

LIVING BUDDHISM

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

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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

APPRECIATION FOR ARTWORK, ESSAY

MY September issue of *Living Buddhism* arrived today and gratitude compels me to write at long last to say, "Thank you—thank you very much."

Thank you for featuring the incredibly beautiful quilt art of Arzu Titus. As a daughter, niece, sister, sister-in-law and mother of women who quilt, I appreciate that art form totally, and my only regret is that I cannot actually touch Ms. Titus' marvelously emotional creations. I hope someday she has an exhibit in Minneapolis or St. Paul!

Thank you for the wonderfully written and photographed article by Claude Lomden, "Lights, Camera, Encouragement!" Not only is his article encouraging, but I am so happy to see such a well thought-out treatise on the truths of Buddhism that are apparent and available to everyone in society as expressed through our culture

and daily experience. I choose to watch movies that to me express the universal truths we seek to practice daily, and movies are always a common denominator with all people, Buddhist or non-Buddhist. I enjoyed all his examples, and would like to add one more that I personally have watched four times because of the delightful example of human revolution and how persistence always pays off in the end: *Groundhog Day*.

Thank you for the ongoing "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," which I look forward to each month and treasure (and I, too, especially liked the dialogue on the Dragon Girl). And along with that, I want to say thank you for featuring the artwork of Larry Ashton and Blair Thornley—two of my favorite artists, both on paper and in person. Their work grows better, stronger and more profound with every issue, and they totally bring to life the meaning of the word *illustration*.

"Thank you" doesn't seem enough. I am delighted to

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>

receive all you bring to me each month.

BONNIE SMITH-YACKEL
Minneapolis, Minn.

REQUEST FOR INFO ON HISTORICAL FIGURES

I HAVE been practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism for a little over two years now. While my study habits are far from perfect, I do take time to read as often as possible and

derive a great deal of inspiration and strength from your efforts. However, after two years of doing gongyo (the third prayer in particular), I have found very little printed information about Nikko Shonin or Nichimoku Shonin. I feel I only know the very minimum about them, and, given that we include them in our daily prayers, the minimum seems insufficient. I must assume that if one person feels a bit lost during this part of the practice, there must be others. Perhaps in one of the upcoming

issues, you could print some historical and biographical information about these men who obviously had a seminal influence in the introduction of the Daishonin's Buddhism to the world.

JIM BOVINO
Minneapolis, Minn.

In the near future, we will carry articles on Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin and other historical figures in Buddhism. Please see p. 25 of this issue.

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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.

VICTORY OF THE PEOPLE FOR THE NEW CENTURY

LAST month the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines (ICBL) and its coordinator, Jody Williams, were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Ms. Williams' victory brings to mind our organizational theme for next year, "Year of Victory of the People for the New Century."

Here is an ordinary woman, working from her home on a dirt road with no street name or number in Putney, Vermont, able to mobilize NGOs around the world—the grass roots—as she pushed for the worldwide elimination of the weapons that kill or maim an estimated 26,000 fellow human beings a year. Ms. Williams' campaign started less than six years ago with some friends sitting around a Thanksgiving meal, discussing the horrible plight of mostly children, women and the elderly being maimed and killed by the leftovers of war. We applaud the ICBL and their victory that the Nobel Committee honored for having changed "a ban on anti-personnel mines from a vision to a feasible reality."

Thinking about the SGI's 1998 theme has helped me focus on just how accessible the people's victory is; especially if one can view it as the awakening of ordinary people to the dignity of life and to their value as human beings. I also think the people's victory is the teaching of *kosen-rufu*.¹ As SGI President Ikeda remarked during a recently published conversation with youth, there are some who connect *kosen-rufu* to the phenomenon of people all over the world embracing Nichiren Buddhism. From one perspective, that certainly will be the time of *kosen-rufu*. Then there are those who believe *kosen-rufu* is a matter of seeing that the Law is passed on from one person to another. This, too, is true. Or when the number of people practicing multiplies.

But *kosen-rufu* is not a number. Nor is it a fixed time or condition that can be measured or evaluated in the context of time and space. *Kosen-rufu* is something that happens within the reality of our lives, which is why it is so closely associated with the concept of human revolution. They both flow eternally. To that point, President Ikeda said that "Everything in the cosmos moves along its own path in exquisite harmony. Just as the earth naturally follows its own orbit, so, too, is *kosen-rufu* like the revolution of a planet around the sun. In the same manner, our individual human revolution is like the rotation of a planet on its axis. These two motions are inseparable."²

HE said that it is neither a formality nor an exercise of the ego, but a continuous flow among humanity, like a river or the spreading out of an immense bolt of material. It will flow everywhere. During the flow, perhaps our character improves, or our disposition; but not our status. We will still be ordinary human beings who happen to have the insight to take actions to improve ourselves.

Kosen means to widely declare the philosophy of Buddhism, its justice and its beliefs—that is why we propagate. *Rufu* means flow like an immense river. It is not a formality, but a continuous flow among all of humanity. When you examine a piece of cloth carefully, you will notice that it is woven of very fine horizontal and vertical threads. By way of analogy, Mr. Ikeda said that the vertical threads can be likened to the mentor-disciple relationship; while the horizontal threads symbolize transcending all differences as we spread the correct philosophy equally among the people of the world.

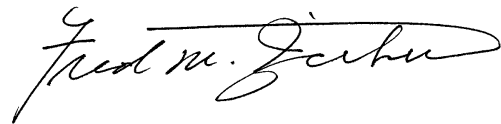
PLEASE be confident that all such efforts will lead to the victory of the people. I remember when President Ikeda was visiting the J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, California, some years ago. While viewing various pieces of art, he stopped in front of a painting by the French painter Jean François Millet (1814–75). It was of a peasant farmer standing in an open field with his head bowed as he leaned on his rake for support. President Ikeda remarked that the farmer in the painting represented the common people. He said that though the farmer seemed serene and quiet, once his ire was awakened, he would stand up for justice with tremendous power and strength.

That was the experience of the late Hiroe Clow, a simple Seattle housewife who decided to tell the truth. As a result of her effort, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu must stand before the bar of justice. When common people aren't intimidated by people of authority and are willing to stand up for what is right—that is kosen-rufu and the beauty of human revolution. It is the people's voice; the same voice we use when we encourage one another at a discussion meeting or during a home visit or on a telephone call early in the morning or late at night. It is all a reminder that we needn't pursue fame and fortune in order to have a voice.

The foundation of our people's victory was suggested in the following thoughts from President Ikeda's 1997 peace proposal:

The only real solution to the issue of nuclear arms is to struggle incessantly against that "evil of life" that threatens the survival of humanity. And this is why Josei Toda entrusted younger generations with the task of disseminating the idea of the "dignity of all life" as the overarching ethos of our times.

Nichiren Daishonin, the thirteenth-century Buddhist sage whose teachings we at the SGI follow, said, "Life is the most important of all our properties." This respect for life is the essential inspiration of the Toda declaration.³ Herein lies the reason we at SGI aspire for the inner revolution of all individuals—the human revolution—that will establish the respect for all life as the basic norm of human society.⁴



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

1. Kosen-rufu is an expression that traces its origins to the Lotus Sutra, which states: "After I have passed into extinction, in the last five hundred year period you must spread it abroad widely throughout Jambuvipa and never allow it to be cut off, nor must you allow evil devils, the devils' people, heavenly beings, dragons, yakshas or kumbhanda demons to seize the advantage" (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 288). The phrase spread it abroad widely is Shakyamuni's mandate to propagate the Law

throughout Jambuvipa (the world).

2. From "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," installment twenty-five, to appear in the December 1997 issue of *Living Buddhism*.

3. Toda Declaration: In September 1957, Mr. Toda made his famous appeal calling for a total ban of nuclear weapons production.

4. April 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 26.

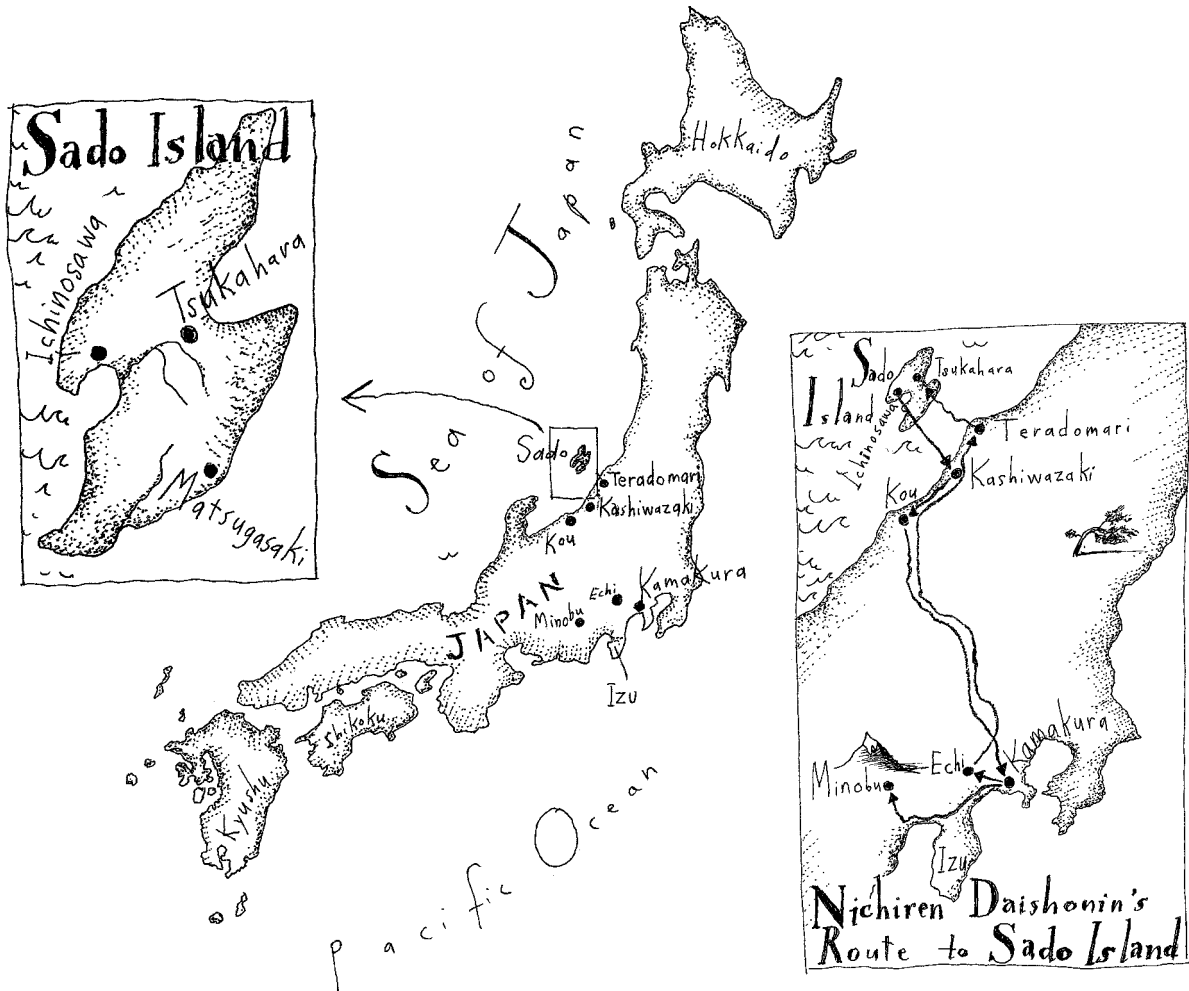
“LETTER FROM SADO”

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPT FROM *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* IS MATERIAL FOR THE SGI-USA STUDY MEETINGS IN NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER.

One who climbs a high mountain must eventually descend. One who slights another will in turn be despised. One who deprecates those of handsome appearance will be born ugly. One who robs another of food and clothing is sure to fall into the world of hunger.¹ One who mocks noble men or anyone who observes the precepts will be born to a poor family. One who slanders a family that embraces the True Law will be born to a heretical family. One who laughs at those who cherish the precepts will be born a commoner and meet with persecution from his sovereign. This is the general law of cause and effect.

Nichiren's sufferings, however, are not ascribable to this causal law. In the past he despised the votaries of the Lotus Sutra and ridiculed the sutra itself, sometimes with exaggerated praise and other times with contempt. He has met all eight² of these terrible sufferings for such acts against the Lotus Sutra which is as magnificent as two jewels combined, two moons shining side by side, two stars conjoined or one Mount Hua placed atop another.³ Usually these sufferings would torment a person over many lifetimes, appearing one at a time, but Nichiren has denounced the enemies of the Lotus Sutra so severely that all eight descended upon him at once. His situation is like that of a peasant heavily in debt to his lord and others. As long as he remains on the estate, they are likely to defer his debts from one year to the next, rather than mercilessly hounding him. But as soon as he tries to leave, everyone will rush over and demand that he repay everything at once. Thus the sutra states, "It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that one can diminish ... his suffering and retribution."⁴

*(The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 1. pp. 40–41) (Gosho Zenshu,
[The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, in Japanese], p. 960)*



Background: Encouragement From the Harsh Conditions of Sado Island

ON October 10, 1271, Nichiren Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island by the government in Kamakura, Japan. He was housed in a dilapidated hut at a place called Tsukahara. The one-room wooden structure offered scant shelter to those visiting an adjacent cemetery where the corpses of criminals and the poor were abandoned. He was over 50, and Nikko, 26, was the only disciple allowed to stay with him. The hut was on the estate of Honma Shigetsura, the local magistrate who was charged with keeping the Daishonin in detention. Guards were posted to prevent any outside assis-

tance. Despite a scarcity of food, clothing and heat, they survived the winter and the Daishonin wrote this letter on March 20, 1272. It would be two years before the authorities pardoned him.

Just six months earlier, on September 12, 1271, the Daishonin was nearly executed in Kamakura, Japan's capital, due to charges of treason fabricated by priests in collusion with government officials. The priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple and Hei no Saemon, deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs, had longed to be rid of the Daishonin. After the authorities interrogated him, it was decided that he be exiled to Sado Island.

However, under cover of darkness, the Daishonin's ene-

mies had him taken instead to Tatsunokuchi Beach to be beheaded. As he describes in his own writings, just as the executioner raised his sword, an unusual meteorological event occurred, lighting the beach as if it was midday. The Daishonin later wrote of the incident, "The executioner fell on his face, his eyes blinded. The soldiers were terrified and panic stricken" (MW-1, 181).

The executioner and soldiers could not carry out the execution and returned to their original plan of taking their prisoner to Sado Island, in the northern Sea of Japan where exiles rarely survived. The authorities hoped this would be the fate of the Daishonin as well.

In the capital, numerous arson fires and murders occurred,

which priests of the Nembutsu and Ritsu sects blamed on followers of the Daishonin. The government, threatened by the growing popularity of the Daishonin's movement, took this opportunity to launch an all-out crackdown in Kamakura.

Regarding the circumstances of his disciples in late 1271 and in early 1272, the Daishonin writes: "During that period seven or eight cases of arson and an endless succession of murders took place in Kamakura. Slanderers went around saying that my disciples were setting the fires. Government officials thought this might be true and made up a list of over 260 of my followers who they believed should be expelled from Kamakura. Word spread that these persons were all to be exiled to remote islands and that those disciples already in prison would be beheaded. It turned out, however, that the fires were set by the Nembutsu and Ritsu believers to implicate my disciples" (MW-1, 184). He also records: "In addition, my disciples, my lay followers, and even those who have merely listened to my teachings have been subjected to severe punishment and

treated as though they were guilty of treason" (MW-2, 96).

THIS attack by the government and the exile of their teacher caused many of the Daishonin's followers to renounce their faith, and his religious movement was nearly destroyed. In a letter titled "Reply to Nii-ama," he states, "When I incurred the displeasure of the government, even in Kamakura 999 out of 1,000 discarded their faith" (MW-3, 69).

Among those who remained, many harbored doubts about the Daishonin's teachings. Some criticized him, wondering, "Why do I have to encounter such obstacles even though I follow the Lotus Sutra?" "I was told that those who believe in the Lotus Sutra will be protected. Why is my teacher suffering from government persecution?"

So, although lacking in adequate food, clothing, shelter and writing materials, and despite the fact that some Nembutsu zealots on Sado were looking to kill him, the Daishonin penned this letter in order to answer his followers' doubts and to encourage them to maintain their faith

despite their hardships.

The Daishonin writes at the beginning of this letter: "This letter is addressed to Toki Jonin. It should also be shown to Shijo Kingo, Tonotsuji Juro, Sajiki no Ama and my other disciples" (MW-1, 33). It was important to him that his message be communicated widely among his followers. The letter's postscript reflects the severe circumstances he was under and his detailed care for individual believers: "There is very little writing paper here in the province of Sado, and to write to you individually would take too long. However, if even one person fails to hear from me, it will cause resentment. Therefore, I want all sincere believers to meet and read this letter together for encouragement" (MW-1, 42).

Second President Toda, commenting on this letter, said that "What deeply moves my heart when I read this letter is that the Daishonin extends his love for his disciples as if they were his children, even when his own life is endangered and his living conditions oppressive" (*Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Kōgi*, vol. 16, p. 174).

Commentary: "Why Are These Things Happening to Me?"

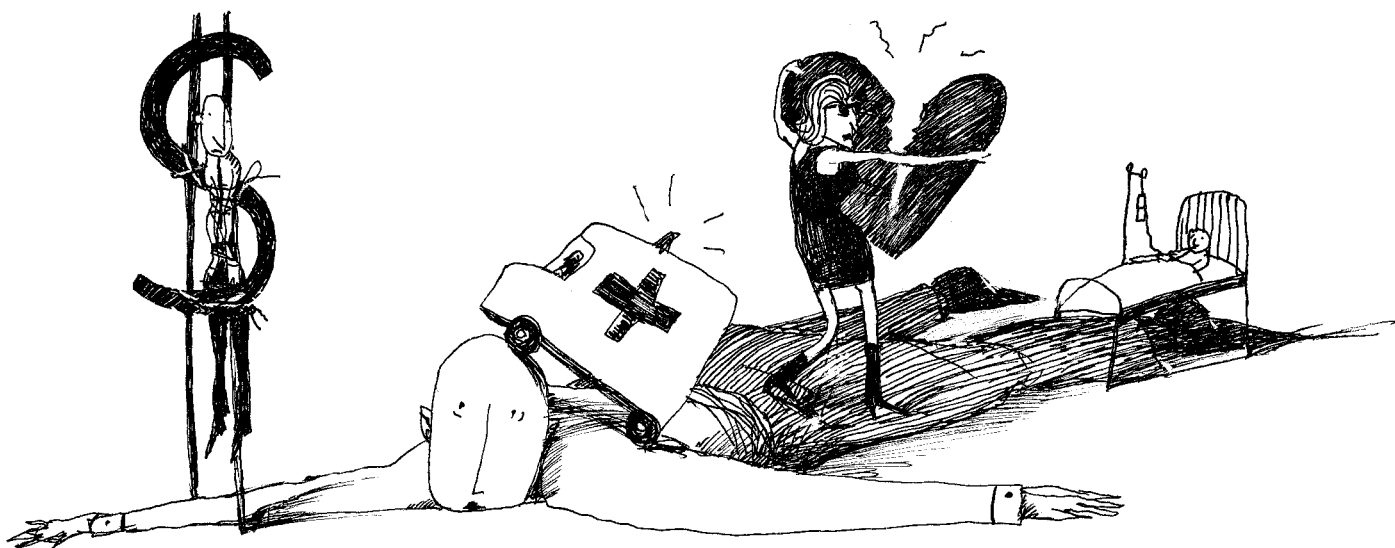
THE doubts and hardships that plagued the Daishonin's disciples in thirteenth-century Japan are not unrelated to our own experience in the twentieth century. Many hardships occur in life—accidents, illnesses, financial problems, difficult relationships and so on. Sometimes our problems seem so over-

whelming we want to ask, "Why me?" and we doubt the validity of our Buddhist practice. To answer doubts that may arise in the face of obstacles, Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter.

