 x 20 in.

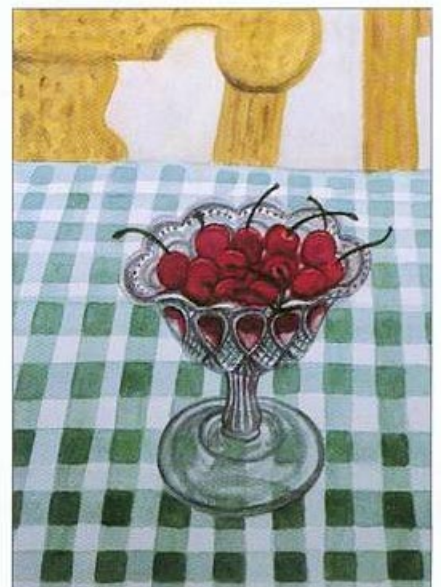
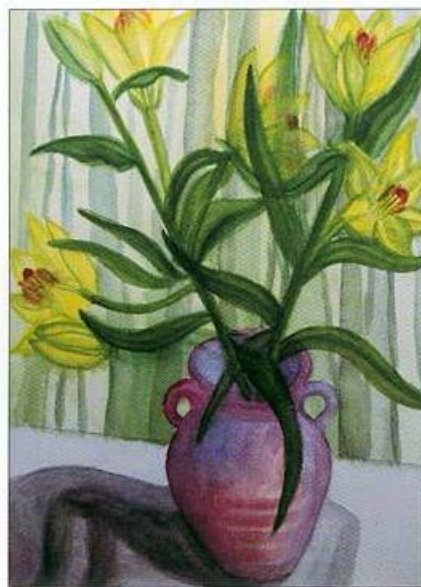
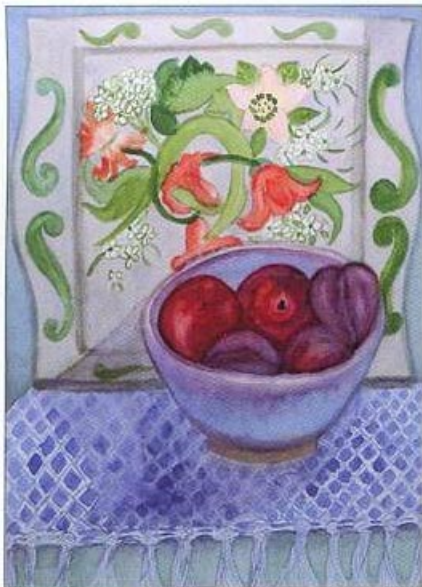
right, *Iris Amana*, 1994, oil on canvas, 12 x 10 in.

