



LIVING BUDDHISM

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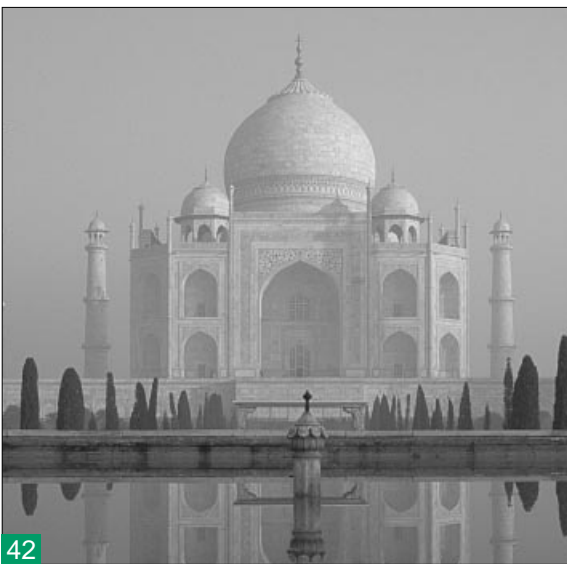
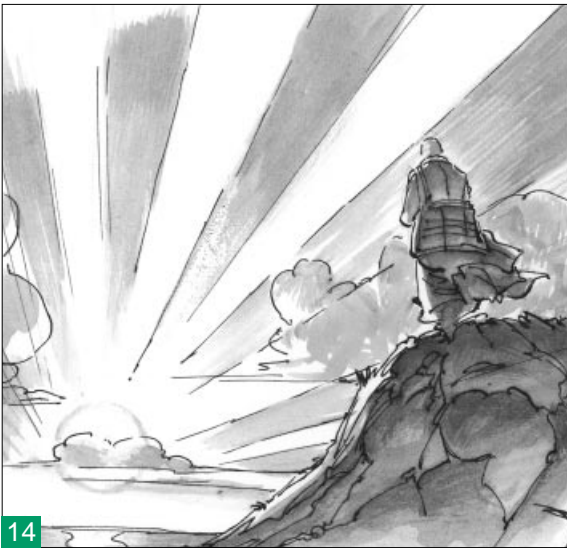
Living Buddhism is the monthly journal of the SGI-USA, an American Buddhist movement that promotes peace and individual happiness based on the philosophy and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

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On The Cover: *Mardi Gras*, colored pencil, acrylics, thread on paper, 12 x 15 in., 1996, by Joyce Martin.

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FROM THE EDITOR

The *Living Buddhism* staff is very thankful for the discerning readers who collaborate with us in working to make this publication a success. We appreciate all your support in 1997, and look forward to ever-improving our magazine in 1998. A Happy New Year to everyone!

— Margie Hall

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

EXPLORING FAMILY LIFE

I'D like to thank Marlea Welton for her article in the October issue about exploring new frontiers. I feel that the literature of Buddhism needs to show more comparisons between the spirit of Buddhist reformation. Of course, President Ikeda has been doing this for years.

I especially liked her quotes from Daniel Boorstin describing the formation of American democracy (p. 9) and his definition of the discoverer and the explorer.

For several years, I felt I needed to get more in touch

with the struggles of American pioneers. After seeing a photo book of ghost towns, my family and I visited Bodie, supposedly the worst California Gold Rush town because of daily murders and duels. My anticipation was high to discover some great secret of our past, which the ghost town held.

Instead of any such secret, we found dilapidated buildings, with bits of rusting cars and trucks from the '20s and '30s strewn about. There was a schoolroom with a calendar from the 1930s and a museum on main street. As far as I know, the duels of Bodie are left to one's imagination.

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

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

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

What I discovered is while it may be interesting to explore the past, no matter what we find, the important thing is to create something far better in the future. Ms. Welton's conclusion points in the right direction by emphasizing treasures of the heart and boldness, real secrets of fortune.