In this portion of the letter, the Daishonin introduces the Buddhist concept of "lessening karmic retribution"—that through faith in the Law, one can reduce the impact of negative effects resulting from past causes. He

explains that he is suffering from various hardships and persecutions because he slandered the Lotus Sutra and its practitioners in past lifetimes. Such slander of the Law would lead to many lifetimes of suffering but because he is fighting to protect the Law, he is eradicating his negative karma all at once in this lifetime.

Using the Buddhist concept of karma, the Daishonin shows



Although we strive to practice Buddhism, we sometimes experience hardships—accidents, illnesses, financial problems, difficult relationships and so on. None of us, although we practice, seems to be free from life's hardships. "Why me?"

us a Buddhist perspective on our problems and encourages us to continue developing our faith despite our hardships.

The Sanskrit word *karma* originally meant action—our thoughts, words and deeds. Buddhism explains that all our mental, verbal and physical actions are recorded as causes within our lives. Karma may be good or bad. These latent influences or non-manifest karma, when activated by an external stimulus, produce a corresponding effect. Our actions in the past have shaped our present reality, and our actions in the present determine our future. The law of causality operates over the three existences of past, present and future, and it is karma formed in past lifetimes which accounts for the differences with which we are born in this lifetime.

In "Letter from Sado," the Daishonin explains that usually a particular cause yields a corresponding effect. This is what he calls "the general law of cause and effect." He gives examples such as, "One who slights another will in turn be despised.... One who mocks noble men or anyone who observes the precepts will be born to a poor family.... One who laughs at those who cherish the precepts will be born a commoner and meet with persecution from his sovereign."⁵

But the concept of karma is more than "what goes around comes around." The Daishonin explains that some actions have lasting effects over many lifetimes. For example, the act of slandering the Lotus Sutra and its practitioners will bring the eight kinds of retribution mentioned in the Hatsunaion Sutra and other innumerable suffer-

ings. This is because the Lotus Sutra expounds the Mystic Law, the basis of all life and phenomena in the universe—it is the source of the dignity of all life. Thus the Daishonin describes the Lotus Sutra "as magnificent as two jewels combined, two moons shining side by side...." Because of the significance of the Mystic Law, one's actions toward it will produce great effects over many lifetimes—be they positive or negative.

In order to help us grasp the concept of karma, the Daishonin first acknowledges that he is suffering from various persecutions because of his own negative karma. This acknowledgment is important because it points out that no one, not even a Buddha, is immune from karmic retribution. The law of causality does not discriminate. Also, the Daishonin declares

that he is an ordinary person living with profound karmic retribution just like anyone else. He is not an immaculate saint or divine being. Commenting on "Letter from Sado," the second President of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, states:

You may think that the president [of the Soka Gakkai] is someone special. But he is not at all extraordinary. I used to frequent a pawnshop just like many of you. If some of you never had to go to a pawnshop, you should consider yourselves fortunate. I was also an expert at bouncing promissory notes. Such a person I was, but now I am very happy thanks to the Gohonzon. Unless one goes through such hardships, he or she cannot become a president [of the Soka Gakkai]. If someone calls me a living Buddha, a living Thus Come One or His Holiness the Founder, I would feel insulted. I am not such a freak. I haven't become His Holiness the Buddha or Thus Come One. I am a great ordinary person. (From his lecture held in Osaka, Japan, on February 7, 1956, *Complete Works of Josei Toda*, vol. 6, p. 573)

The first step to change our negative karma is to accept personal responsibility for our circumstances. Accepting responsibility for our hardships is not easy, especially when we cannot trace the cause of our suffering to something we did in this lifetime. While lecturing on "Letter from Sado," President Toda explained that our karma does not attack us from the outside, but originates from within us: "You sometimes say that you were attacked by your karma.

But please don't use that expression because your karma doesn't attack you. For example, when you go to the bathroom, waste comes out of your body. It does not attack you. Likewise, karma comes out [of your own life]; you don't get attacked by it" (Ibid., p. 581).

Many children today blame their unfortunate circumstances on their parents. However, Buddhism explains that our parents merely provided a particular set of circumstances into which we were born by our own choice of karmic causality. So we cannot blame anyone, even our parents, for our misery.

Pre-Lotus Sutra teachings explain that one's suffering in this lifetime is due to his or her past negative karma, but they fail to point out the means of changing it. This led people to accept their suffering with a sense of resignation, with a sense of burden.

The Lotus Sutra resolves this misconception of karma. It states:

...you should understand that these persons voluntarily relinquish the reward due them for their pure deeds and, in the time after I have passed into extinction, because they pity living beings, they are born in this evil world so they may broadly expound this sutra. If one of these good men or good women in the time after I have passed into extinction is able to secretly expound the Lotus Sutra to one person, even one phrase of it, then you should know that he or she is the envoy of the Thus Come One. He has been dispatched by the Thus Come One and carries out

the Thus Come One's work. (*The Lotus Sutra*, ch. 10, pp. 161-62)

In other words, the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra voluntarily discarded their good karma and created evil karma to be born in an evil age to propagate the Mystic Law. The Great Teacher Miao-lo of China (711-782) interpreted this phrase as to signify the principle of "deliberately creating the appropriate karma" (Jp. *ganken'ogo*).

Such a concept leads us to argue, "I don't think I ever asked to be poor or sick in this lifetime!" Of course, there is no way of knowing if in our past lifetimes we "deliberately" created the "appropriate karma" to be in the circumstances that we find ourselves. However, if we can apply this principle, we can transform our way of life, our attitude toward our hardships. By understanding this principle, our negative karma transforms itself into our mission. This is the key to changing our negative karma.

Instead of regarding our hardships as a fixed destiny or as baggage we must carry around throughout our lives, we can, through the perspective presented in the Lotus Sutra, view our hardships as opportunities to fulfill our mission. By challenging our circumstances with a strong sense of mission and attaining victories through faith, we give courage and hope to others. For those who accept the Lotus Sutra's perspective on karma, our karmic retribution serves as a source of energy to propel us forward.

In this regard, President Ikeda writes in *The New Human Revolution*:



We challenge our circumstances with a strong sense of mission and give courage and hope to those suffering in the similar circumstances by our victory won by our faith and practice. For those who accept the Lotus Sutra's perspective on karma, our karmic retribution serves as a source of energy to propel us forward.

It is true that Buddhism teaches that one who commits evil deeds against others will receive the negative effects of those actions and live an unhappy life. This is just one aspect, however. Were it the entire teaching on karma, then people would be doomed to live under a cloud of guilt and vague anxiety, not knowing what offenses they might have committed in past lives. It would also mean that people's destiny was fixed—a concept that could easily rob them of their energy and passion. It might also cause people to lapse into a passive way of life, simply concerning themselves with not doing anything bad.

The Buddhism of Nichiren

Daishonin goes far beyond the framework of superficial causality. It elucidates the most fundamental cause and shows us the means for returning to the pure life within that has existed since time without beginning. This fundamental cause is to awaken to our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth and dedicate our lives to the widespread propagation of the Law.

Shin'ichi said: "Buddhism teaches that its practitioners 'voluntarily choose to be born in evil circumstances so they may help others.' This means that although we have accumulated the benefit through Buddhist practice to be born in favorable circumstances, we have purposely chosen to be

born in the midst of suffering people and there propagate the Mystic Law....

"So you see, the deeper and greater the suffering, the more magnificently one can show proof of the powerful benefit of Buddhism. You could say that karma is another name for mission." (Vol. 1, pp. 252–55)

In "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," President Ikeda also writes:

To simply view your sufferings as "karma" is backward-looking. We should have the attitude: "These are sufferings I took on for the sake of my mission. I vowed to overcome these problems through faith."



Our past does not exist in history books. Nor does our future lie in the mind of a fortuneteller. Both our eternal past and eternal future exist in our lives at the present moment.

When we understand this principle of “deliberately creating the appropriate karma,” our frame of mind is transformed; what we had previously viewed as destiny, we come to see as mission. There is absolutely no way we cannot overcome sufferings that are the result of a vow that we ourselves made. (*Living Buddhism*, February 1997, p. 37)

Once we accept responsibility for our circumstances with a sense of mission as indicated in the Lotus Sutra, the final step needed to change our negative karma is to take action. In this letter, the Daishonin quotes a passage from the Hatsunaion

Sutra: “It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that one can diminish in this lifetime his or her suffering and retribution.”

By “protecting the Law,” we can transform our negative karma into a source of happiness and encouragement for others to follow. “Protecting the Law” is to protect not only the integrity of Buddhism but also those who practice Buddhism. In other words, we are “protecting the Law” when we support one another and share Buddhism with others. We are also “protecting the Law” when we fight against injustice or attempts to betray the spirit of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The Daishonin

states that he himself was able to diminish his karmic retribution by “denouncing the enemies of the Lotus Sutra.”

When we view our lives in the light of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, practicing as he taught, something profound takes place—we begin to transform our negative karma. Conspicuous changes in our problems may not appear immediately, but we will start experiencing more important changes internally. Our outlook on life will change. We will find the inner resources to challenge any obstacle with the will to win.

The Daishonin reassures us that we should regard hardships as a sign that our negative

karma is changing. "Good" karma that we can accumulate through protecting the Law is so immense that we diminish whatever profound karmic retribution we would otherwise have to suffer. In this letter, he gives an example of a peasant hounded by his lord and other creditors as he tries to leave the land. It is like the peasant unexpectedly finding bars of gold in the fields. He can pay off all his debts with comparatively little money coming from his own pockets.

In "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin quotes the Sutra of the Contemplation on the Earth of the Mind: "If you want to understand the causes that existed in the past, look at the results as they are manifested in the present. And if you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present" (MW-2, 172). Our past does not exist in history books. Nor does our future lie in the mind of a fortuneteller. Both our eternal past and eternal future exist in the present moment.

Past causes exist now as effects in the present and future effects exist now as causes in the present. The principle of karmic

causality tells us that by changing our lives in the present, we can shape our future and even change the meaning of our past. No matter what painful event we experienced in the past or no matter what horrible act we might have committed in our past existences, if we view our present circumstances as an opportunity to prove our mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth then even our past is entirely different from the past that would otherwise make us miserable.

President Ikeda writes in his poem "The Sun of *Jiyu* Over a New Land":

Past, present, future...
The causes and effects of the
three existences
flow ceaselessly as the reality
of life;
interlinked, they give rise to all
differences and distinction.
Trapped in those differences
human society is wracked by
unending contention.

But the Buddhism of True
Cause,
expounded by the Daishonin
whose
teachings we embrace,
enables us to break the spell
of past karma, past causes and

effects,
and to awaken to the grand
humanity
—the life of *jiyu*—
that had lain dormant in our
hearts....

Awaken to the life of *jiyu*
within!
When the bright sun of "True
Cause" rises,
the stars and planets of
past cause and effect grow dim
and the supreme world of
harmonious unity emerges—
the unity of friends and
comrades,
each manifesting the life-
condition
of the Bodhisattva of the Earth,
offering timeless proof that,
indeed,
"the assembly on Eagle Peak
has not yet dispersed."
(March 1993, *Seikyo Times*, p. 54)

Our karma is not a chain to bind our spirit. When our lives are infused with a sense of mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth we are able to live free and fulfilled lives. □

(Background and commentary by
SGI-USA Study Department)

Illustrations by Blair Thornley

1. The world of Hunger: The second lowest of the ten worlds in which one's existence is controlled and tormented by insatiable desires for wealth, fame or pleasure. The ten worlds are ten states of life that manifest in both physical and spiritual aspects of all human activities. They are Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Tranquillity or Humanity, Rapture or Heaven, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. All ten are eternally inherent in life and emerge through people's interaction with their environment.
2. All eight: The Daishonin writes in the portion preceding the passage printed here: "For none, save Nichiren, have experienced all eight sufferings described in the [Hatsunaion] sutra: (1) to be slighted; (2) to possess an ugly physical form; (3) to lack clothing; (4) to lack food; (5) to seek wealth in vain; (6) to be born to a poor family; (7) to be born to a heretical family; and (8) to be persecuted by one's sovereign" (MW-1, 40).
3. Mount Hua: One of the five highest mountains in China.
4. The Hatsunaion Sutra: (Sutra of the Final Nirvana) One of several varying translations of the Nirvana Sutra. The complete passage reads, "It is due to the blessings obtained by protecting the Law that one can diminish in this lifetime his suffering and retribution."
5. In this instance, "noble men or anyone who observes the precepts" indicates those who keep the Theravada precepts, and "those who cherish the precepts" are those who keep the Mahayana precepts.

THE GOHONZON: TREASURE MAP OF LIFE

THE significance of the object of devotion—the Gohonzon—in the practice of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, lies not in the literal meaning of the characters but in the fact that it embodies the life of the original Buddha, or the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. No extra benefit accrues to those who can read the Gohonzon, and knowing what is written on the Gohonzon does not mean that one understands the Gohonzon itself. Some of the characters on the Gohonzon are historical persons, mythical figures or Buddhist gods. Nichiren Daishonin used them to represent the actual functions of the universe and of our own lives. All these functions are clustered around Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; therefore, the Gohonzon is the embodiment of the life of Buddhahood within us.

At one time, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, explained the purpose of embracing the Gohonzon as follows:

The natural power of human beings is very weak. No matter how hard one tries to live one’s own life in one’s own way, in the end one is easily influenced by others and by external factors.... I believe that to make one’s life its strongest, most brilliant and happiest, there is no way but to live the Buddhism of *ichinen sanzen* [a single life-moment possesses three thousand realms] and the mutual possession of the ten worlds. This is the ultimate philosophy that Nichiren Daishonin delivered to the vast universe more than seven hundred years ago. He perceived people’s ignorance of this profound principle and bestowed upon them the gem of *ichinen sanzen* so that they could attain the state of happiness. This gem of *ichinen sanzen* is nothing other than the Dai-Gohonzon that he inscribed.... (*Buddhism in Action*, vol. 7, pp. 107–08)

By Ted Morino
SGI-USA Study Department Chief

THE Gohonzon, in a sense, can be compared to a map pointing to the location of the supreme treasure of life and the universe—the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-

renge-kyo. This treasure map tells us that the treasure is found within our lives. To those who can understand the map, it is not just a piece of paper but an invaluable object equal in value to the “treasure,” that is, life’s supreme condition and potential itself. To those who fail to

grasp its message, however, the map’s worth will be reduced to that of a mere scroll.

As Nichiren Daishonin says: “As for the characters of the Lotus Sutra [the Gohonzon], a blind person cannot see them at all. A person with the eyes of a common mortal sees them as

black in color. Persons in the two vehicles see them as void. Bodhisattvas see various different colors in them, while a person whose seeds of Buddhahood have reached full maturity see them as Buddhas. So the sutra states: "If one can uphold this [sutra], he will be upholding the Buddha's body" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 112).

How then can we correctly understand this map and locate the treasure it leads to? The Daishonin encourages us, "When you chant the Mystic Law and recite the Lotus Sutra, you must summon up deep conviction that Myoho-renge-kyo is your life itself" (MW-1, 4). Nichiren Daishonin teaches us, in other words, that one's life is the greatest treasure. Hence he also writes: "Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 213). This realization is what Buddhism calls the condition of enlightenment.

To convey his message, the Daishonin used the theory of a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms—especially the mutual possession of the ten worlds—as a basis for the Gohonzon's graphic image. The Gohonzon itself is the world of Buddhahood in which all the other worlds are represented. This is the depiction of mutual possession.

DOWN the center of the Gohonzon is written "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—Nichiren" (Nos. 1 and 2 respectively on the chart, p. 17). This illustrates the oneness of the person and the

law, or that the Daishonin's life itself embodies the Mystic Law, as he writes, "The soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 120). It also indicates that our lives are fundamentally one and the same with the law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, as the Daishonin demonstrated through his life.

Put another way, the inscription of "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—Nichiren" tells us that we have the identical qualities of the original Buddha's life. To the degree we strive for kosen-rufu and pray with the same desire as the Daishonin, we will manifest the same courage, hope and wisdom. This is what the Daishonin meant when he wrote: "You, yourself, are a true Buddha who possesses the three enlightened properties. You should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with this conviction" (MW-1, 30).

TO the left and right of "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—Nichiren" are various Buddhist figures that represent the ten worlds in the life of Nichiren Daishonin. The Daishonin included them on the Gohonzon to indicate that even the Buddha's life inherently contains the lower nine worlds.

By writing "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo—Nichiren" prominently down the center with the other, smaller characters around it, the Daishonin graphically indicated that the figures representing the lower nine worlds are illuminated by the Mystic Law, as the Daishonin writes: "Illuminated by the five characters of the Mystic Law, they display the enlightened nature they

inherently possess. This is the true object of worship" (MW-1, 212). In other words, these figures signify the nine worlds contained within Buddhahood.

How the ten worlds are represented on the Gohonzon varies. On some Gohonzon each of the ten worlds is represented by a separate character or characters found in Buddhist scriptures. On other Gohonzon, however, the ten worlds are represented as groups, like the four noble worlds. The Daishonin used both styles, as did later high priests.

The Nichikan-Transcribed Gohonzon

ON the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon, the ten worlds are represented in two groups: the four noble worlds (Buddhahood, Bodhisattva, Realization and Learning) and the six lower paths (Heaven, Humanity, Anger, Animality, Hunger and Hell).

On the Nichikan Gohonzon, the four noble worlds are indicated by Shakyamuni Buddha (No. 8) and Many Treasures Thus Come One (No. 9), who both represent Buddhahood, and the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—Bodhisattva Superior Practices (No. 10), Bodhisattva Boundless Practices (No. 11), Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices (No. 6), and Bodhisattva Pure Practices (No. 7).

The lower six worlds are represented by figures indicating Heaven, Animality and Hunger. Heaven is indicated, for instance, by the Four Great Heavenly Kings—Great Heavenly King Hearer of Many Teachings (No. 4),

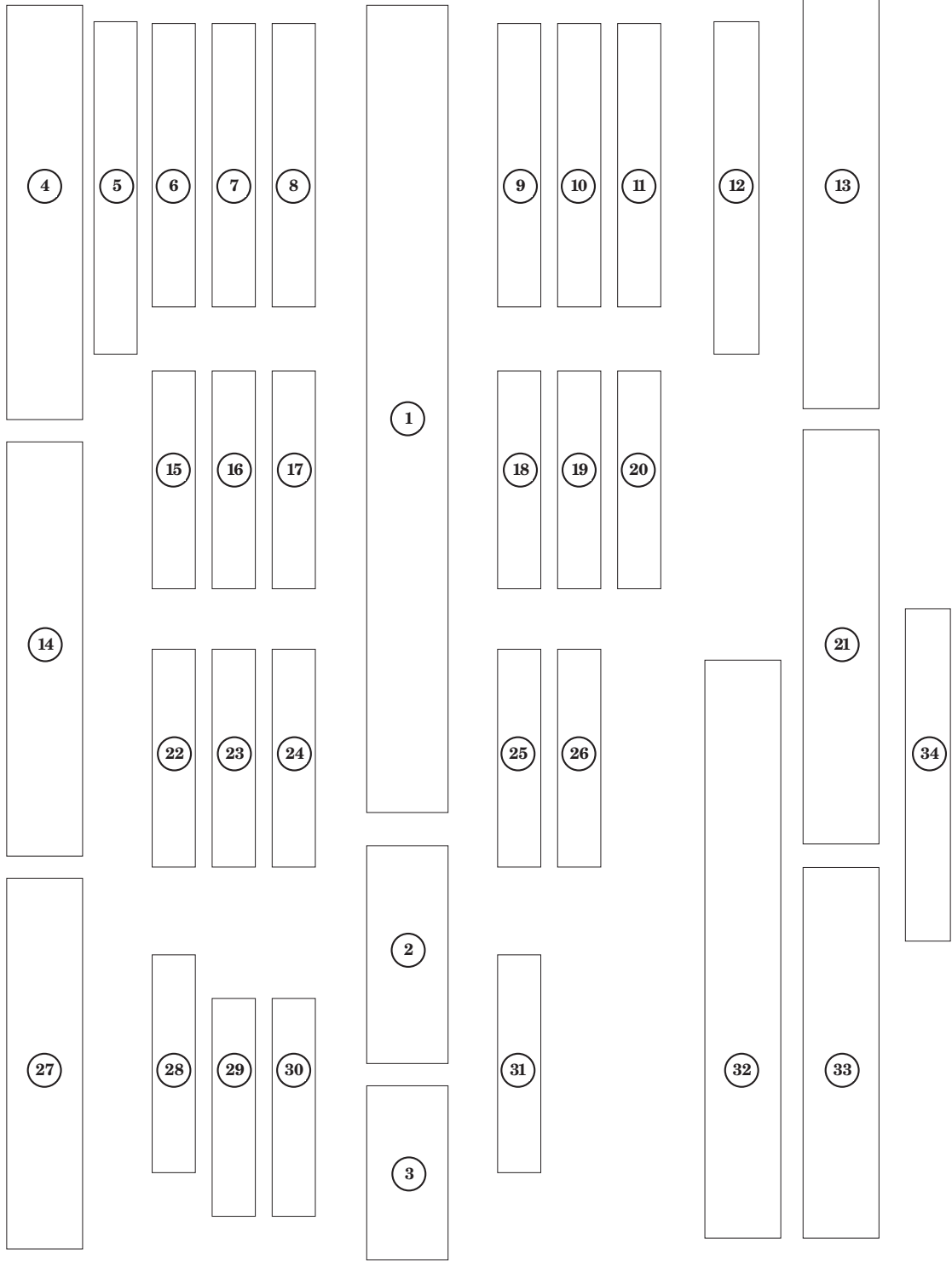
(Continued on p. 18)

DIAGRAM OF THE GOHONZON

TRANSCRIBED BY HIGH PRIEST NICHIKAN

The following is the key to the accompanying diagram. The key gives the phoneticized original, English translation and Sanskrit of characters on the Gohonzon transcribed by Nichikan.