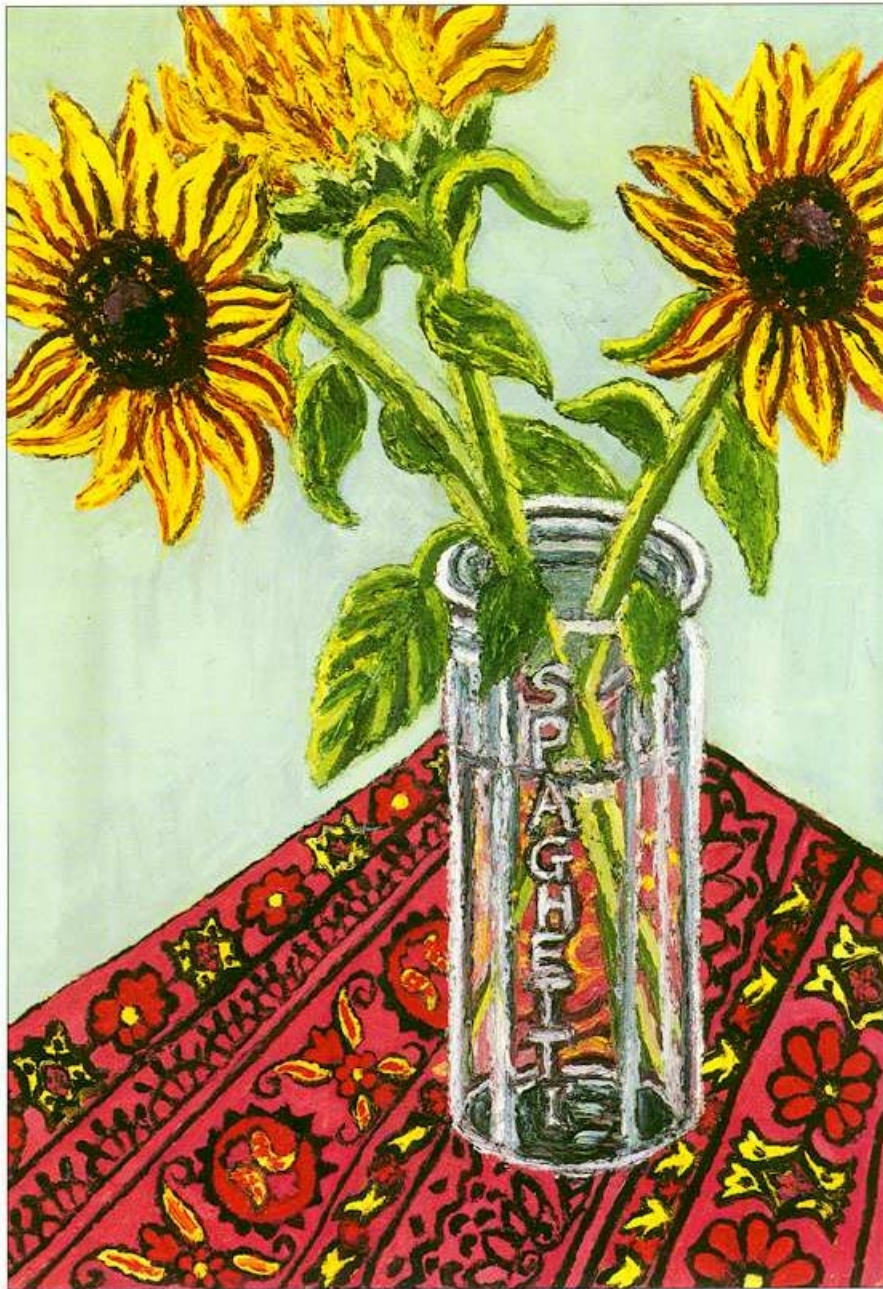
far right, *Grapes and Begonia Blossoms*, 1994, oil on canvas, 10 x 14 in.

below left, *Painted Tray with Plums*, 1996, watercolor, 14.25 x 10.25 in.

below center, *Yellow Lilies*, 1996, watercolor, 14 x 10 in.

below right, *Cherries in Glass Compote*, 1996, watercolor, 14 x 10 in.





*Spaghetti Jar with Sunflower, 1994,*  
oil on canvas, 20 x 14 in.  
by Rowena Perkins