1. **Nam-myoho-rence-kyo**
2. **Nichiren**
3. **Zai gohan**—This is Nichiren Daishonin's personal seal.
4. **Dai Bishamon-tenno**—Great Heavenly King Vaishravana (Skt.), also called Tamon-ten (Hearer of Many Teachings).
5. **U kuyo sha fuku ka jugo**—Those who make offerings will gain good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles [of the Buddha]. Note: In Buddhism, making offerings has a broad meaning; here it means to respect and praise.
6. **Namu Anryugyo Bosatsu**—Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices (Skt. Supratishthita-charitra). Note: The word *namu* is added to some names in the Gohonzon as a sign of great respect.
7. **Namu Jyogyo Bosatsu**—Bodhisattva Pure Practices (Skt. Vishuddhacharitra).
8. **Namu Shakamuni-butsum**—Shakyamuni Buddha.
9. **Namu Taho Nyorai**—Many Treasures Thus Come One (Skt. Prabhutaratna Tathagata).
10. **Namu Jogyo Bosatsu**—Bodhisattva Superior Practices (Skt. Vishishtacharitra).
11. **Namu Muhengyo Bosatsu**—Bodhisattva Boundless Practices (Skt. Anantacharitra).
12. **Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun**—Those who vex and trouble [the practitioners of the Law] will have their heads split into seven pieces.
13. **Dai Jikoku-tenno**—Great Heavenly King Upholder of the Nation (Skt. Dhritarashtra).
14. **Aizen-myo'o**—Wisdom King Craving-Filled (Skt. Ragaraja). Note: The name is written in Siddham, a medieval Sanskrit orthography.
15. **Dai Myojo-tenno**—Great Heavenly King Stars, or the god of the stars.
16. **Dai Gattenno**—Great Heavenly King Moon, or the god of the moon.
17. **Taishaku-tenno**—Heavenly King Shakra (also known as Heavenly King Indra).
18. **Dai Bontenno**—Great Heavenly King Brahma.
19. **Dai Rokuten no Mao**—Devil King of the Sixth Heaven.
20. **Dai Nittenno**—Great Heavenly King Sun, or the god of the sun.
21. **Fudo-myo'o**—Wisdom King Immovable (Skt. Achala). Note: The name is written in Siddham, a medieval Sanskrit orthography.
22. **Hachi Dairyuo**—Eight Great Dragon Kings.
23. **Dengyo Daishi**—Great Teacher Dengyo.
24. **Jurasetsumyo**—Ten Demon Daughters (Skt. Rakshasi).
25. **Kishimojin**—Mother of Demon Children (Skt. Hariti).
26. **Tendai Daishi**—Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai.
27. **Dai Zojo-tenno**—Great Heavenly King Increase and Growth (Skt. Virudhaka).
28. **Hachiman Dai Bosatsu**—Great Bodhisattva Hachiman.
29. **Kore o shosha shi tatematsuru**—I respectfully transcribed this.
30. **Nichikan, personal seal**—Signature of the high priest who transcribed this Gohonzon, in this case, Nichikan, consisting of his name and personal seal.
31. **Tensho-daijin**—Sun Goddess.
32. **Butsumetsugo ni-sen ni-hyaku san-ju yo nen no aida ichienbudai no uchi mizou no dai-mandara nari**—Never in 2,230-some years since the passing of the Buddha has this great mandala appeared in the world.
33. **Dai Komoku-tenno**—Great Heavenly King Wide-Eyed (Skt. Virupaksha).
34. **Kyoho go-nen roku-gatsu jusan-nichi**—The 13th day of the sixth month in the fifth year of Kyoho [1720], cyclical sign *kanoe-ne*.



(Continued from p. 15)

Great Heavenly King Upholder of the Nation (No. 13), Great Heavenly King Increase and Growth (No. 27), and Great Heavenly King Wide-Eyed (No. 33)—and Great Heavenly King Sun (No. 20), Great Heavenly King Moon (No. 16), Great Heavenly King Stars (No. 15) and the Devil King of the Sixth Heaven (No. 19).

Animality is indicated by Eight Great Dragon Kings (No. 22), and Hunger is indicated by Mother of Demon Children (No. 25) and Ten Demon Daughters (No. 24).

Other Characters

T' IEN-T' AI (No. 26) and Dengyo (No. 23) represent those who transmitted the true lineage of Buddhism in the past.

The native gods of India, Great Heavenly King Indra (No. 17) and Great Heavenly King Brahma (No. 18), are incorporated into the Gohonzon as Buddhist gods. So, too, are gods native to Japan—Sun Goddess (No. 31) and Great Bodhisattva Hachiman (No. 28).

Two names are written in (medieval) ancient Indian Sanskrit, or Siddham. They are the Buddhist deity Ragaraja (No. 14), which represents the principle of “earthly desires are enlightenment,” and the Buddhist deity Achala (No. 21), which represents the principle that “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana.”

Also inscribed on the Gohonzon is a declaration by the Daishonin that reads, “Never in the 2,230 years since the passing of the Buddha has this great mandala appeared in the

world” (No. 32).

Demonstrating the law of causality on the Gohonzon are the two Buddhist promises—“Those who make offerings will gain good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles [of the Buddha]” (No. 5) and “Those who vex and trouble [the practitioners of the Law] will have their heads split into seven pieces” (No. 12).

Arrangement of the Gohonzon

THE graphic arrangement of the Gohonzon is based on the concept of the Ceremony in the Air depicted in the Lotus Sutra. The eleventh or “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” chapter depicts the appearance of a magnificent tower: “At that time in the Buddha’s presence there was a tower adorned with the seven treasures, five hundred *yojana* in height and two hundred and fifty *yojana* in width and depth, that rose up out of the earth and stood suspended in the air” (*The Lotus Sutra*, p. 170).

One *yojana* is said to be the distance the royal army could march in a day. According to one interpretation, 500 *yojana* would be equal to the radius of the earth. The Treasure Tower was closed when it first emerged, but Shakyamuni opened it when Many Treasures Thus Come One, who appeared to validate Shakyamuni’s teachings, invited him to sit with him in it. This is how the Ceremony in the Air begins.

Regarding the Treasure Tower, the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, says: “Within our lives exists the magnificent state of life beyond our compre-

hension called Buddhahood. This state of life or its power defies our imagination; nor can our words express it. However, we can concretely manifest this state in our lives. To explain that our lives can manifest the latent Buddha nature as a concrete reality is the ceremony depicted in ‘The Emergence of the Treasure Tower’ chapter.”

In other words, the appearance of the Treasure Tower is a metaphor for the magnificent Buddha nature in our lives. In the Lotus Sutra, the opening of the closed doors of the Treasure Tower represents the transition from a theoretical explanation of Buddhahood as a potential state to the actual manifestation of the Buddha nature in each person.

ON the Gohonzon, “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo—Nichiren” corresponds to the Treasure Tower. Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasures Thus Come One are seated in the tower facing the audience. The rest of the bodhisattvas, deities and various beings are facing these two Buddhas. In India, important persons are usually seated to the right. That Shakyamuni is placed to the left of “Nam-myoho-enge-kyo” as we face the Gohonzon and Bodhisattva Superior Practices (the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth) to the right means that Shakyamuni is facing out from within the Treasure Tower and Bodhisattva Superior Practices is facing him.

The Gohonzon diagram published along with this article will help you see the position and meaning of each inscription on the Nichikan-transcribed

Gohonzon. It is hoped that explaining the graphic components of the Gohonzon will make it easier for you to sense the meaning of Nichiren Daishonin's message to all humanity—that every individual is potentially a Buddha, that everyone can attain Buddhahood through faith in the Gohonzon.

WE can compare the graphic image of the Gohonzon to each of our lives. Living in such a defiled age as the Latter Day of the Law, our lives can be easily dominated by the lower life-conditions, such as Anger or Animality—when this happens it is just like putting those worlds in the center rather than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

Our lives are just like the Treasure Tower, but they may be closed and buried deep in the earth of delusion. Our challenge, therefore, is to bring the hidden Treasure Tower up from within the soil of our fundamental darkness and open it, establishing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in the center of our lives and illuminating our lower life-conditions—putting them in their proper places.

What makes this possible is the power of faith and practice for oneself and others. It is our challenge to continue to practice to the Gohonzon with firm faith in its message that we are innately endowed with the supreme treasure. In this way, we can solidify Buddhahood as the basis of our life-condition, as exemplified by the arrangement of the Gohonzon. □

(A version of this article appeared in the August 29, 1997, World Tribune.)

Further Explanation of the Diagram of the Nichikan-Transcribed Gohonzon

The following section gives further explanation of the diagram of the Nichikan-transcribed Gohonzon found on p. 23. The numbering of each term corresponds to the numbering on the diagram.

Many of the Buddhist gods' names include words such as Dai and tenno. Dai is an honorific term meaning great; tenno means heavenly king. The word namu is added to some names as a sign of great respect.

1. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo: The ultimate Law permeating all phenomena in the universe. The fundamental component of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, it expresses the true entity of life that allows people to directly tap their enlightened nature. Although the deepest meaning of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is revealed only through its practice, the literal meaning is: *nam* (devotion), the action of practicing Buddhism; *myoho* (Mystic Law), the entity of the universe and its phenomenal manifestations; *renge* (lotus flower, which blooms and seeds at the same time), the simultaneity of cause and effect; *kyo* (sutra, the voice or teaching of a Buddha), all phenomena. The invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo was established by Nichiren Daishonin, on April 28, 1253, at Seicho-ji temple in the province of Awa.

2. Nichiren (1222–82): The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true

object of worship, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one's mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the universal practice to attain enlightenment. Daishonin is an honorific title that means great sage. He was born on February 16, 1222, in the small fishing village of Kominato in Awa Province in what is presently Chiba Prefecture, Japan. In his writings he states that inscribing the Gohonzon, "...is the reason for my advent in this world" (MW-1, p. 30).

3. Zai gohan: Literally, *zai* means to exist; *go* is an honorific prefix, and in this case, denotes "Nichiren Daishonin's"; *han* means personal seal. Nichiren Daishonin is said to have instructed those who inscribe the Gohonzon to place the word *gohan* under his name.

4. Dai Bishamon-tenno (Great Heavenly King Vaishravana): One of the Four Heavenly Kings, who appear in the Lotus Sutra and vow to protect those who embrace the sutra. Bishamon lives halfway down the northern side of Mount Sumeru¹ and protects the north, accompanied by the two classes of demons called yaksha (Jp. *yasha*) and rakshasa (*rasetsu*). Bishamon is a transliteration of the Sanskrit Vaishravana. This god is said to always protect the place where the Buddha preaches and listen to the Buddha's teachings. In the twenty-sixth chapter of the Lotus

Sutra, he pledges to protect the votaries of the sutra.

5. “Those who make offerings will gain good fortune surpassing the ten honorable titles [of the Buddha].” The ten honorable titles that express a Buddha’s power, wisdom, virtue and compassion are:

a. Thus Come One—one who has come from the world of truth. A Buddha embodies the fundamental truth of all phenomena and grasps the law of causality permeating past, present and future.

b. Worthy of Offerings—one who is qualified to receive offerings from human and heavenly beings.

c. Right and Universal Knowledge—one who comprehends all phenomena correctly and perfectly.

d. Perfect Clarity and Conduct—one who understands the eternity of past, present and future, and who performs good deeds perfectly.

e. Well Gone—one who has gone to the world of enlightenment.

f. Understanding of the World—one who understands all secular and religious affairs through his grasp of the law of causality.

g. Unexcelled Worthy—one who stands supreme among all living beings.

h. Leader of People—one who instructs and leads all people to enlightenment.

i. Teacher of Gods and Humans—A teacher who can guide all human and heavenly beings.

j. Buddha, the World-Honored One—an awakened

one, endowed with perfect wisdom and virtue, who can win the respect of all people.

6. Namu Anryugyo Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Firmly Established Practices): One of the four bodhisattvas who are the leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. He appears in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. According to Tao-hsien’s “Supplement to the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” (*Hokke Mongu Fusho Ki*), the four bodhisattvas represent the four virtues of the Buddha: true self, eternity, purity and happiness. Bodhisattva Anryugyo represents happiness, the unshakable state of life filled with joy.

7. Namu Jyogyo Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Pure Practices): One of the four leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. He appears in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Tao-hsien’s *Hokke Mongu Fusho Ki* says that the four bodhisattvas represent the four virtues of the Buddha’s life—true self, eternity, purity and happiness. Bodhisattva Jyogyo represents purity, the pure state of life that is never swayed by circumstances.

8. Namu Shakamuni-butsu (Shakyamuni Buddha): The first recorded Buddha and founder of Buddhism, born about 2,500 years ago. He was the son of Shuddhodana, the king of the Shakyas, a small tribe whose kingdom was located in the foothills of the Himalayas south of what is now central Nepal. *Shakya* of Shakyamuni is taken from the name of this tribe and *muni* means sage or saint. His family name was Gautama (Best

Cow) and his given name was Siddhartha (Goal Achieved), though some scholars say this is a title bestowed on him by later Buddhists in honor of the enlightenment he attained. For fifty years, he expounded various sutras (teachings), culminating in the Lotus Sutra, which he declared his ultimate teaching. The Lotus Sutra provides the theoretical basis for the Gohonzon.

9. Namu Taho Nyorai (Many Treasures Thus Come One): A Buddha who appears, seated within the Treasure Tower, at the Ceremony in the Air to bear witness to the truth of Shakyamuni’s teachings in the Lotus Sutra. According to the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra, Taho Buddha lived in the world of Treasure Purity in an eastern part of the universe. While still engaged in bodhisattva practice, he pledged that, even after he had entered nirvana, he would appear, in the Treasure Tower, and attest to the validity of the Lotus Sutra wherever anyone might teach it. In the eleventh chapter, Shakyamuni assembles all the Buddhas from throughout the universe. He then opens the Treasure Tower and at Taho’s invitation seats himself at this Buddha’s side.

T’ien-t’ai interprets Taho and Shakyamuni seated side by side in the Treasure Tower as the fusion of reality and wisdom (Jp. *kyochi myogo*), with Taho representing the objective truth or ultimate reality, and Shakyamuni, the subjective wisdom to realize it. Moreover, Taho Buddha represents the property of the Law, Shakyamuni Buddha, the property of wisdom, and the Buddhas from throughout the universe, the

property of action; together they represent the “three properties.”³

Nichiren Daishonin uses these interpretations of T’ien-t’ai and further states in the “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life” that Shakyamuni and Taho represent, respectively, life and death, the two phases that the entity of life undergoes.

10. Namu Jogyo Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Superior Practices): One of the four bodhisattvas and the leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. He appears in the fifteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra.

Tao-hsien says in the *Hokke Mongu Fusho Ki* that the four bodhisattvas represent the four virtues of the Buddha’s life: true self, eternity, purity and happiness. Among these, Jogyo represents the virtue of true self.

Nichiren Daishonin interprets Bodhisattva Jogyo as the provisional or ephemeral figure of the original Buddha of *kuon ganjo*⁴ projected at the Ceremony in the Air. (See September 1997 *Living Buddhism*, pp. 8–10.)

11. Namu Muhengyo Bosatsu (Bodhisattva Boundless Practices): One of the four bodhisattvas who lead the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Muhengyo literally means no boundary and represents eternity, one of the four virtues of the Buddha’s life.

12. Nyaku noran sha zu ha shichibun: “Those who vex and trouble [the practitioners of the Law] will have their heads split into seven pieces.” An analogy for the fact that negative causes against the Mystic Law will produce loss in one’s life.

13. Dai Jikoku-tenno (Great Heavenly King Upholder of the Nation): One of the Four Heavenly Kings. He lives half-way down the eastern side of Mount Sumeru and protects the eastern quarter. In the twenty-sixth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he pledges to protect those who embrace the sutra.

14. Aizen-myo’o (Wisdom King Craving-Filled): A Buddhist deity who is said to purify people’s earthly desires and free them from illusions and the sufferings accruing from earthly desires. In the esoteric teachings,⁵ his true identity is regarded as Dainichi (Skt. Mahavairochana) Buddha or Kongosatta (Skt. Vajrasattva). 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 are enlightenment.”

15. Dai Myojo-tenno (Great Heavenly King Stars, or the god of the stars): A deification of the stars in Indian mythology, incorporated into Buddhism as one of the twelve gods.⁶

16. Dai Gattenno (Great Heavenly King Moon): A deification of the moon in Indian mythology, incorporated into Buddhism as one of the twelve gods.

17. Taishaku-tenno (Heavenly King Shakra, also known as Heavenly King Indra): One of the main tutelary gods of Buddhism, together with Bon-ten. He is also one of the twelve gods said to protect the world.

Originally the god of thunder in Indian mythology, he was later incorporated into Buddhism as a protective deity. He lives in a palace called Correct Views or Joyful to See in the Trayastrimsha Heaven on the peak of Mount Sumeru and, served by the Four Heavenly Kings, governs the other thirty-two gods of that heaven.

While Shakyamuni was engaged in bodhisattva practice, Taishaku is said to have assumed various forms to test his resolve. According to the first chapter of the Lotus Sutra, he joined the assembly on Eagle Peak,⁷ accompanied by 20,000 retainers.

18. Dai Bontenno (Great Heavenly King Brahma): A god said to live in the first of the four meditation heavens in the world of form above Mount Sumeru and to rule the *saha*⁸ world. In Indian mythology, he was regarded as the personification of the fundamental universal principle (Brahman), and in Buddhism he was adopted as one of the two major tutelary gods, together with Taishaku.

19. Dai Rokuten no Mao (Devil King of the Sixth Heaven): Many devils appear in Indian and Buddhist scriptures, the most formidable and powerful of which is the Devil King of the Sixth Heaven. He is the king of devils who dwells in the highest of the six heavens of the world of desire and delights in manipulating others to do his will. He is regarded as a symbol of lust for power. He is also called Takejizaiten, the king who makes free use of the fruits of others’ efforts for his own pleasure. Served by innumerable minions, he works

to obstruct Buddhist practice and delights in sapping the life force of other beings. He corresponds to the last of “the three obstacles and four devils.”⁹ Nichiren Daishonin interprets this devil as the manifestation of the fundamental darkness inherent in life. Especially in Buddhism devils are interpreted to mean functions that work to block or hinder people in their Buddhist practice.

20. Dai Nittenno (Great Heavenly King Sun): The divinity of the sun, adopted in Buddhism as a protective god. He is said to be a subject of Taishaku.

21. Fudo-myō’o (Wisdom King Immovable): A Buddhist deity who serves practitioners by defeating the obstacles and evils that hinder Buddhist practice. It is said that he enters into a flame-emitting meditation in which he exudes flames that destroy all karmic hindrances. Because he never yields to obstacles, he is called Fudo (Immovable). He is popularly depicted as an angry figure surrounded by flames, holding a rope and a sword. He signifies that “the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana (Jp. *shoji soku nehan*).”

22. Hachi Dairyuo (Eight Great Dragon Kings): Kings of the dragons said to live at the bottom of the sea. Eight dragon kings, each with many followers, assembled at the ceremony on Eagle Peak to hear the Lotus Sutra. According to the Kairyuo Sutra (Sutra of the Dragon King of the Sea), dragons are often eaten by giant birds called *garudas*, their natural enemy.

23. Dengyo Daishi (Great Teacher Dengyo): The founder of the Tendai sect in Japan. He is also called Saicho. At age 12, he entered the Buddhist Order and studied under Gyohyo at the provincial temple in Omi. In April 785, he was fully ordained at Todai-ji temple, receiving the 250 precepts. In June of the same year, he went to Mount Hiei and built a small retreat there where he devoted himself to the study of Buddhist scriptures and treatises, especially those of the T’ien-t’ai school.

In 804, Dengyo went to T’ang China accompanied by his disciple, Gishin. There he studied T’ien-t’ai Buddhism under Miao-lo’s disciple Tao-sui who was then staying at Lung-hsing-ssu temple. After that, Dengyo went to Mount T’ien-t’ai where he studied under Hsing-man, another disciple of Miao-lo. In 805, he returned to Japan and the next year established the Tendai sect. At that time, all priests were ordained exclusively in the Theraveda precepts. Dengyo made continuing efforts to secure imperial permission for the building of a Mahayana ordination center on Mount Hiei, despite concentrated opposition from the older sects of Nara. Permission was finally granted a week after his death, and in 827, the ordination center was completed by his successor, Gishin. In addition to this project, after his return to Japan, Dengyo concentrated his efforts on refuting the interpretations of the older Buddhist sects. In particular, his ongoing debate with Tokuchi, a priest of the Hosso sect, is well known. This debate began in the early Konin era (810–824). Tokuchi asserted that the one-vehicle teaching of

the Lotus Sutra was a provisional teaching that Shakyamuni Buddha expounded in accordance with the people’s capacity, while the three-vehicle teachings were true teachings, and that there are some people who are without the potential to attain Buddhahood. In opposition to this assertion, Dengyo maintained that all people have the Buddha nature and that the supreme vehicle of Buddhahood expounded in the Lotus Sutra is the true teaching. He was a key figure in upholding the righteousness of the Lotus Sutra in the Middle Day of the Law.

24. Jurasetsunyo (Ten Demon Daughters; also known as the Ten Goddesses): The ten daughters of the female demon Kishimojin (Skt. Hariti). They are Ramba (Lamba), Biramba (Vilamba), Kokushi (Kutadanti) or Crooked Teeth, Keshi (Pushpadanti) or Flowery Teeth, Kokushi (Makutadanti) or Black Teeth, Tahotsu (Keshini) or Much Hair, Muenzoku (Achala) or Insatiable, Jiyoraku (Maladhari) or Necklace Bearer, Kodai (Kunti), and Datsu Issai-shujo Shoke (Sarvasattvojohari) or Robber of the Vital Spirit of All Living Beings. In the twenty-sixth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, they pledge to protect the sutra’s votaries.

25. Kishimojin (Mother of Demon Children): A female demon, said to have been a daughter of a *yaksha* demon in Rajagriha, India. She had 500 children (some sources say 1,000 or 10,000). 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. 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 twenty-sixth chapter of the Lotus Sutra, she and her ten daughters pledged before the Buddha to safeguard the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.

26. Tendai Daishi (Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai, also called Chih-i): The founder of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai school, commonly referred to as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. His name and title were taken from Mount T'ien-t'ai, where he lived.

T'ien-t'ai refuted the scriptural classifications formulated by the ten major Buddhist schools of his day, which based themselves either on the *Kegon* (The Flower Garland Sutra) or Nirvana Sutra, and devised the classification of "the five periods and eight teachings," thereby establishing the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra. He also expounded the theory of "a life-moment possessing 3,000 realms" (*ichinen sanzen*). Because he systematized both its doctrine and method of practice, he is revered as the founder of the school. If Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra provides the theoretical basis for the Gohonzon, T'ien-

t'ai's *ichinen sanzen* can be likened to a blueprint.

27. Dai Zojo-tenno (Great Heavenly King Increase and Growth): One of the Four Heavenly Kings. He lives halfway down the southern face of Mount Sumeru and guards the south.

28. Hachiman Dai Bosatsu (Great Bodhisattva Hachiman): One of the main deities in Japanese mythology, along with Tensho Daijin (Sun Goddess). There are several views concerning the question of how he came to be worshipped. According to one explanation, in the reign of the twenty-ninth emperor, Kimmei, the god Hachiman appeared as a smith in the southern part of Japan, and declared that in a past life he had been Emperor Ojin, the fifteenth emperor of Japan.

His aid was sought after in his capacity as the god of smiths when the great image of Vairochana was erected at Todai-ji temple in Nara, and from that time on, Hachiman came to be more and more closely associated with Buddhism. Early in the Heian period (794–1185), the imperial court named him Great Bodhisattva, an early example of the fusion of Buddhist and Shinto elements.

In his writings, Nichiren Daishonin views Hachiman as a personification of the function that promotes the agricultural fertility of a land whose inhabitants embrace the Law.

29. Kore o shosha shi tatematsuru: "I respectfully transcribed this." *I* generally refers to the high priest who transcribed the Gohonzon.

30. Nichikan (1665–1726): The twenty-sixth high priest, who is revered as a restorer of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, together with Nichiu Shonin, the ninth high priest. He worked tirelessly to clarify the Daishonin's teachings during a time when a number of errors and misconceptions had become widespread.

Nichikan Shonin wrote exegeses on the Daishonin's five major writings and other works and also wrote the *Six-volume Writings (Rokkan Sho)*, which distinguishes the correct interpretations of the Daishonin's teachings from misleading ones.

31. Tensho-daijin: The Sun Goddess in Japanese mythology, who was later adopted as a protective god in Buddhism. According to the oldest extant histories, the *Kojiki* (Record of Ancient Matters) and the *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan), she was the chief deity and also the progenitor of the imperial clan. In many of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin views Tensho Daijin as a personification of the workings that protect the prosperity of those people who have faith in the Law.

32. Butsumetsugo ni-sen ni-hyaku san-ju yo nen no aida ichienbudai no uchi mizou no dai-mandara nari— Never in 2,230-some years since the passing of the Buddha has this great mandala appeared in the world.

33. Dai Komoku-tenno (Great Heavenly King Wide-Eyed): One of the Four Heavenly Kings. He lives halfway down the

western side of Mount Sumeru and protects the western continent. With his divine eyesight, he is said to discern evil and punish those who do evil deeds, and to arouse the aspiration for attaining Buddhahood.

34. June 13, 1720, cyclical sign *kanoe-ne*: The date the original Gohonzon was transcribed by Nichikan Shonin. Cyclical sign refers to one of sixty calendar signs, which are based on the twelve animal signs of the

Chinese zodiac and the ten elements of nature according to old Chinese traditions. *Kanoe-ne* means “Year of the Yang (element of) Metal and the Rat,” the thirty-seventh year of the sixty-year calendar cycle. □

1. Mount Sumeru: A mountain thought to stand at the center of the world, according to ancient Indian tradition. It is said to measure 84,000 *yojana* above the surface of the sea and 84,000 *yojana* below, and to be composed of gold, silver, emerald and crystal, with four sides facing north, south, east and west, respectively. The god Taishaku resides on the summit, while the Four Heavenly Kings live halfway down the four sides.

Mount Sumeru is surrounded by seven concentric mountain ranges made of gold, between which are seven perfumed seas. The seventh gold mountain range is surrounded by a salt ocean, in which are the four continents of Puravideha (Jp. Hotsubadai), Aparogdaniya (Kuyani), Uttarakuru (Uttanotsu) and Jambudvipa (Embudai), lying respectively to the east, west, north and south. It is said that Buddhism spreads in Jambudvipa. The salt ocean is in turn bounded by a circular range of iron mountains that stands at the rim of the world. A sun and a moon move around Mount Sumeru.

2. Tao-hsien: A priest of the T’ien-t’ai school in T’ang China. He wrote the “Supplement to the Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” (*Hokke Mongu Fusho Ki*), a commentary on Miao-lo’s “Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra” (*Hokke Mongu Ki*).

3. Three properties: The three properties are: (1) the property of the Law (Jp. *hosshin*), or the essential property of the Buddha’s life, which is the truth to which the Buddha is enlightened; (2) the property of wisdom (Jp. *hoshin*), or the spiritual property of the Buddha’s life, which enables the Buddha to perceive the truth; and (3) the property of action (Jp. *ojin*), or the physical property of the Buddha’s life. The property of action is the Buddha’s body with which he carries out compassionate actions to save people, or these actions themselves.

4. *Kuon ganjo*: Time without beginning. Also called the infinite past. The term *kuon ganjo* is used to indicate an eternity without beginning, as opposed to the specific point in time called *gohyaku-jin-*

tengo, which is expounded in the sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra. *Kuon ganjo* suggests a past far older than even the inconceivably distant *gohyaku-jintengo*, but philosophically speaking, it indicates that dimension that is outside the temporal framework, having neither beginning nor end.

5. Esoteric teachings: Those teachings that are revealed secretly and are beyond the understanding of ordinary people. According to the Shingon sect, the esoteric teachings are those teachings that were preached by Dainichi (Skt. Mahavairochana) Buddha to Kongosattva (Vajrasattva), who compiled them and sealed them in an iron tower in southern India where they were later transferred to Nagarjuna by Kongosattva.

Esoteric Buddhism is a form of Tantrism, which incorporates indigenous magical and ritualistic elements such as symbolic gestures (*mudras*), spells (*mantras*) and mystic syllables (*dharanis*), as well as diagrams (*mandalas*) and the worship of numerous deities.

6. Twelve gods: Twelve kinds of gods said to protect the world. They are the god of earth, the god of water, the god of fire, the god of wind, Ishana who lives in the sixth, or highest, heaven of the world of desire, Taishaku, Emma, Bonten, Bishamon, the rakushasa (Jp. *rasetsu*) demons, the god of the sun and the god of the moon.

7. Eagle Peak: Sometimes called Vulture Peak. A mountain located to the northeast of Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha in ancient India, where Shakyamuni is said to have expounded the Lotus Sutra and other teachings. According to the “Treatise on the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom” (Jp. *Daichido Ron*), Eagle Peak got its name because the summit is shaped like an eagle and because it was inhabited by many eagles. The expression *Eagle Peak* is also used to symbolize the Buddha land or the state of Buddhahood.

8. *Saha* world: This world, which is full of sufferings. The Sanskrit word *saha* means endurance. It is called this because people in this world must

endure many sufferings stemming from the three poisons—greed, anger and foolishness—and other earthly desires.

9. Three obstacles and four devils: A categorization of the various obstacles and hindrances that trouble one’s practice of Buddhism. The three obstacles are: (1) The obstacle of earthly desires, or obstacles arising from the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness. (2) The obstacle of karma, or obstacles due to bad karma created by committing negative causes. This category is also interpreted as opposition from one’s wife or children. (3) The obstacle of retribution, or obstacles due to painful retribution for actions in the three evil paths (the three lower of the ten worlds—Hell, Hunger and Animality). This category also indicates obstacles caused by one’s sovereign, parents or other persons who carry some sort of secular authority.

The four devils are: (1) The hindrance of the five components, that is, those obstructions caused by one’s physical and mental functions. (2) The hindrance of earthly desires, or obstructions arising from the three poisons. (3) The hindrance of death, because the fear and suffering that death entails obstruct one’s practice of Buddhism. (4) The hindrance of the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. This obstruction is usually said to take the form of oppression by those in power.

In “Letter to the Brothers,” Nichiren Daishonin states: “If you propagate it, devils will arise without fail. Were it not for these, there would be no way of knowing that this is the true teaching... [Quoting from the works of T’ien-t’ai] ‘As practice progresses and understanding grows, the three obstacles and four devils emerge, vying with one another to interfere.... You should be neither influenced nor frightened by them. If you are frightened by them, you will be prevented from practicing true Buddhism.’ This quotation not only applies to Nichiren but also is the guide for his disciples. Reverently make this teaching your own and transmit it as an axiom of faith to future generations” (MW-1, p. 145).

The Courageous Lady of Sado Island

By David Baldschun,
Assistant Managing Editor



The following two articles introduce one of Nichiren Daishonin's most famous disciples, Sennichi-ama. The one beginning on this page is a historical account of her life. In the article on page 28, Faye Hovey gives us a fictionalized first-person account of Sennichi-ama's thoughts.

SHE was living comfortably and peacefully with her aged husband in their farming village on Sado Island. Her son, Tokuro, was married and had taken over most of her husband's duties. She saw the rest of her life as a simple, happy time with her beloved Abutsu-bo. But the arrival of a controversial priest to their island off the coast of Japan

would turn her into a conspirator, guilty of violating government policy. Her association with the priest Nichiren would also make her one of the bravest and most famous women in Buddhist history. She was Sennichi-ama.

Like her husband, she was a lifetime believer of the Nembutsu Buddhist sect which believed in attaining entrance to

a heaven-like Pure Land by chanting the name of Amida Buddha. Nichiren Daishonin had denounced the sect as contradictory to Shakyamuni's teachings and the cause of the calamities and suffering of the nation. It was because of this view that the Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island in October 1271 and put in confinement under the responsibility of the local magistrate,

Honma Shigetsura, on his estate at Sanmaido. When news of the arrival of this heretical priest spread among the Nembutsu believers of the area, they were outraged.

One of those who was outraged the most was the respected headman of the village, a former samurai, Endo Tamemori. Tamemori was his secular name but to demonstrate his devotion to Amida Buddha, he changed his name to Abutsu-bo, a contraction in Japanese of Yui-Amida-Butsu. He was simply known as Abutsu-bo and was in his 80s.

WHEN he heard that this criminal priest living near his village had proclaimed that all Nembutsu believers were going to hell, Abutsu-bo was filled with murderous intent. One evening he went to the shabby hut at Sanmaido. As he approached through the snow, he heard the intriguing sound of chanting coming from the hut—*Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*, *Nam-myoho-enge-kyo*. It was Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko chanting against the cold.

He called out and the door opened. Abutsu-bo's eyes met Nichiren Daishonin's. The priest had a faint smile on his face and his eyes were filled with such compassion that Abutsu-bo was taken aback. Invited in against the cold wind, the elderly villager entered and sat down before Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko.

He must have asked if it was true that the Daishonin said Nembutsu believers were going to hell.

Calmly and reasonably, the Daishonin would have explained that Amida Buddha should not be one's object of

worship because that Buddha is only a symbol Shakyamuni used to explain the enlightenment he had attained. Shakyamuni himself stated that the teachings leading up to the Lotus Sutra were only expounded to pave the way for what he really wanted to say—that the essence of universal truth is contained within the Lotus Sutra—*Myoho-enge-kyo*.

Myoho-enge-kyo is not merely the name of the sutra. It is the core of all of Shakyamuni's teachings and the soul of the Buddha.

After a while, there was a great change in the heart of Abutsu-bo and warm tears filled his eyes. He vowed to never utter the Nembutsu chant ever again. When he returned to his home that night, Sennichi-ama listened to his tale in great wonder. Abutsu-bo had always been a passionate man, but that night he could barely contain himself. When her husband had finished, she was convinced of the righteousness of the Daishonin's Buddhism as well.

When Abutsu-bo said that he was going to take food and supplies to the priest's hut, violating government policy toward the Daishonin, he tried to persuade Sennichi-ama to remain behind. But she would have none of that and the two of them trudged on through the snow with their packs on their backs. Night after night, the two of them made their way past the guards to the Daishonin's shack.

He later wrote to her:

When I was exiled to the province of Sado, the constable of the province and the other officials, following the designs of the regent, treated me with

animosity. And the ordinary people went along with their orders. In addition, the Nembutsu believers and the Zen, Ritsu and Shingon priests in Kamakura sent word that by no means should I be allowed to return there from the island of Sado....Thus it seemed that I could not possibly escape with my life. Whatever Heaven's design in the matter may have been, every single steward and Nembutsu believer worthy of the name kept strict watch on my hut day and night, determined to prevent anyone from communicating with me. Never in any lifetime will I forget how under those circumstances you, with Abutsu-bo, carrying a wooden container of food on his back, again and again came in the night to bring me aid. It was as though my deceased mother had suddenly been reborn in the province of Sado! (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 255)

THEY also joined Nikko in spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism across the island, starting with their own son, relatives and friends. Because Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama were held in such high esteem, their propagation activities were very successful. As a result, the Abutsu-bos were harassed with fines, being driven from their home and having it confiscated.

The priests of other sects were dismayed. Not only were their efforts to kill the Daishonin through starvation unsuccessful, they were losing many of their own congregation. When they complained to the magistrate Honma about the situa-

tion, he suggested a public debate. On January 16, 1272, the single priest Nichiren defeated scores of priests from the major sects of the day before hundreds of farmers, villagers and the magistrate. Many Nembutsu adherents threw down their prayer beads and pledged to never chant Nembutsu again.

Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama shared the victory with the Daishonin and Nikko as all their propagation efforts were validated. About a month later, Honma Shigetsura became a follower of the Daishonin and provided more hospitable accommodations for him at a residence in Ichinosawa.

FROM here, the Daishonin continued to pen more of his most important works. He also inscribed a Gohonzon for Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama. In response to a question from Abutsu-bo, he wrote "On the Treasure Tower." This letter of March 13, 1272 contains the famous quotation:

Abutsu-bo is the Treasure Tower itself, and the Treasure Tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful.... You, yourself are a true Buddha who possesses the three enlightened properties.... Faith like yours is so extremely rare that I will inscribe the Treasure Tower especially for you.... This is the reason for my advent in this world.... You and your wife should worship this Treasure Tower.... (MW-1, p. 30)

In February 1274, a messenger arrived from the capital city, Kamakura, with a pardon for Nichiren Daishonin. This was at

once good news and sad news for the couple. Their days with the Daishonin had been the most fulfilling of their lives and now he was preparing to return to the capital to continue his efforts to propagate the Law. Leaving Abutsu-bo and Sennichi-ama as leaders of the believers on Sado, the Daishonin and Nikko departed. It was a sad parting for everyone.

Eventually, the couple heard that Nichiren Daishonin had retired to the remote Mount Minobu region after the government rejected his third remonstrance to save the nation.

IN 1275, the aged Abutsu-bo declared his intention to visit the Daishonin. This was a courageous decision because the journey required crossing the treacherous sea of Japan as well as the long overland route into the mountains of Minobu. But equally courageous was Sennichi-ama's support of her husband's decision. She would remain behind to take care of their responsibilities at home. She realized that she may never see him again. But she also understood her husband's deep desire to see their master again.

During the four years between 1275 and 1278, he visited the Daishonin three times. Each time, the Daishonin praised Sennichi-ama's courage to let her husband make the dangerous trip. In one of his letters to her he wrote:

It is easy to sustain our concern for someone who is before our eyes, but quite a different thing when he or she is far away, even though in our hearts we may not forget that person. Nevertheless, in the five years...

I have been living here in the mountains, you have three times sent your husband from the province of Sado to visit me. What profound sincerity! Your faith is weightier than the great earth, deeper than the great sea! (MW-6, p. 256)

In 1279, Abutsu-bo died on Sado, leaving a grieving Sennichi-ama. Following his father's wishes, Tokuro carried his ashes to Mount Minobu to rest near the Daishonin. The Daishonin, acutely aware of Sennichi-ama's suffering over the loss of Abutsu-bo, wrote to her:

Some may wonder where the spirit of the late Abutsu-bo may be at this moment. But by using the bright mirror of the Lotus Sutra to reflect his image, I, Nichiren, can see him among the assembly on Eagle Peak, seated within the Treasure Tower of Taho Buddha and facing toward the east. (MW-6, p. 297)

THE letters written to Sennichi-ama from the Daishonin are among the most moving written to any of his followers. His great love and respect, his praise for her strong faith are evident throughout. He wrote to her that even though they had not met face to face during Abutusu-bo's pilgrimages, it was their heart-to-heart connection that mattered most.