Living Buddhism  
Periodicals Postage Paid  
at Santa Monica, CA 90401

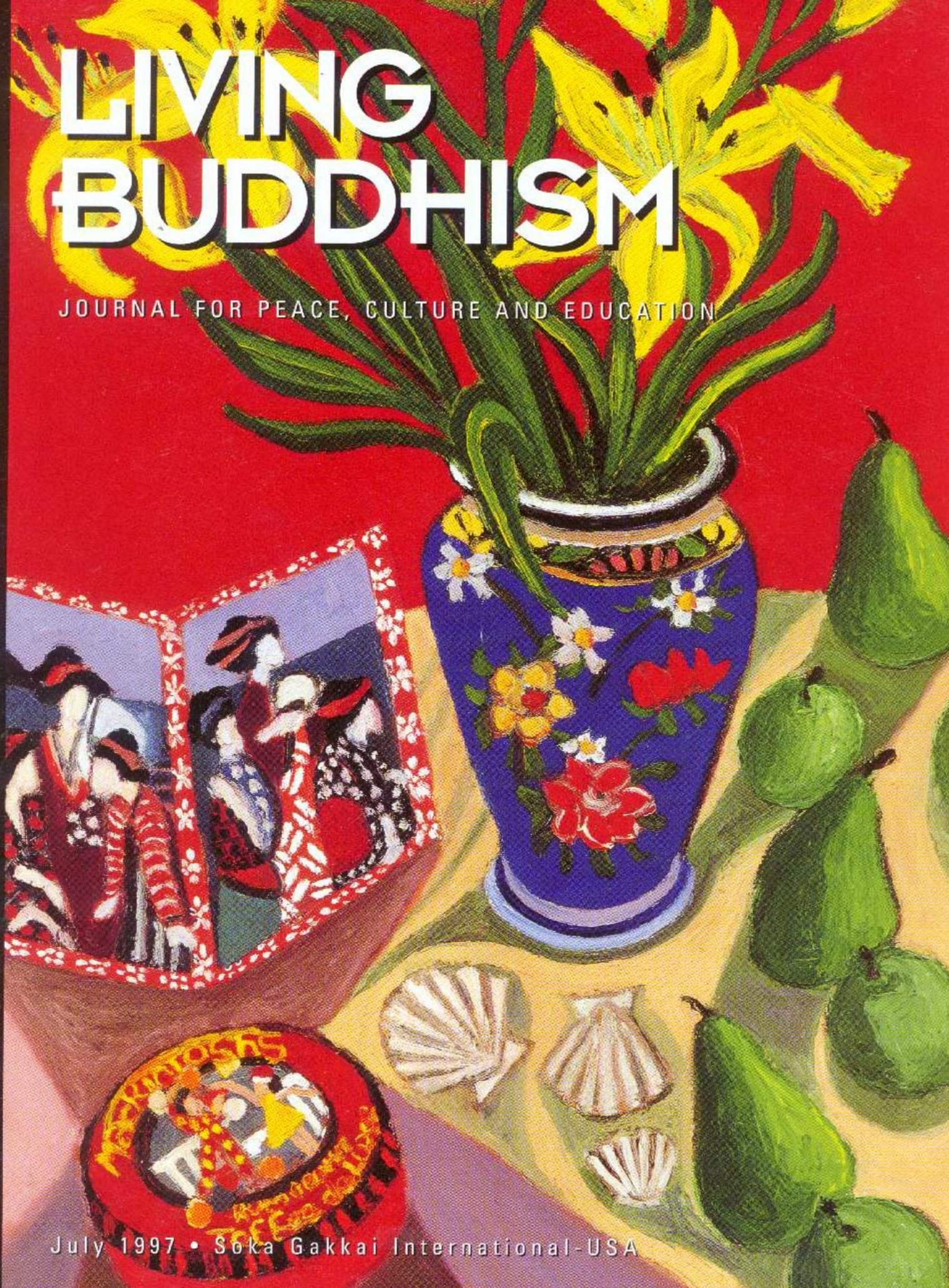
**RETURN POSTAGE GUARANTEED**

Return To:  
SGI-USA Subscriptions Section  
525 Wilshire Boulevard  
Santa Monica, CA 90401-1467

# LIVING BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

Study Material for July/August: Reply to Kyo'o • Humanistic Education



July 1997 • Soka Gakkai International-USA

## Austria Culture Center



The opening of the Austria Culture Center in Vienna in June 1994 was celebrated with a musical ceremony attended by Dr. Jutta Unkart-Seifert, a vocalist and undersecretary of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, the Arts and Sports (see article p. 50); she honored the occasion by performing songs in Japanese. Her husband, Dr. Ralf Unkart, professor emeritus of Vienna Technical University, also attended.

The culture center, known as the House of Elizabeth, the last imperial princess of the Hapsburg line, was built in the middle of the nineteenth century. It has a library, a hall and twenty rooms of varying sizes that are used for

prayer and discussion. The air around the center is filled with the melody of singing birds and the grounds abound with horse-chestnut, white birch and beech trees.

In 1992, Künstlerhaus, Austria's most prestigious artists' association with a 130-year history, conferred on SGI President Ikeda its special overseas membership in recognition of his artistic achievements in the field of photography. Mr. Ikeda is the tenth special member and the only Japanese recipient of the honor. The conferment of the honorary membership was the first since the induction of Joan Miró (1893–1983), the great Spanish artist.