She practiced the Daishonin's teachings on a remote island, far from the centers of his activities on the mainland, and yet her faith shone so brightly that centuries later, its light reaches us today. □

No Distance Can Separate Two Hearts

By Faye Hovey,
Maui, Hawaii



ALL of us have felt the suffering of being separated from someone important to us. In “The Drum at the Gate of Thunder,” Nichiren Daishonin praises a woman follower, Sennichi-ama, for her abiding faith, and reminds us that no distance can separate two hearts.

This fictionalized insight into Sennichi-ama’s life and feelings reflects my own picture of what it must have been like for her, “a mere woman” in old Japan, to encounter someone like the Daishonin. In this story, I have used my own imagination to give this woman disciple a voice.

For me, the Daishonin’s letters are like doorways to those times and it is possible to be “of one heart” over time and space with any of the fascinating people that were a part of his life. Imagine, if you will, the kind of human revolution it took to become a follower of the Daishonin during those times. Without the poetry and graceful imagery provided by his letters, filled with kindness, consideration, stern advice and compassion, we would never know them—people just like us, in troubled times similar to our own; people we encounter every time we read one of his writings.



"The Drum at the Gate of Thunder"

A WOMAN who embraces the lion king of the Lotus Sutra need not fear the beasts of Hell, Hunger and Animality. All the offenses committed by a woman in her lifetime are like dry grass, and the single character *myo* of the Lotus Sutra is like a small spark. When a small spark is set to a large expanse of grass, not only the grass but also big trees and large stones will all be consumed. Such is the power of the fire of wisdom in the single character *myo*....

It is a thousand *ri* across the sea and mountains from Sado to this province. You, as a woman, have held fast to your faith in the Lotus Sutra; and over the years you have repeatedly sent your husband here to visit me in your place. Surely, the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni, Taho and all other Buddhas of the ten directions know of your devotion. For example, though the moon is forty thousand *yojana* high in the heavens, its reflection appears instantly in a pond on the earth; and the sound of the drum at the Gate of Thunder is immediately heard, ten million *ri* in the distance. Though you remain in Sado, your heart has come to this province.

The way of attaining Buddhahood is just like this. Although we live in the impure land, our minds reside at Eagle Peak. Merely seeing each other's face would in itself be insignificant. What matters is one's heart. Someday let us meet at Eagle Peak, where Shakyamuni Buddha dwells. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, pp. 288-89)

Sennichi-ama: My Story

WHAT is enlightenment? What does this mean to me, a woman? A mere woman they would say in my day is unfit for anything other than child-bearing and the keeping of the house. But enlightenment? This I have always known but kept closely to my heart...one would never mention it to others, oh no,

but I have known, since I was a child, that the same power that dwells in a man must dwell in a woman. After all, it is we who give birth to men, so it has to be within us also, yes? It only makes sense, yes? But of course, one could never say, even in the company of other women who have been taught so well to believe otherwise.

I would never have considered or



desired it, this enlightenment. For years, it was said that Buddha lived long ago and if I were to attain Buddhahood at all it would be possible only if I were reborn as a man. But then, many things don't make sense and the older I get the less it matters what others think. I know what I know.

I cannot go to see the Daishonin. Now I am in my eighties, and here on the isolated island of Sado my walk is stiff, and there are the animals to tend, my small orchard to prune, the daily things of life that claim me.

And it is so far to where he dwells. I would have to ride many days in a small, leaky boat, chance being smashed upon the rocks in a storm, walk many miles over mountains where bandits and evil men lie in wait for the foolish, the weak and the unwary.

But I know he is there. Once every few months, his messages come. It is a wondrous thing, how these messages get to us. A fisherman, smelly and old, climbs

the rocky path to our door, to hand us a small scroll wrapped in oiled cloth, bound with an old fishing skein to keep it dry. Or one of his disciples, on a special journey, stops in for a bowl of rice and pickles, digs deeply into his pack and lo, there is a length of hollow bamboo sealed with tallow and string.

We wait until it is dark, our lamp lit, our tea bowls steaming after dinner. My husband's eyes are weak, so it is I who smooths the stiffened scroll, using small beach stones to weight the corners and bend forward to peer at the calligraphy.

Many times when he lived on Sado I brought him paper. It was such a treasure for him. What little I could provide him with in this stark place, I did...a flask of rice wine to warm him, a basket of apples. He was always so grateful.

One time, approaching his hut in the field where he lived, I heard him heartily laughing. He had been trying to drink his tea and was having difficulty picking up the cup with his cold fingers. The front of



his robe was wet with tea and he happily took the paper I had saved for him, saying it was good that winter always turns to spring and his writing would have to wait until then when his fingers could cooperate with the brush.

It was from this unusual man in our midst here on Sado that I learned that women could become enlightened too. Imagine my profound astonishment to hear this. It was as if he had said that humans would walk one day on the face of the moon. And although the idea of enlightenment made perfect sense, still it seemed as out of reach as the moon. From the first moment I began to chant the phrase he taught us, everything became possible.

When he left, his exile over, I bowed low, tried hard to blot my tears with my sleeve before he could see them. He was like our father, going away for good. I patted the horse's muzzle, my husband checking the belongings strapped to the horse's rump and I knew I would never see him again in this life. My feet would not follow, my life, a woman's life on a remote island, too deeply set. "Though you remain in Sado, your heart has come to this province," the letter said.

That day, I watched him leave, my husband and I waving good-bye, and then he was gone down the hillside, to the shore and the mainland of Japan, eventually to another little hut on the side of Mount Minobu.

So, I sent my husband, three times, laden with gifts, a habit I couldn't break,

never knowing when or if my husband would return. Later, I rolled up the scroll in its oiled cloth and placed it in a chest with the others. I think about my life, so small it has been, and yet it has been touched by someone great, and that greatness has been ignited in me. And I still have my husband, a miracle in these times when men are as expendable as stalks of grass. Soon death will come to claim us. I am a simple woman. But I know what I know.

I know the heart can dwell in two places at once, perhaps more. And in this *saha* world so filled with trouble and strife, we can choose to dwell at the same time at Eagle Peak.

So we sit this night on Sado, Buddhas together with him far away on Minobu. For after all, he has said, what matters is one's heart. □

Illustrations by Ed Lee

Fay Hovey lives in the town of Haiku on the island of Maui, Hawaii. She is a published poet and essayist. "I've watched with interest and enthusiasm the evolution of Living Buddhism over the last few years. It has always been a deep desire for me to be able to contribute something. Our magazines, our newspapers greet us in our mail boxes, pulsing with life, connecting us to each other. In a similar fashion, the Daishonin's writings brought life, encouragement and clarification of Buddhist concepts to his followers."



This is the twenty-fourth installment of an ongoing discussion 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 January 1997 issue of the *Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

The “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) chapter describes the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as being unsoiled by worldly things “like the lotus flower in the water” (LS15, 222),¹ that is, like blossoming lotus flowers that appear in the midst of a muddy swamp. The discussion this time turns to the symbols of the lotus and the sun; the significance of Nichiren’s name; the “world of empty space underneath the saha world” (LS15, 213) where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are said to have dwelled previously; and other topics relating to the lotus flower, an important symbol in Buddhism and in many civilizations of the world.

Katsuji Saito: This is our second discussion on the “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) chapter. It is the chapter in which, by way of praise, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are compared with lotus flowers. In the sutra they are said to be “like the lotus flower in the water” (LS15, 222). I’d like to suggest, as a way to deepen our understanding of the chapter, that we narrow the focus of our discussion this time to an examination of the lotus flower.

Daisaku Ikeda: That sounds fine. The lotus is indeed a mysterious flower. In the Buddhist canon, it has deep and important significance. However, if we were to focus solely on a discussion of the various doctrines that pertain to the lotus flower, we could fill dozens of volumes. That would mean that this series of conversations would never end.

Therefore, I propose we begin by taking a look at how people in different parts of the world

have viewed the lotus flower throughout history—a sort of cultural history of the lotus. Let us save for another occasion a more detailed study of the profound principles of Buddhism as they relate to the lotus flower.

Takanori Endo: I agree and since this discussion will appear in the first issue of the new year [of the *Daibyakurenge*], I think it might be nice to steer clear of difficult doctrinal issues insofar as possible.

DIALOGUE ON THE LOTUS SUTRA



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



Saito: That's a good idea. Culturally people in different places and ages most certainly must have viewed the lotus flower very differently from one another. To begin with, I suspect there are quite a few young people these days who have never actually seen one.

Haruo Suda: In Japan, the lotus is associated with funerals and the annual Festival of Lanterns.² At the same time, however, since ancient times the lotus has

been taken to symbolize that which is noble. In China, for example, it was known as the "flower of nobility."

Endo: In modern Japanese, there is an expression comparing a beautiful woman to a cotton rose (Jp. *Fuyo*); originally, however, the word for the flower in this expression meant the lotus. Similarly, I understand that in India there is an expression comparing the beauty of a woman's eyes to the lotus flower.

Saito: In Japan today it would be rare for one to associate a woman's beauty with that of the lotus flower. But even if someone did, few women would consider it a compliment.

Ikeda: India and Japan are two different cultures. That brings to mind something that happened during my first visit to Portugal. I went to a flower shop with the intention of buying some chrysanthemums to present to a guest, but the local people there discouraged me from doing so. In Japan, chrysanthemums are symbols of elegance and refinement, but in Portugal they are used primarily at funerals and are taken as a sign of sadness and grief. People's perceptions of flowers vary widely from one country or culture to the next.

The Lotus and the Waterlily

Ikeda: Why don't we conduct a little quiz? Since the three of you are always giving other people tests, it wouldn't hurt for you yourselves to be tested once in a while.

The Japanese term *rengé* (lotus flower) refers to two general varieties of flowers: the lotus (Jp. *hasu*) and the waterlily (Jp. *suiren*). What is the relation between these two?

Endo: All right. In terms of its botanical classification, *rengé* refers to the waterlily (*Nymphaeaceae*) family, which contains the lotus (*Nelumbo*) genus and waterlily (*Nymphaea*) genus. The Chinese characters for the waterlily genus by the way mean "sleeping lotus." Among such waterlilies, there are some that

bloom during the day and some that bloom at night. They are called sleeping lotuses because, in either case, when the proper time arrives they fold up their petals as though falling asleep.

Saito: There is also a type of waterlily native to Japan called ram grass (Jp. *hitsujigusa*; pygmy waterlily). This species is so called because it opens its petals at the time known in Japanese chronology as “the hour of the ram,” which is around 2:00 p.m.

Endo: Such day-blooming lilies close up and “go to sleep” when the sun sets.

Suda: It seems that the plants of the lotus genus also open their petals around dawn and close in the afternoon.

Ikeda: While the lotus and waterlily seem similar, they differ in a number of ways. What about their appearance?

Suda: In the case of the lotus, both the stem and the lotus rhizome, or root, are hollow. The rhizome has joints, and it is from these joints that the leaves and flower emerge. The stem grows out above the surface of the water, and the bud blossoms atop it. It then produces seeds from this position suspended above the water.

By contrast, neither the stem nor the roots of the waterlily are hollow. Its roots are solid like those of a potato. The flowers float on the surface of the water and it is there that they bloom; when the flowers wither, they sink down and then seed underwater.

Saito: In the general Buddhist

canon, *renga* may refer to either the lotus or the waterlily. But in the Lotus Sutra, it refers to only the lotus, and to the white lotus in particular.

Ikeda: How many different varieties of lotus and waterlily are there?

Endo: From a botanical viewpoint, there are only two kinds of lotus. There is the strain that is prevalent in Asia and Oceania, and there is the American lotus or water chinquapin of North America.

As for the waterlily, there are approximately forty strains throughout the world. While most of these are tropical, there are temperate varieties. Included among them are the white waterlily originally from the Mediterranean region (which has spread widely across the Eurasian continent) and Japan’s ram grass.

Suda: In South America’s Amazon basin, there is a strain of waterlily called the water platter or victoria lily. This plant is so large that its floating pad can support the weight of a small child on the water.

Ikeda: That’s right—I recall hearing about that. By the way, do you suppose there are lotus flowers or waterlilies in Europe?

Endo: The white waterlily that I mentioned a moment ago is native to the Mediterranean region and grows wild in Europe. However, it seems that there are no wild lotus plants, although there are fossils of lotus from the region.

Ikeda: The lotus has existed since very ancient times. As I recall, they have been traced as far back as the Cretaceous period (or about 135 million years ago). It seems they flourished immediately after the appearance of seed plants or spermatophyte.

Suda: In Europe, the white waterlily is a symbol of chastity. In the language of flowers, the waterlily signifies inner purity and faithfulness.

Ikeda: Speaking of European waterlilies, the paintings of waterlilies by the French Impressionist Claude Monet (1840–1926) are well known. The Tokyo Fuji Art Museum has one of them in its collection. I once discussed Monet’s waterlilies with the noted French art historian René Huyghe.

What about in Africa then?

Saito: There are waterlilies in Egypt. The waterlily is in fact Egypt’s national flower. Many waterlilies grow along the banks of the Nile River. These include both night-blooming white waterlilies and day-blooming blue waterlilies, with the latter the more numerous.

Ikeda: The clusters of blue and white waterlilies floating on the Nile make a beautiful scene. I think it was the fifth-century-B.C. Greek historian Herodotus who wrote that parts of the lotus plant were used for food in ancient Egypt.

Endo: That’s right. In his *History*, Herodotus makes reference to the lotus as a type of lily.³ It is

Among such water-lilies, there are some that bloom during the day and some that bloom at night. They are called sleeping lotuses because, in either case, when the proper time arrives they fold up their petals as though falling asleep.



also known as the waterlily in English.

Suda: Another type of *lily* is the lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*), which leads me to wonder if the name *lily* itself has any special significance.

Endo: It seems that *lily* is a generic term given to flowers that are especially fresh and beautiful. Lilies have long been regarded as symbols of purity.

Saito: The white lily, appropriately, is the symbol of the Soka Gakkai women's division.

Ikeda: How about lotus plants? Or did ancient Egypt only have waterlilies?

Endo: There are indications that lotus plants did grow in ancient

Egypt. A source mentions "a type of lily resembling a rose," but little is known of the details.

Simultaneous Production of Flowers and Fruit

Ikeda: Next, why do you suppose the lotus is called *hasu* in Japanese? What is the derivation of this word?

Saito: In olden times, lotus (the lotus genus or *hasu*) were called *hachisu* in Japan, which is short for *hachi-no-su*, or "bee's nest."

When a lotus flower opens, a fruit shaped like an inverted shower-head appears. Because of its resemblance to a beehive, this part of the plant was called *hachi-no-su*, which was later shortened to simply *hasu*. It is this part of the plant that is referred to by the Chinese char-

acter *ren* (of *renga*).

Ikeda: That's right. Technically, this part is known as the receptacle. The lotus seeds are found inside the holes of this "bee's nest" (to which the petals, stamens, pistils and other parts attach).

Suda: Because it contains the seeds, we can think of this part of the plant as the fruit.

Endo: The unique feature of the lotus flower is that its fruit (the receptacle) develops even before the flower blooms. In most plants, the flower blooms first and the fruit appears some time later. If we associate this with cause and effect, flowers represent the cause, and fruit the effect. Ordinarily, the cause comes first and the effect later. But in the case

The lotus has existed since very ancient times. As I recall, they have been traced as far back as the Cretaceous period (or about 135 million years ago). It seems they flourished immediately after the appearance of seed plants or spermatophyte.



of the lotus flower, the flowers (cause) and the fruit (effect) develop at the same time. That's why the lotus flower is used as a metaphor for the Lotus Sutra's doctrine of the simultaneity of cause and effect.⁴

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth Signify Eternal Advance

In this manner these sons study and practice my way and Law.

And in order that day and night with constant diligence

they may seek the Buddha way,

in this *saha* world

they dwell in the empty space in its lower part.

Firm in the power of will and concentration,

with constant diligence seeking wisdom, they expound various wonderful doctrines and their minds are without fear. (LS15, 220)

Ikeda: The simultaneity of cause and effect is an extremely profound doctrine. I propose that we discuss it in detail another time.

For the time being, I'd just like to point out that the causality referred to here specifically indicates the causes and effects pertaining to the attainment of Buddhahood. The state of Buddhahood is the effect, and the practice to attain that state is the cause. The idea that these two could coincide seems counter-intuitive; the usual assumption is that by carrying out Buddhist practice (the cause), a person later attains

Buddhahood (the effect).

But when we practice Nam-myoho-renge-kyo (the True Cause for attaining Buddhahood), our practice already encompasses the world of Buddhahood (the True Effect). Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is at once the True Cause and the True Effect of attaining Buddhahood. This marvelous teaching of the Mystic Law embodying the simultaneity of cause and effect is compared to the lotus flower. The important point here is that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth manifest this simultaneity of cause and effect in their lives.

Saito: Because outwardly they are bodhisattvas, they are still in the process of making causes to attain Buddhahood. But in terms of their inner lives, they are Buddhas, that is, they have already

gained the effect of Buddhahood.

Ikeda: Buddhahood is not a fixed or static condition. Just as the fruit and flowers of the lotus mature at the same time, the effect, or the world of Buddhahood, develops in our lives simultaneous with our carrying out our Buddhist practice for kosen-rufu. In that sense, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth signify eternal advance and eternal growth. Conversely, if a person ceases to advance in faith, he or she is no longer a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

The Thousand-Petaled Lotus

Ikeda: Why don't we continue our discussion of the cultural history of the lotus flower? What is the history of the lotus in Asia? Let's look first at Japan, and then China and India.

Suda: Japanese, too, have had fond associations with the lotus since olden times. References can be found in such early Japanese works as the *Nihon Shoki*⁵ and *Man'yoshu*,⁶ which date from the eighth century. As Buddhism spread, many splendid varieties of lotus flowers were brought here from China for people to admire.

Endo: It seems that lotus have grown in many areas of Japan since ancient times. And indeed the names of many locations are related to the lotus.

Ikeda: That's right. According to one explanation, Chiba [literally, "thousand petals"], the modern name of the region where Nichiren Daishonin was born, comes from the term *thou-*

sand-petaled lotus.

Saito: According to a classical literary source, there was once a body of water called Ikeda Pond in which thousand-petaled lotus flowers bloomed. This is reportedly the origin of the name Chiba.

[The Myoken Jitsuroku Sen-shuki (*Thousandfold Collection of Mysteries Seen and Factually Recorded*) says: "The Ikeda Pond is a pure and clear pond. In this pond there bloomed thousand-petaled lotus flowers."]

Suda: I wonder, President Ikeda, if there is some relation to your name.

Ikeda: I'm not really very clear on the matter, but someone has suggested that my family has its roots in the Ikeda area of Chiba Prefecture.

Also, I gather that the Chiba prefectural office roughly marks the spot where this Ikeda Pond once stood.

Saito: I understand that "thousand" in thousand-petaled lotus does not simply mean many, but is to be taken literally.

Endo: I wonder whether lotus flowers with a thousand petals have ever actually existed. The "Devadatta" (twelfth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra also mentions a thousand-petaled lotus.

Ikeda: Bodhisattva Manjushri is described as being "seated on a thousand-petaled lotus blossom big as a carriage wheel" (LS13, 185).

As to whether thousand-

petaled lotus have really existed, I understand that lotus flowers usually have between twenty and twenty-five petals. Flowers with a single set of such petals are usually referred to as "one-layer bloomers." But there are lotus flowers with multiple layers, some with enough to have a hundred or even as many as three hundred petals per flower. Also, there is a variety called the many-headed lotus, so called because the receptacle puts forth multiple flowers—one after another. I understand that the number of petals on these may range from 3,000 to 5,000.

While I personally have never seen a thousand-petaled lotus, I will always remember the lotus pond near a house where I lived as a child. I think it was when I was in the fifth year of elementary school (1938). The Sino-Japanese War had begun shortly before (in 1937), and my older brothers were drafted; also, my father's health had declined. As a result, we had to vacate the large house where we had lived until then and moved to this house, right next-door to a lotus pond. There must have been easily several hundred lotuses there. I cannot forget the scene as their flowers bloomed here and there one after another. We would eagerly look forward to that season each year.

We were eventually forced to evacuate that house, too [due to the intensifying air raids on Tokyo]. It seems that the pond no longer exists today. Everything around us changes with the passage of time.

But getting back to our discussion, what about lotus flowers in China?

They emerge from a swamp but are not stained by the muddy water, reminding us of the description in the sutra, “unsoiled by worldly things like the lotus flower in the water.”



Suda: Let me see, as for writings in praise of lotus flowers in China, there is a famous text by the Song Dynasty (960–1127) author Zhou Dun yi (Chou Tun-I, 1017–73) (titled *Ai Lian Shuo* [On Love for the Lotus]). In it, the author cites a number of reasons for people’s fondness for the lotus flower. These might be summarized as follows: (1) They emerge from a swamp but are not stained by the muddy water, reminding us of the description in the sutra, “unsoiled by worldly things like the lotus flower in the water” (LS15, 222); (2) they are cleansed by pure wavelets and are free of anything unpleasant; (3) their stalks are hollow on the inside, and perfectly straight on the outside, having neither tendrils nor branches; (4) their fragrance carries long distances, and becomes more refreshing at

greater distances; (5) they grow in an upright and orderly arrangement, and thus should be enjoyed from afar rather than from close by.

He further praises the lotus for its purity as the “flower of nobility.”⁷

Ikeda: I see. So the lotus flower represents all that is pure. In Buddhism, too, the lotus represents purity.

Incidentally, why aren’t lotus flowers discolored by the muddy water in which they grow?

Saito: According to the Japanese botanist Dr. Tomitaro Makino (1862–1957), it’s apparently because the fine hair-like filaments of its leaves repel water.

Endo: It seems that it was due to the influence of Buddhism that

lotus flowers came to be associated with purity in China. Before Buddhism came to that country, the lotus was a symbol of fertility and prosperity. Also, we may attribute the reason for lotus flowers having come to symbolize love and affection to the similarity between the pronunciation of the character for *lotus* (Chin. *lian*, Jp. *ren*) and such words as *love* (Chin. *lian*, Jp. *ren*) and *pity* (Chin. *lian*, Jp. *ren*).⁸

Also, in China parts of the lotus plant are used as food or medicine.

Ikeda: People have indeed had a close relationship with the lotus since ancient times.

Endo: Lotus root, leaves and stamen are used to stop bleeding. In China, these have been combined with other herbal

remedies and used to treat gastric ulcers, metrorrhagia (uterine bleeding), hemorrhoids and other conditions.

Suda: I hear that in India people eat lotus seeds raw, and may pickle or fry the root. In Indian medicine, too, the lotus has long been put to various uses.

The Robust Vitality of Lotus Seeds

Endo: In China, lotus seeds are regarded as both having nutritional value and as medicine for restoring health and strength. They are extolled for increasing vigor and curing ills of all kinds, and if taken consistently over time are thought to retard the aging process and confer longevity. Since they are as hard as rock, they are referred to in Chinese as “rock lotus seeds.”

Saito: Speaking of hardness, the scientific name of lotus is *Nelumbo nucifera*. *Nucifera* means “having hard fruit.” The seed has a shell that is hard as a rock. (*Nelumbo* means “lotus” in Sri Lankan.)

Ikeda: Because they are so very hard, lotus seeds can withstand harsh conditions and still bud and produce flowers. The famous Oga Lotus sprouted from a seed that had lain dormant for at least 2,000 years; some scientists estimated the period of dormancy at more than 3,000 years. That is phenomenal. There are now lotus plants descended from the Oga Lotus growing at the Kansai and Tokyo Soka Junior and Senior High Schools, and at Soka University.

Endo: According to Dr. Oga, lotus seeds can remain viable after so long a time because of their hard and thick shell. Moreover, because the seeds respire extremely slowly with very little exchange of moisture or gases, it takes an extremely long time before they are smothered by the carbon dioxide that they produce.

Ikeda: This gives a sense of the lotus flower’s awesome life force.

The Lotus Sutra is the “seed” for attaining Buddhahood. The Lotus Sutra is great because it contains the seed of Buddhahood enabling all people to become Buddhas. This seed of Buddhahood of the Lotus Sutra is compared to a diamond; like a diamond, it cannot be damaged or broken. It will not be destroyed even if one should fall into the state of hell or any of the evil paths.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have the “virtue of never losing the seed of Buddhahood.” That’s because, since the remote past, they have been inwardly embracing and outwardly practicing Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, the seed of Buddhahood, which is the Lotus Sutra’s essence.

Suda: The fact that this teaching is named the “law of the lotus” reflects the wisdom to discern that the seed of the lotus flower is strong and long-lived.

Endo: The Oga Lotus bloomed in 1952, an auspicious year marking the 700 anniversary of Nichiren Daishonin’s establishment of his teaching. Moreover, its seeds were discovered in Chiba Prefecture, Nichiren Dai-

shonin’s birthplace.

Ikeda: That’s right. Also, I recall that around the same time there were reports in the news that a big, pale crimson flower bloomed from a lotus seed that had lain dormant for tens of thousands of years in a national park in Washington D.C.⁹ Thus, in the year marking the 700 anniversary of the founding of the Daishonin’s Buddhism, lotus flower seeds thousands and tens of thousands of years old bloomed in both East and West. Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, interpreted this as a wonderful sign portending the revival of the Great Pure Law.

[On September 30, 1952, President Toda remarked: “The single great desire of people who are wallowing in the muddy swamp of suffering is for the appearance of the one great Buddhist teaching. Now is the time when this great Buddhism—sublime and true, clearly elucidating reward and punishment, and worthy of anyone’s trust—has to appear. Lotus flowers have now bloomed in both East and West, sprouting from the mud to put forth beautiful blossoms, having awakened from a slumber of thousands or tens of thousands of years. Now, in the swamp of the Japanese people, the supreme Buddhism of the original Buddha of the Latter Day has suddenly burst into bloom, breaking the slumber that has prevailed from the distant past and, more recently, for the past seven hundred years. If these lotus flowers blooming in both East and West are not a sign that the teaching of the original Buddha of the Latter Day is about to gloriously blossom, then what are they?]¹⁰

I was 24 at the time. It helped me solidify my determination to dedicate myself to spreading the supreme “law of the lotus” in Asia, the United States and throughout the world.

The Lotus Flowers of the Lotus Sutra

Ikeda: And so we come at last to India. In India, lotus flowers have been widely known since ancient times, and occupy an important place in the Hindu canon.

Suda: That’s right. Lotus flowers are mentioned in the *Rigveda*, India’s oldest extant religious text.

Ikeda: Just what kinds of lotus appear in the Lotus Sutra?

Saito: A line in the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” (nineteenth) chapter mentions “red lotus flowers, blue lotus flowers, white lotus flowers” (LS19, 255).

When we look at the corresponding terms in the Sanskrit text of the sutra, we find that “red lotus flowers” is a translation of *padma*. This is a white waterlily, but it seems there are pink varieties, too. “Blue lotus flowers” is a translation of the blue waterlily known as the *utpala* (*nilotpala*). And “white lotus flowers” is a translation of the white lotus called *pundarika*. The term *pundarika* is used in the sutra’s Sanskrit title.

Ikeda: I understand that in the Sanskrit text, lotus flowers are usually mentioned in the order of blue, yellow, red and white.

The white lotus flower, which is mentioned last, is accorded the highest value and reverence. Because the Lotus Sutra is the highest teaching, its Sanskrit title is the *Saddharma-pundarika* sutra, or, literally, “Sutra of the White Lotus of the Wonderful Laws.”

Suda: The Lotus Sutra, in addition mentions a night-blooming white or red waterlily called the *kumuda*. Also, the term *flower* in Pure Flower Constellation King Wisdom, the title of the Buddha in the world to the east where Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound dwells, is a red lotus called the *kamala*.

Ikeda: That’s a lot of detail. What about yellow lotus flowers?

Suda: Chinese translations of the Lotus Sutra other than Kumarajiva’s *Miaofa lianhua jing* (Myoho-enge-kyo) mention a yellow lotus.

[Yellow lotus flowers are mentioned, for example, in the eighteenth and the twenty-fourth chapters of Dharmaraksha’s *Zhengfahua jing* (Jp. Sho-hokke-kyo).¹¹]

In reality, however, it seems that there are no yellow lotus or waterlilies in India.

Endo: Yellow lotus do apparently exist; for example, in the American lotus or water chinquapin found in the Mississippi basin in the United States.

Suda: The so-called esoteric teachings of Buddhism, in addition to red, white, blue and yellow lotus flowers, describe an imaginary black-colored lotus.

Saito: That’s a little hard to visualize.

Ikeda: Buddhist texts describe lotus flowers of such various colors. In one text, Shakyamuni reminisces about the blue, red and white lotus flowers that grew in the garden of the palace where he grew up.¹²

Lotus flowers give a sense of cool respite from the heat of summer. Since the summer heat in India is so severe, that association may have been even stronger.

Saito: Lotus flowers are described as growing in Anavatapta Lake (literally, “Icy Lake”), which appears in Buddhist literature and was supposed to be part of an ideal land. The Daishonin in fact refers to this lake in his writings (cf. MW-2, 140 [163]).¹³ A lotus pond was apparently an indispensable feature of such a place. The Pure Land of Perfect Bliss of Amida Buddha is also described as filled with lotus flowers.

Suda: It seems that the importance early Indians accorded to lotus flowers is part of a tradition that can be traced back to the civilization of the Indus Valley (which existed through 1500 B.C.E.). A statue resembling an earth goddess with a lotus flower on its head has been unearthed from the famous ruins of Mohenjo-Daro in southern Pakistan.

Ikeda: The ruins of Mohenjo-Daro are thought to be more than 3,000 or 4,000 years old. That the lotus flower was important so long ago is very interesting. Also, I am intrigued by the

In India, lotus flowers have been widely known since ancient times, and occupy an important place in the Hindu canon.



connection between the lotus flower and the earth goddess. Like the statue of the earth goddess, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth appearing in the Lotus Sutra also emerge from the ground as the “human lotus flowers.” It occurs to me that this image of emerging from the earth—irrespective of the profound meaning that attaches to it in Buddhism—may have resonated strongly with Indian cultural traditions. While nothing definite can be said, I look forward to what further research may reveal in this area.

Saito: We find the concept of an “earth mother” in many different cultures, and India is no exception. Many cultures have traditions that revere the earth as the mother or goddess that gives life to all things.

Endo: Perhaps we can say that the earth mother is the womb that gives birth to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Ikeda: Their emergence suggests an image of lotus flowers emerging from the water stretching out as far as the eye can see. More precisely, the sutra describes the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as having existed in the “empty space in the lower part” of the earth. Let’s think about this a moment. Doubtless some will wonder what the sutra means by the “empty space” beneath the earth.

The “Empty Space” Beneath the Earth Is the Ultimate Origin

Endo: Ancient Indian cosmology presents the following view of the underground structure of

the world: The ground on which we dwell is the surface of the earth wheel. Beneath that, there is a gold wheel, and below that, a water wheel. The border between the gold wheel and the water wheel is termed the “edge of the gold wheel.”

Ikeda: That’s very interesting. The edge of the gold wheel lies in the very depths; accordingly, the Japanese expression “at the edge of the gold wheel” (Jp. *konrinzai*) has the nuance of “to the last” or “absolutely” used emphatically in a negative sentence.

Endo: That’s exactly right. Beneath the water sphere there is a wind sphere. And this wind sphere is said to float above empty space.

Saito: From the time of the

In Egypt, the lotus flower is also associated with the sun. Because of the way its petals open out from the center, it was probably thought to resemble the rays of the sun. It seems the fact that many lotus flowers open in the morning and close by evening reinforced this connection.



Rigveda, Indians have considered the question of the origin of all things in various ways. According to one philosophical poem, the creating deity, upon making the world, “placed water as a womb in the vastness of space.” This suggests that space is more fundamental even than water. In later commentaries, space comes to be revered as Brahma, the ultimate origin of all being.¹⁴ Viewed in light of this cultural tradition, the “empty space in the lower part” where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are said to have dwelled formerly would seem to indicate the most primary realm of all and, hence, the origin of origins.

Endo: The idea that they were born from the “origin of origins” seems very close to what

the Daishonin terms the “ultimate depths of life” or “absolute reality” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 563). This association is, of course, far from conclusive.

Ikeda: The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the disciples from the remote past of the Buddha of the “Life Span” (sixteenth) chapter. These disciples from the remote past are born from the ultimate ground of existence. The “ultimate depths of life” and “absolute reality,” of course, refer to the ultimate truth, or the Law of Nammyoho-renge-kyo.

Based on that recognition, it may be that the statement in the “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) chapter that these bodhisattvas emerge from “the world of empty space underneath the *saha* world” (LS15,

213) reveals their origin in terms of space, while Shakyamuni’s remark that he has been teaching and converting them “ever since the long distant past” (LS15, 220) reveals their origin in terms of time.

The emergence of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is a great drama of life and the universe. It suggests that the ultimate Law contained in the depths of the essential teaching (or second half) of the Lotus Sutra is the ultimate principle governing the universe.

The Silk Road Is a “Lotus Road”

Saito: Looking at things this way, I am impressed anew at how important a symbol the lotus has been throughout the world.

Suda: The Egyptian hieroglyph of the lotus flower and the existence in Egyptian shrines of pillars carved with a lotus at the crown suggest that Egyptian civilization was a great center of “lotus culture.”

Endo: We could say the same of Greek civilization, which inherited a great deal from Egypt. For example, lotus flowers are seen in an arabesque pattern in the temple at Olympus.

Ikeda: Alexander the Great brought Greek civilization to India. Alexander’s expedition resulted in a melding together of the Greek civilization of the West with Asian civilization. The encounter of Indian and Western civilizations eventually gave birth to the brilliant Buddhist art of Gandhara,¹⁵ which spread throughout Asia by way of China, eventually reaching as far as the Korean peninsula and even Japan. While it is difficult to prove anything about the specific influence of the lotus, it is clear that in a sense the entire Eurasian continent was united by a grand Lotus Road.

Saito: The Silk Road was therefore also a Lotus Road.

Ikeda: The camel, known as the “ship of the desert,” was one of the principal means for traveling that road. The late Chang Shuhong, honorary director of China’s Dunhuang Relics Research Institute, observed that the hoofprints of camels resemble lotus flowers.¹⁶

Endo: So the Lotus Road was actually marked with a pattern

of lotus flowers!

Suda: That’s a wonderful image.

Ikeda: Fragrant lotus flowers of human happiness similarly mark the road of kosen-rufu that we are now forging. And our lives likewise become a beautiful Lotus Road of value creation.

Lastly, why don’t we discuss the relation between the sun and the lotus flower? This is an extremely important point, in that it relates to Nichiren Daishonin’s name.

**The Sun Is the Lotus
Flower of the Heavens, the
Lotus Is the Sun of the Earth**

Endo: Well, to begin with, in Egypt the lotus flower is also associated with the sun. Because of the way its petals open out from the center, it was probably thought to resemble the rays of the sun. It seems the fact that many lotus flowers open in the morning and close by evening reinforced this connection with the sun.

Suda: According to Egyptian myth, at night the corolla of the lotus flower becomes the “cradle of the sun.” And at dawn it supposedly imparts new life to the sun.

Ikeda: The sun is regarded everywhere as a symbol of boundless vitality. Also, since it sets only to rise again the following morning, it is taken as a symbol of rebirth and eternal life.

Saito: Lotus flowers were placed atop mummies or used

in funerals to express the wish for eternal life or rebirth. An Egyptian legend reportedly suggests that when a lotus born from primal waters bloomed, the newborn sun, represented as a beautiful child, appeared and created the world.

Suda: Also, the people of ancient Persia thought of lotus flowers as incarnations of the sun. These are depictions of the sun god wearing a robe of light and a crown of lotus flowers.

Ikeda: In the ancient Orient, the lotus flower seems to have been regarded as an “earthly sun,” and the sun as a “heavenly lotus.” The lotus flower was thought to give birth to, or contain, something sacred. It must have been looked upon as a divine plant.

Saito: In India, likewise, from ancient times the lotus was thought to give birth to something sacred. The thousand-petaled lotus mentioned in the Lotus Sutra that we talked about earlier is an example of this.

An early legend describes the creation of the universe as follows: In the beginning there was only water. From within this water a lotus flower floated to the surface, and then a thousand-petaled lotus shining with a golden light like that of the sun came forth. Within that lotus flower, which is described as a “golden womb,” Brahma, the creator of the universe, was born.

Suda: The “golden womb” is the origin of all things mentioned in the ancient Hindu text the *Rigveda*. It contains within it

all things in embryonic form, and brings all things into being.

Endo: The receptacle of the lotus plant in Sanskrit is called the *garbha*, which literally means womb or uterus; this is probably because it produces the seeds. Also, the golden lotus is used to symbolize the sun.

Saito: The image of a thousand-petaled golden lotus also appears in Buddhist texts. In a miraculous account of occurrences at Shravasti,¹⁷ the dragon kings Nanda and Upananda make a “thousand-petaled golden lotus” as large as a chariot wheel and with a stem of jewels, and they present this to Shakyamuni.¹⁸

The Buddha Is the Sun and the Lotus

Ikeda: Shakyamuni is addressed as “Sun of wisdom, great sage and venerable one” (LS2, 27). The image is that of a sun radiating the light of wisdom. In other words, Shakyamuni, the teacher who expounds the Law for all people, is the sun and the lotus. This is extremely important.

Saito: In the “Treatise on the Sutra of the Perfection of Wisdom” (Jp. *Daichidoron*), there are comments elucidating the connection between the “thousand-petaled lotus” and the “light of wisdom.” It says that when Shakyamuni is in *samadhi*, or profound meditation, he emits a great light. Each of the rays of this light, it says, becomes a “thousand-petaled lotus” made of jewels, and on top of each of these lotus flowers a Buddha is born.

Ikeda: The Buddha’s wisdom is called “wisdom light” and the Buddha’s compassion, “mercy light.” Thus, the Buddha’s wisdom and compassion are both compared to light. This suggests that the light of the Buddha’s wisdom and compassion is the “mother” that gives birth to all Buddhas.

We have to shed light on people, to give people light. We must also bathe ourselves in light. We must never remain in darkness, nor must we allow others to remain in the dark. Flowers will not bloom, the lotus will not blossom, in darkness. We have to send the light of the Mystic Law to all those we share a bond with. Doing so also increases our own light.

Countless Buddhas being born atop countless thousand-petaled lotus flowers—this is a magnificent image. The Lotus Sutra describes similar scenes. During the Ceremony in the Air, the two Buddhas Shakyamuni and Many Treasures (Jp. *Taho*) sit side by side in the Treasure Tower. And around the Treasure Tower gather the Buddhas of the worlds in the ten directions who are Shakyamuni’s emanations.

Suda: Yes. This congregation of Buddhas is likened to a “multitude of lotus flowers.”

All Teachings Arise From the “Lotus Flower”

Ikeda: Along the same lines, without going into a detailed discussion, the Kegon Sutra develops the idea that all beings are born from lotus flowers through the concept of the world of lotus-treasury.

Nichiren Daishonin says regarding the single character *ren* (or “lotus”):

It is the well-spring of all teachings. Ultimately, the doctrines of threefold contemplation in a single mind, the three thousand realms in a single moment of life (*ichinen sanzen*), the three truths, the six stages of practice, the fusion of wisdom and reality, and the essential and theoretical teachings all arise from one character “*ren*.” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p, 1364)

He also says, “All teachings arise from the two characters *ren* [lotus] and *ge* [flower]” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 809). The lotus flower that produces all teachings is ultimately Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

We have not finished our discussion on the connection between the lotus flower and the sun, but I wonder if there are any other similar concepts.

Saito: There is a concept called the “lotus flower in the breast.” According to one explanation, this refers to the heart. And the heart is at the same time likened to the sun.

Ikeda: The heart is probably compared to the lotus flower because its shape resembles that of a closed lotus flower. Moreover, the muscle striations in the heart give it the appearance of being divided into eight sections. Consequently, the heart is called the “eight-petaled lotus.”

Endo: Ancient Indians viewed the human body as the “palace

We have to shed light on people, to give people light. We must also bathe ourselves in light. We must never remain in darkness, nor must we allow others to remain in the dark.



of Brahma,” the place in which Brahma (the fundamental principle of the universe) dwells. And they conceived of the heart as the “small palace of the white lotus flower” within the palace of the body.

Ikeda: We have seen that the heart is likened to a lotus flower. But we still need to explain how it also represents the sun.

Saito: Yes. Both the human heart and the sun were thought to be held together by fine capillaries. The light of the sun provided nourishment for the activity of the *atman*, or self, within the heart.

Suda: In short, the implication is that the vital energy which gives life and causes the heart to beat comes from the sun.

Ikeda: From that standpoint, it accords nicely with the view of modern science. If we trace the food chain from its source, we find that the sun is the origin of all energy on the planet. The sun is the mother of all life on earth, and all human activities also ultimately depend on the beneficent rays of the sun.

In short, both the sun and the lotus flower represent the source of the energy of the universe. At the core the essence of both is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; the Mystic Law is itself both the sun and the lotus flower. In human terms, Shakyamuni is the sun and the lotus flower.

The Daishonin Is the Sun and the Moon and the Lotus Flower

Saito: The “Supernatural Pow-

ers of the Thus Come One” (twenty-first) chapter, compares the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to the sun.

[It says, “As the light of the sun and moon / can banish all obscurity and gloom, / so this person as he passes through the world / can wipe out the darkness of living beings” (LS21, 276).]

And so the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, like Shakyamuni Buddha, are compared to lotus flowers and to the sun.

Ikeda: That’s right. The Daishonin says that this passage in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter “means that the first five hundred years of the Latter Day of the Law will witness the advent of Bodhisattva Jogyo [Superior Practices], who will

The sun is the origin of all energy on the planet. The sun is the mother of all life on earth, and all human activities also ultimately depend on the beneficent rays of the sun.



illuminate the darkness of human ignorance and earthly desires....” (MW-1, 236). The Daishonin, who spread *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*—the essence of the Lotus Sutra—in the Latter Day of the Law, thus suggests that he himself is the reincarnation of Bodhisattva Superior Practices.

He also says, “Names are important for all things.... Giving myself the name Nichiren [Sun-Lotus] signifies that I attained enlightenment by myself” (MW-1, 236).

Suda: This means that he attained the state of the Buddha on his own. The Daishonin himself is the Buddha, and the name “Nichiren” expresses his enlightenment.

Endo: In a letter to Shijo Kingo’s

wife he says, “The Lotus Sutra is the sun and the moon and the lotus flower. Therefore, it is called *Myoho-renge-kyo* (the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Mystic Law). Nichiren is also like the sun and the moon, and also like the lotus flower” (MW-4, 87).

Ikeda: His taking the name Nichiren, the Daishonin says, signifies that he embodies the essence of the Lotus Sutra. The Daishonin reveals that he is at one with the “sun” eternally illuminating the lives of all people in the Latter Day, and the pure lotus flower—or white lotus—giving life to all Buddhas.

There are various profound teachings concerning the name Nichiren. The twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan Shonin, sums these up in his writing “*Nichiren*

no niji no koto” (On the Two Characters in the Name Nichiren). He observes in his conclusion that the Daishonin, by taking the name Nichiren, is making a great declaration that he is the votary of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law and in fact the original Buddha.¹⁹

Saito: This means that we who are the Daishonin’s followers also each have to become a “sun” and a “lotus flower” in our own right.

Ikeda: When we become a “sun,” all darkness is banished from our lives. Each day is filled with light and we can brightly illuminate the lives of others, too. When we become a “lotus,” we can change the muddy swamp of earthly desires into joyous enlightenment.

The “Emerging from the Earth” chapter describes the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as being “like the lotus flower in the water” (LS15, 222). As Bodhisattvas of the Earth, we dwell in the “swamp” of society; we certainly do not seek to escape from reality. And what’s more, our lives are in no way stained or tainted by society. Why is this? It is because we never forget our mission.

The Daishonin says of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, “Their fundamental mission is to propagate Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, the one great reason for the Buddha’s appearance in this world” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 833). It’s a matter of dedicating one’s life to kosen-rufu. It’s a matter of possessing the spirit to do *shakubuku*—to help others become

happy through the Mystic Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The spirit of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is found in the faith to dedicate oneself wholeheartedly to kosen-rufu. If people lose this spirit, then no matter how splendid their appearance, their hearts will be tainted by worldly affairs and concerns.

Suda: The Daishonin also says, “[Untainted by] the things of the world’ indicates not being swayed even though one may receive lands or a court rank from the sovereign or a minister” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 833). This means that no matter what powerful people may do in attempting to entice them with wealth or status, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth absolutely never allow their faith to bend.

Ikeda: And they absolutely never betray their comrades. A treacherous individual is sure to meet a pitiful end. This is as true now as it was in the past.

The essence of the Lotus Sutra that Nichiren Daishonin revealed with his life is found in the spirit to treasure kosen-rufu even more highly than one’s life. When we advance with such a lofty spirit, the sun of the “greatest of all joys” rises in our heart, and our life, like a golden lotus or a thousand-petaled lotus, blossoms as a fragrant flower of happiness.

Kosen-rufu is a movement to cause the sun of compassion to rise and the lotus flower of happiness to bloom in society.

(To be continued)

Illustrations by Larry Ashton

1. Editor’s note: All quotations from *The Lotus Sutra* are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
2. Festival of Lanterns: A traditional festival for the deceased, held in mid summer. Also called the Bon Festival.
3. Technically, lilies belong to a different family, but the term is used in a generic sense to include all flowers resembling lilies.
4. This is termed the “figurative *rengé*.” In the *Hokke Gengi* (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra), Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China interprets *rengé* of *Myoho-renge-kyo* in two ways: as the figurative *rengé* symbolizing the Law, and as the entity of the Law itself.
5. *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicle of Japan): The oldest official history of Japan.
6. *Man’yoshu* (Collection of Ten Thousand Leaves): The earliest extant collection of Japanese poetry.
7. *Hasu no Bunkashi* (Cultural History of the Lotus), ed. Kodai Miura (Koshigaya, Japan: Kado Sobo, 1994), pp. 167–68.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 97.
9. “Lotus Blooms From Seed Centuries Old.” *New York Times* Associated Press July 1, 1952: 26, Wirephoto. In Washington, D.C.’s National Capital Park, a plant grew from seeds tens of thousands of years old found in geologic deposits in Manchuria in 1950. The blossom measuring six inches in diameter opened in summer of 1952. And July 11, 1952, *Tokyo Shimbun*.
10. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Works of Josei Toda), (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1981), vol. 1, pp. 86–87.
11. Dharmaraksha’s *Zhengfahua jing*: The earliest Chinese translation of the Lotus Sutra, or the *Saddharma-pundarika-sutra*, consisting of twenty-seven chapters in ten volumes. This translation (dated C.E. 286) corresponds with Kumarajiva’s *Miaofa lianhua jing* (C.E. 406) in most respects, except that it contains several parables that the latter omits.
12. Hajime Nakamura, *Gotama Buddha* (Gautama Buddha), bk. 1, *Nakamura Hajime Senshu* (Selected Writings of Hajime Nakamura), vol. 11 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1992), p. 155.
13. Editor’s note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the second edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
14. Hajime Nakamura, *Upanishaddo no Shiso* (Upanishad Thought), *Nakamura Hajime Senshu* (Selected Writings of Hajime Nakamura), vol. 9 (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 1990), p. 95.
15. An ancient country in northern India, located north of Punjab and northeast of Kashmir.
16. Chang Shuhong and Daisaku Ikeda, *Tonko no Kosai* (The Brilliance of Dunhuang), (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1990), p. 56.
17. Shravasti: The capital of the Kosala Kingdom of ancient India, located to the east of present-day Delhi. The Buddha is said to have made Shravasti his base of activities during the rainy season for twenty-five years, and to have converted many people there including King Prasenajit.
18. Akira Miyaji, *Gandara—Hotoke no Fushigi* (Gandhara—Wonders of the Buddha), (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1996), p. 252.
19. *Fujishugaku Yoshu* (Selected Works of the Fuji School), vol. 3, pp. 255–58.

Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures

**Aleksey N. Kosygin,
Former Premier of
the Soviet Union**

THE former premier of the Soviet Union, Aleksey N. Kosygin (1904–80), was a leader on a grand scale.

Being forthright by nature and believing it to be a sign of respect for others, I once asked him quite directly: "China is anxious about the Soviet Union's intentions. Is the Soviet Union going to attack China?"

"The Soviet Union has no intention of either attacking or isolating China," Mr. Kosygin assured me.

"May I convey that to China's leaders?" I asked.

"Please do," he said.

We were in the premier's office in the Kremlin. Across the table from me sat the 70-year-old Mr. Kosygin, his rugged features as seemingly impervious as storm-weathered stone.

Our meeting took place twenty-two years ago [on September 17, 1974], on the last day of my first visit to the Soviet Union. During my ten-day sojourn in that country, I had felt with my entire being

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Premier Aleksey M. Kosygin, second from right, meets with SGI President Ikeda in May 1975.

the Soviet people's desire for peace. That is why I had presumed to ask the question I did.

Three months earlier, I had also visited China. There, in Beijing, I was shown the underground shelters being built as defenses against possible aerial attack. The Chinese people were busily constructing them of their own accord in case such an emergency arose. With a depth ranging from seven to twelve yards, the shelters were equipped with telephone centers, broadcast facilities and canteens, and underground passageways linked every part of the city. Each family home and school had a door leading down to the underground city.

"We aren't building these shelters for attack," I was told. "We don't plan to dig our way to Moscow!"

I saw the students of a junior high school strenuously digging an underground shelter beneath their schoolyard. The threat of war had even cast its ominous shadow over these children. It

was a painful sight. It mustn't go on, I thought.

THIS was a period of great tension between the Soviet Union and China. The two socialist nations hurled harsh criticisms at each other, and some in China were determined to continue the ideological debate with the Soviet Union "for ten thousand years," if necessary. At the same time, China's rapprochement with the United States and Japan was causing growing anxiety among the Soviet people. A situation prevailed where both sides—China and the Soviet Union—feared a military attack from the other.

I wanted to somehow dispel this mutual distrust. Small as its effect might be, I was determined to initiate the beginnings of dialogue.

China had been a victim of Japanese militarism. The Soviet Union had been a victim of German Nazism. Tens of millions had died. Countless more had been engulfed and devas-

tated by the senseless tragedy of war. If the next generation could not enjoy a life of peace, then the enormous flood of tears that had been shed would all have been in vain.

"I do not think China is pursuing a policy of aggression," I said.

Though the Soviet premier's expression remained unreadable, a light came into his eyes when he heard these words.

Premier Kosygin was famous for his impassive expression. Since his first appearance in a Soviet cabinet at the age of only 35 [in 1939], he had held important posts in the party and the government. During the Stalin era, he later revealed, he was kept under constant surveillance and never permitted to be alone. In an age when the smallest error of judgment—or even no error at all—could condemn one to being summarily executed, it was a miracle that he survived. Many attributed his staying power to his lack of personal ambition, an extraordinary ability to get

things done and, above all, amazing good luck.

Given this background, it was perhaps only natural for the premier, who had walked the edge of the precipice, to have acquired a profound sense of caution in all matters. But on this day, I could feel him gradually relax and open up as our conversation progressed. This became clearly apparent when we spoke about prices in the Soviet Union. With a memory that had earned him the nickname “the walking computer,” Mr. Kosygin explained the price controls in effect, effortlessly quoting figures. “There are, of course, exceptions,” he said. “We have had price increases, too—for vodka and alcohol products. Unfortunately, I still drink!” The room filled with laughter. When he laughed, the premier’s face was transformed into that of a kindly grandfather.

HIS unswerving seriousness and self-control were sometimes misunderstood as coldness. But everyone who knew the premier was quick to testify that he was a warmhearted person. It has recently come to light that he secretly helped the family of a highly placed official who had been ousted.

Although he worked sixteen-hour days, he was at heart a loving family man. Once, on board a ship while visiting Alexandria, Egypt, the premier danced on deck with his wife Klavdiya. The Egyptians were surprised and delighted at the couple’s warm affection for each other.

Several months later, on May Day, 1967, Mrs. Kosygin lay in a critical condition, having been struck by sudden illness.

Because of his state duties, however, the premier had to leave her bedside to review the troops in Red Square. Locking his feelings with a heroic force of will, he stood before Lenin’s tomb throughout the long ceremonies. When he returned, she had already passed away.

That was the kind of man he was.

I intuitively felt that the premier spoke the truth when he said that he wished for peace with China. I lament the present tendency to twist any sincere statement of truth into some kind of political ploy, or to interpret it in purely partisan terms. Unless we eliminate such ignoble moral and intellectual laziness from public life, we will never be able to open a window of hope for our confused and frustrated world. My policy is to take the pronouncements of sincere and responsible people at face value. Unless we trust others, fruitful discussion is impossible.

The Soviet premier was in earnest. He told me, “All our actions are based on the fundamental position that we value peace and will not initiate hostilities.”

Premier Kosygin is said to have consistently opposed acts of military aggression, including the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

“We have more than enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world,” he said, with some feeling. “We don’t know when another Hitler may appear and what he may do. If that should happen, we have no means to preserve global civilization. Sooner or later, the human race will have to opt for nuclear disarmament.”

In a sense, this was a surprising declaration, since the public position of the Soviet Union around that time was that its nuclear arsenal was necessary to preserve world peace.

“Another Hitler....” During our conversation, I touched upon Hitler’s siege of Leningrad (present-day St. Petersburg). The Nazi policy of complete annihilation created the bitterest struggle in human history, lasting almost 900 days (from September 1941 to January 1944). According to one source, nearly half of the 3 million citizens of the Soviet city died of starvation or cold.

THE worst time of the siege was the winter of 1941–42. Temperatures were below zero. The daily ration of bread (adulterated with paper to make supplies last longer) at one stage dropped to only four ounces. There were no lights, no telecommunications, no running water. When one went to the banks of the Neva River to drink, the smell of abandoned corpses assaulted the nostrils. Earsplitting mortar fire raged day and night. Each day seemed like several months. When loved ones died, their family members, themselves weakened by starvation, often didn’t have the strength to carry them to the cemetery. At night, rats came to gnaw at corpses that were left lying on the floor. People even ate the rats. They ate their pets. Others even sold human flesh. If there was ever a hell, this was it. Still, the people of Leningrad continued their long struggle despite these horrors, until finally the siege ended.

Four days before my interview with Premier Kosygin, I had vis-



Performers in a Bolshoi Ballet production of "Swan Lake" take a final bow on stage in the Kremlin's Palace of the Congresses.

ited Leningrad. I went to the Piskarevsky Cemetery. The 200 gravestones over mass graves were inscribed only with the month and year—"December 1941," "January 1942." There were so many dead that the names of most were unknown. On the wall of the memorial in the cemetery was the inscription, "Let no one forget; let nothing be forgotten!" It was a desperate cry for peace. I couldn't help but exclaim: "Why isn't anything known about this in Japan?!"

By even the most conservative estimates, the Soviet Union lost more than 20 million of its people in World War II, around ten percent of its total population. Everyone in the nation had lost someone they loved. I struck up a conversation with the hall attendant at my lodgings in Moscow one day—a sturdily built, middle-aged Russian woman with a friendly word for all. I will never forget the sadness that filled her eyes

when she said, quietly and simply, "I lost my husband in the war."

THE Japanese are not the only ones who suffered the tragedy of war. All of the world's peoples long earnestly for an end to war for all time. We cannot allow that universal wish for peace to be splintered and diluted by the concerns of nationalism. We must unite across borders. We must unite and lay siege against war itself.

"We in Japan need to know more about the Soviet Union," I said to the premier, relating the profound sense of shock I had experienced on my visit to Leningrad.

"You know," he replied, "I was in Leningrad during the siege." And he said no more. Perhaps he was afraid of the emotions that might come pouring out if he dared to speak further.

Leningrad was Premier Kossygin's hometown. Earlier in his

career, he held a high-ranking position in that city's government. And during World War II, he was responsible for the difficult task of evacuating the residents during the Nazi blockade.

At the City Museum of History in Leningrad, I saw a little diary by a child named Tanya Savichev. The display constituted just seven small scraps of paper—pages torn from an 11-year-old girl's Russian ABC notebook. Each page was set aside for the practice of a letter of the alphabet. The notebook's young owner had written simple entries starting with the letter on that page:

Z—Zhenya [Sister] died 28 December,

12:30 in the morning, 1941.

B—Babushka [Grandmother] died 25 January, 3 o'clock, 1942.

L—Leka [Little brother] died 17 March, 5 o'clock in the morning, 1942.

D—Dedya Vasya [Uncle Vasya] died 13 April, 2 o'clock at night, 1942.

D—Dedya Lesha [Uncle Lesha], 10 May, 4 o'clock in the afternoon, 1942.

M—Mama, 13 May, 7:30 a.m., 1942

S—Savichevs died. All died. Only Tanya remains.

Though safely evacuated from Leningrad, Tanya herself

The Winter Palace houses the Hermitage Museum, renowned for its collection of fine art.

died a little more than a year later.

There was an uncountable number of Tanyas across the Soviet Union. And in China. And an uncountable number of Savichev families in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Okinawa and all across Japan and throughout the world.

"We must abandon the very idea of war," said Premier Kosygin. "It is meaningless. If we stop preparing for war and prepare instead for peace, we can produce food instead of armaments." He made these comments after I shared my vision for the establishment of a "World Food Bank" as a response to the problem the world faces in feeding its ever-growing population.

MR. Kosygin always advocated the importance of the economy over the military. He opposed the state of affairs in which missiles ate away the bread of the Soviet people. Soon after taking office, he carried out the so-called Kosygin Reforms, introducing market mechanisms into the Russian economy and bringing new life and energy to society. But the petrified apparatus of Soviet power doomed the reforms to failure.

Premier Kosygin was a man without illusions. His feet were firmly planted on the ground. He disliked abstract theories



DEAN CONNOR/ORBIS

and flowery speech. He wasn't fond of ritualistic meetings or ceremonies. He wanted to get to work without wasting time. Precisely because of that, the inefficiencies of the Russian system must have grated on him intensely. In a sense, he was an early proponent of *perestroika* (restructuring).

"What is your basic ideology?" the premier asked me.

I answered without hesitation: "I believe in peace, culture and education—the underlying basis of which is humanism."

"I have a high regard for those values," Mr. Kosygin said. "We need to realize them here in the Soviet Union as well." He said this eleven years before the appearance of President Gorbachev. Premier Kosygin was a person willing to listen to new ideas. He was always open to improving things.

I frankly spoke with him about Japanese-Soviet relations as well: "The Japanese do not feel close to the Soviet Union. We know Russian literature and Russian folk songs, but most

Japanese look at the Soviet Union as a nation to be feared. This is unfortunate for both peoples. We must increase our mutual understanding. To achieve that, government and economic exchanges aren't enough. They don't build true friendship. Nor is it enough to leave such exchange solely to so-called pro-Soviet Japanese. What, then, should we do? The only route is for a broader exchange on the level of ordinary citizens, the active promotion of wide-ranging personal and cultural exchange."

MY belief has always been that, when an atmosphere of warm mutual understanding is built between nations, the means can be found to solve the complicated issues that divide them. As in the famous Aesop's fable of the sun and the north wind, the sun of friendship must first rise in the sky. As long as the cold north wind of criticism and reproach blows, people will never remove the cloak that shields their hearts; in fact, they

will only clutch it closer to them.

The premier listened to my proposal with an even expression. Then, he nodded firmly and said, "I agree." His voice rang out with determination. And from that moment, many forms of cultural and educational exchange between the Soviet Union and Japan began in earnest, with the Soka Gakkai taking the initiative.

I visited Premier Kosygin again in May 1975, on my second visit to the Soviet Union. The Queen of Denmark was visiting the country at the time and the premier was very busy. But he greeted me with a smile, saying: "I made time."

SINCE our encounter the previous year, I had met with the prime minister of China, Zhou Enlai [December 1974], and with the U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger [January 1975]. Precisely because I am a private citizen, I can act without the restrictions of profit, position or policy. My only position is that of an ordinary human being, and it was in that role that I hoped, in some small way, to bring together and consolidate the will for peace into a global commitment.

I learned this song in Moscow:

Do the Russians want war?
Ask this wide land and its
birch forests,
Ask the soldiers who rest
forever beneath them.

Do the Russians want war?
Ask the mothers of Russia,
Ask the widows who lost
their husbands in battle,
Ask the children who lost
their fathers.

Who can suppress such deep human sentiments? Who has the right?

I learned of Premier Kosygin's death at the end of 1980. He had just retired from office that October for health reasons. His life had been one of hard work. The grief of the Soviet people at his passing was proof of the high regard and feelings of trust they had held for him.

THE following year [May 1981], I visited his grave. At the time, a strong anti-Soviet mood prevailed around the world in the wake of the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan [in December 1979], which had led to a boycott of the 1980 Moscow Olympics by some sixty nations. Relations between Japan and the Soviet Union were also frosty. For that very reason, I decided to visit Moscow, and to bring with me a 230-member goodwill delegation from Japan.

After paying my respects at Mr. Kosygin's tomb, I stopped by to see the late premier's daughter Lyudmila Gvishiani at her place of employment, the National Library of Foreign Literature. I had met with the premier as a fellow human being, and it was in this same capacity that I offered my condolences to his family after his death.

Ms. Gvishiani told me that the premier had spoken happily to his family about our first meeting when he arrived home that night. "And he rarely talked of work at home," she added.

She went on to say, "I have spoken with my family, and we have decided that we would like you to accept a few keepsakes of my father. We have cho-

sen some items that he kept close and were of great personal significance to him."

She presented me with a cherished crystal vase that had been bestowed on the premier upon winning the high Soviet honor of "Hero of Socialist Labor." She also gave me two leather-bound books, his last works, which lay in his private library up to the moment of his death.

"THE warmth of my father's hands still clings to them. I offer them to you in his stead," she said, her eyes filling with tears. I will never forget the scene. Ms. Gvishiani herself died just nine years later, at the age of 61.

Time passes, it flows ever onward. The Soviet Union and the world have changed radically. The tension between the Soviet Union and China has disappeared, the Cold War has ended, and the Soviet Union has chosen the road to democracy.

I recall even now the premier's hearty response when I asked him whether I might presume then that the world would be a brighter place in the next century. He had declared: "That is what we desire."

At that time, a quarter of this century yet remained; now the dawning of the next is just around the corner.

I hope that it will be an era in which all share a deeper recognition of our common humanity. I want to believe that the world, in spite of many twists and turns, is heading toward a growing commitment to humanism.

But what about Japan? Has Japan changed for the better? Can Japan hope for a bright future in the twenty-first century? □

Perceptions of Color Light, and Magic

By Alicia W. Moore,
Charlotte, North Carolina



MY early years of practice began eighteen years ago in the South Jersey/Philadelphia area with the support of some very strong SGI-USA members. I began my practice as a single parent of three young children, one son and two daughters. During this time, I introduced all of my family to the practice: four of them received their own Gohonzon.

My children and I relocated to Louisville, Kentucky, where I worked as a teacher in the Jefferson County school system. My first obstacle was challenging my arrogant nature. Having moved from a big city with a large community center and very large membership, I felt like things were too slow, too backward, and just too small. Little did I know it was tailor-made for the advancement of my practice. Gradually, I began to understand and appreciate what it meant to be on the front lines as a pioneer member. I had the opportunity to become close to my seniors and receive lots of guidance.

One Saturday before school started for the year, I went to my classroom to add some finishing touches. On the way home, I

became dizzy. I couldn't see a thing! I thought it was a result of all the fumes from carpet glue, oil paint, shellac and paint thinners, because our school was under renovation. I chanted and managed to pull over to the side of the road.

Over the next two weeks, I experienced the same feeling five or six times; more when I was driving. On the way to work one morning it happened again. This time it scared me enough to tell my boss, who sent me straight to the doctor. An M.R.I. revealed a tumor growing on the lining of my brain (meningioma). With false courage, I asked him, "Just what does that affect?" He told me I would have to talk to a neurosurgeon. This set off my "daimoku alarm!" Nam-myoho-renge-kyo!

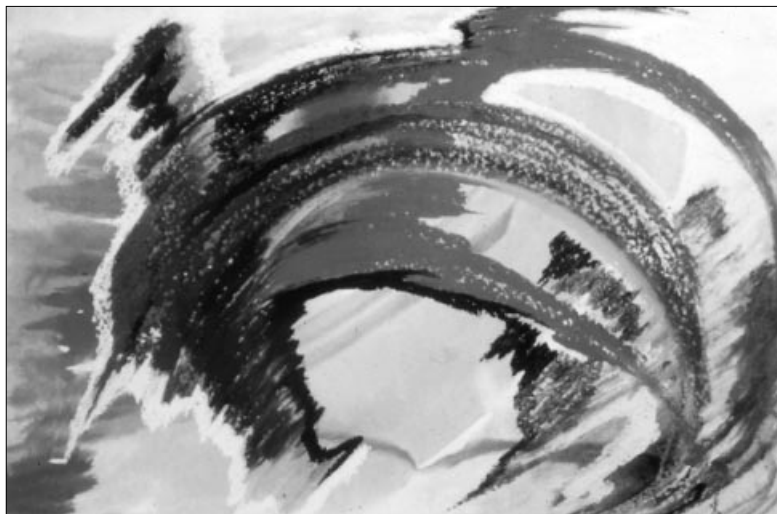
At this point I knew I had to chant some serious daimoku. I waited a week for my appointment to see the neurosurgeon, only to find out that his office had no record of my referral. I told the nurse I had a brain tumor, and she replied, "Oh, it seems you would want to get in right away then."

Things moved quickly to a "two alarmer." The neurosur-

geon told me the tumor had to come out right way; that the symptoms would only get worse. It was growing rapidly. Surgery was scheduled for the following week. It had become an automatic "four alarmer." I made phone calls to all corners of the SGI-USA for daimoku support.

When our joint territory leader visited Louisville, I went to him for guidance. I shared with him that when I heard health experiences of other members, I thought: "Wow, that is so encouraging. They are so strong. I don't want to be tested like that. My practice is not that strong!" He gave me confidence that I could do it, saying: "You are an emissary, a votary of the Lotus Sutra. Now it's your turn to show actual proof."

THE day before surgery I went to the hospital for pre-operation tests. I was given an angiogram (iodine injected into the blood stream through a catheter tube). As I watched the monitor, I chanted that the catheter tube would hurry and reach its destination. It took one-and-one-half hours. After the test, I was moved upstairs to recuperate. Two hours later, I



Realm Shift, 1996,
watercolor and oil pastel, 22 x 34 in.

was finally given a meal. I was drinking some juice when I began to choke. Before long there were doctors and nurses all over me asking what was wrong. I became aware that I was crying and could not get my words out. I struggled to convey that I felt pressure in my brain. I was having a stroke.

I lost all feeling in the left side of my body, my face dropped and my speech became slurred. I was placed on 600 mg. of Dilantin, an anti-convulsive medicine. The doctors told me they had never seen this happen before. The brain surgery was postponed for four weeks. I was so disappointed, but I was encouraged to look at it as an opportunity to chant many more daimoku. But I didn't see it that way at the time. My faith was about to be tested on another level.

After about ten days, I was sent home. It got to the point that I couldn't finish a thought, a sentence or even see the words to do gongyo. I was literally walking into walls. My neurologist had told me to make an appointment

to have my Dilantin level checked in two or three weeks. Two weeks later I learned my Dilantin level was much too high. I began to itch all over and I noticed that food got lodged in my throat. A friend who was a doctor encouraged me to go to the urgent care facility immediately. There I was told that I had something called "the Steven-Johnson Syndrome." From that moment, I think I was in shock. By the time I reached the hospital, the syndrome was in full effect. Every inch of my body swelled to enormous proportions and I broke into a rash equivalent to third-degree burns. I was moved to a private room where members enshrined the Gohonzon. I welcomed the opportunity to tell everyone about the practice. After ten days, I was ready to be discharged again. Because my veins had collapsed, the head nurse ordered a "pic line" to be threaded through my chest into my arm. At home, a visiting nurse noticed that it was infected. She pulled it out, put an alcohol patch on my arm and left. Sunday morning, pain was throbbing through my entire body. Even my eyelids

ached. The infection had spread throughout my body.

This time, while in the hospital, I wanted no flowers, no gifts, no visitors and no phone calls. I wanted to be left alone. I was tired of fighting, and I still had not addressed the primary issue of the brain tumor. Now they were talking about surgery on my arm.

DURING my self-imposed seclusion, it became clear to me that I needed to make a decision. Was I going to "float aimlessly on the sea of suffering" or was I going to take charge of my own life and change this karma? Buddhism is win or lose.

I had so many doctors during this journey. One day I overheard one telling the other: "If I were her surgeon, I wouldn't touch her. She has such bad luck!" This was not the energy or the attitude I wanted. I needed to tell all the doctors who would have anything to do with me about my practice. I wrote a five-page letter to the doctors, nurses and staff explaining my Buddhist philosophy. I thanked

them for their efforts, and assured them that in my practice there is no such thing as “luck,” there is only fortune—something that is solidly grounded in one’s life from the causes we make.

It was time for me to show actual proof of my practice once again. I had to take full responsibility for my own life. I determined that I would arise victorious. At last I was released without needing surgery on my arm. Two weeks later, my neurosurgeon met with me to re-schedule my original surgery for the fourth time. He thanked me for the letter, and we discussed my Buddhist philosophy. He told me that I was a very fortunate young lady, because he had known two other cases like mine, and neither had survived.

ONE week after surgery, after regaining consciousness, I learned there had been many complications during that week, but the result was very successful. On my path to recovery, there came a need to express what had been bubbling up inside for years—I began to paint. Since then, I’ve had the benefit and opportunity of my work being displayed in many galleries, homes and businesses around the country.

My family and I are now living in Charlotte, North Carolina, where we are lovingly embraced by the SGI-USA members with their great spirit. I would like to honor my ancestors, especially my brother Dwight, who continues to share his gifts. My deepest appreciation goes out to Daisaku Ikeda, the members, my family and

many friends throughout the world.

Art: The Journey

MY artwork speaks of the journey in my life and my practice, which I now know are one. The vibrant colors speak to the passion that runs deep. The free-flowing movement of energy signifies the constant healing taking place. The contrast speaks to the diversity in all things and yet the oneness of it all. I experience the Mystic Law at the core.

In my experience, color is one of the most exciting things I have encountered. For me it is an opportunity to share the mystical, magical world of color, light and movement hidden inside. There is no doubt in my mind that the many hours of daimoku and the challenging of my health karma unlocked a hidden world of talent that had been lying dormant for many years. It was an opportunity to change consciousness, opening the heart to love, light and inner wisdom. This allowed me to participate fully in the ongoing creation of the universal rhythm and express it on paper.

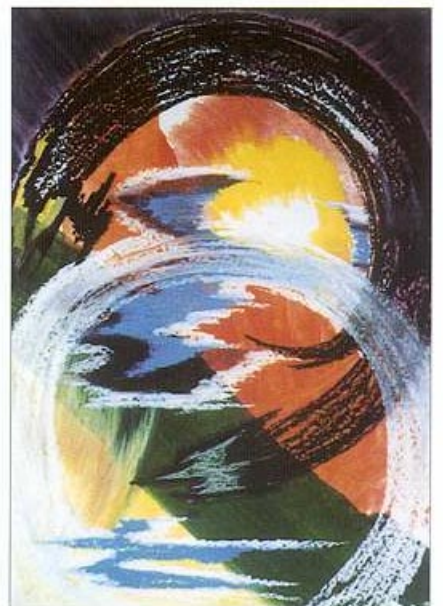
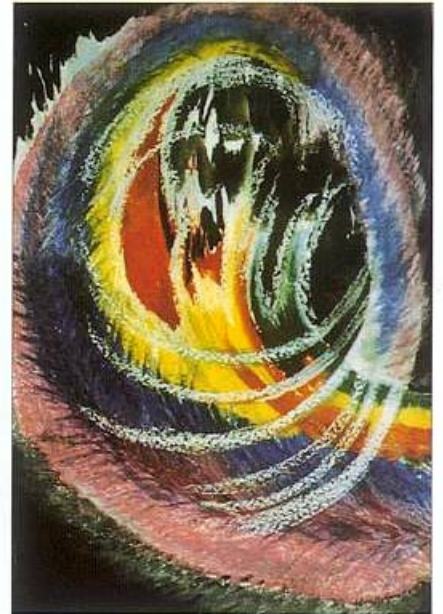
My work goes beyond the normal, everyday sensory perceptions of light, color and composition. In traditional approaches, artists seek inspiration and knowledge of light and color from natural phenomena. In this work, I am expressing my own individuality, intuition and my own inner search for light.

One of my many gifts from President Ikeda is the spirit of self-reliance. It is a reminder

that I am not only free to be who I am; it is my mission as a Bodhisattva of the Earth to live my light, which pulsates from the depths of my life into the hearts and lives of others, and express it through my art.

In my Cosmic System of Healing, the use of color is combined with the energy of the Mystic Law. The mental and emotional factor in health and disease is connected with the etheric, the causal and the spiritual levels of consciousness, which contribute to the final output (effect) of either harmony or disease in the physical. I have found that color is a vibration or a frequency of the energy of light. Depending upon the frequency, our physical eyes see a specific color. Disease is a want of harmony in the system. Colors help restore harmony, therefore the objective is to restore or supply this need through art.

My media of choice are watercolor, oil pastels and oil sticks. The style is abstract, lending to the free-flowing movement of different levels of consciousness. The watercolor techniques range from the traditional overlays of thin washes to the bolder wet-on-wet, wet-on-dry, light-to-dark, dark-to-light techniques. Although the oil pastels are more opaque in my abstract compositions, they are as vibrant and fresh as the watercolors. The free-flowing strokes give the effect of powerful movement and an air of excitement in each painting. The technique of cropping creates a multidimensional perspective, encouraging the viewer to step out of a linear way of experiencing it. □



top left, *Cosmic Party*, 1996, watercolor and oil pastel, 22 x 34 in.

top right, *Portal of Transcendence*, 1996, watercolor and oil pastel, 34 x 22 in.

center left, *Lunar Manifestation*, 1996, watercolor and oil pastel, 22 x 34 in.

center right, *Dreamer and Dreamed*, 1996, watercolor and oil pastel, 34 x 22 in.

left, *Sacred Geometry Tools of Manifestation*, 1996, watercolor and oil pastel, 22 x 34 in.





Journey into Higher Self, 1996,
watercolor and oil pastel, 22 x 34 in.
by Alicia W. Moore

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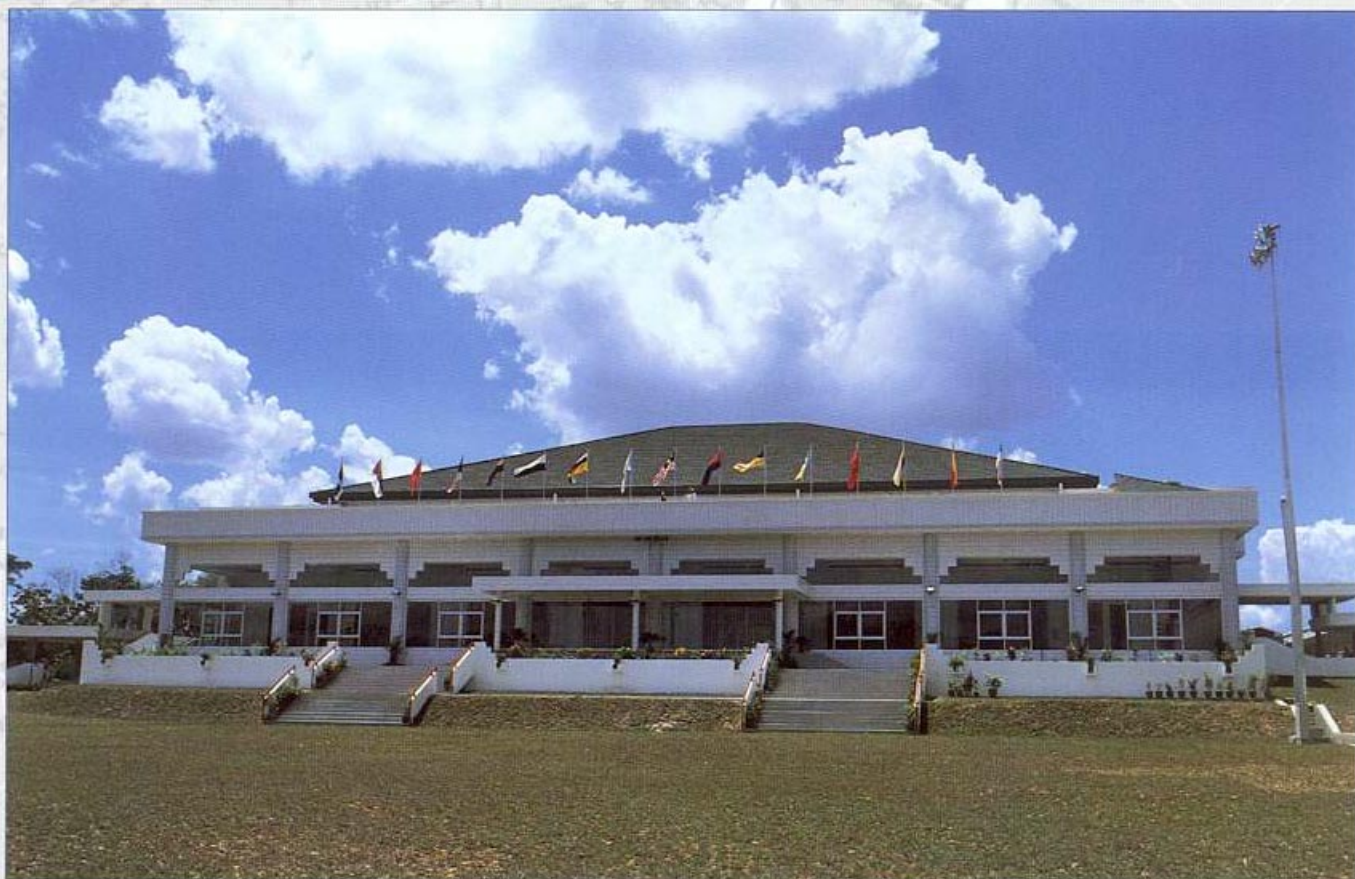
Study Material for Nov/Dec: Letter From Sado • Explanation of the Gohonzon

LIVING BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

November 1997 • Soka Gakkai International-USA

Malaysia Culture Center



LOCATED on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, the capital and commercial center of Malaysia, the Soka Gakkai Malaysia (AGM) Culture Center officially opened on January 22, 1988. A complex of four buildings includes an office building, which has meeting rooms, and an auditorium that accommodates 2,500 people. The Soka Kindergarten in Malaysia opened in the center's vicinity in December 1994.

SGI President Ikeda visited Malaysia for the first time on February 5, 1988, at the invitation of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the University of Malaya. The following day,

after his meeting with the prime minister, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, Mr. Ikeda visited the University of Malaya to oversee the donation of 500 Japanese-language books, video cassettes and equipment to the institution. An agreement to conduct academic exchanges with Soka University was reached.

On February 7, Malaysian members attended a commemorative friendship meeting, where it was announced that February 5 would be known as Malaysian Peace Day to commemorate the date of Mr. Ikeda's arrival on his first visit to the country.