RON BAIRD
San Francisco

I FEEL compelled to respond to Marlea Welton's article on family life in the October 1997 issue.

It is obvious from the article that Ms. Welton has researched her topic well in describing the different types of family that exist throughout the globe. However, I absolutely disagree with her description of the family on the islands in the Caribbean and take umbrage at her statement "families are matrifocal (mother and children living together). Men circulate throughout the community and establish relationships with different women." This description depicts the men as permissive, interested only in bedding as many women as they can and take absolutely no interest or responsibility in the raising of their children. This is totally untrue and Ms. Welton's description equally false.

I can state with certainty that most families in the Caribbean live under the "extended fami-

ly" umbrella. And I say that with a strong conviction as I am a member of an extended family from the island of Grenada. My parents married before they started their family and they stayed married to each other for thirty-nine years before my father died. My father did not establish relationships with different women and my siblings and I did not grow up with my mother alone. And my family was not unique.

I know of many West Indians who grew up in extended families in the West Indies. Conversely, I know of West Indian families where the children are living with their mothers. The same could be said of many families I have met in the United States. While it is true that some men have relationships with other women, I find there is no more of a higher incidence of multiple relationships in the West Indies than in many other countries. Certainly, monogamy is more the norm than otherwise. As I mentioned earlier, Ms. Welton's article is well researched but she should have extended her survey to a larger cross section of the West Indian population.

GEMMA MUNRO
Reston, Virginia

Ms. Welton replies: It was a difficult task to condense what I read

about families and kinship into an educational but already lengthy article. Anthropological perspectives are arrived at by a method of research called ethnography. Individuals and small groups of people are observed and then theories are drawn (based on scientific principles) concluded from those observations. The full text of the quotation mentioned is from a book by Alexander Alland, Jr. called To Be Human: An Introduction to Anthropology (cited in my article), and it reads as follows: "On many of the islands that dot the Caribbean a large number of families are matrifocal, consisting of a mother and her children. While a percentage of nuclear families does exist, men frequently circulate through the community, establishing relationships of different duration with several women."

This description is but one interpretation of a small, indigenous group of people on the Caribbean. It in no way reflects the entirety of contemporary family structure in that country, any more than the indigenous cultures of our country such as the Iroquois Indian, who were famous for having a matrilineal kinship structure, would reflect American family life. What I was trying to indicate by alluding to alternative systems in other countries was that we can all benefit by being open to the possibilities of different structures other than the nuclear one. It was not meant to offend.

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.

A UNIVERSITY FOR THE PEOPLE

THIS month, the editors have included study material for the Entrance-level Examination scheduled for next April. I hope it will be helpful to the exam candidates and those who assist them in study. That an exam is coming up reminds me of one of the last ones I took. As I recall, it was an Advanced-level Exam. I thought it would be easy. It wasn't. In fact, much to my surprise, I failed it. That experience taught me an important lesson about Buddhist study that I would like to share with you.

Because I had successfully passed previous exams, my study habits weren't as keen as they should have been. I was beginning to take study lightly. So even had I passed, I don't think I would have gained much. Failing that exam, however, helped me realize that study isn't just something we undertake when exam time rolls around. Nor is it an activity designed just for scholars and intellectuals. Rather, study is an integral part of our practice, something no less important than reciting the sutra, chanting or sharing the wonders of Buddhism with others. In fact, to integrate study into our daily regime is exactly the formula outlined by Nichiren Daishonin when he writes, "Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 94-95). But what makes Buddhist study such a profound endeavor, I think, can be found in the remaining part of that passage where he writes, "You must not only persevere yourself: you must also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith.

Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase."

Generally we tend to think of study as simply acquiring more knowledge for ourselves. There are even those who study to be able to say, "I'm smarter than you are." But to study solely for the sake of gaining more knowledge or deepening one's own intellectual understanding completely misses the point of Buddhist study. Such self-centeredness falls into the realm of what Buddhism calls the "lesser self" and can in fact lead one away from being able to truly understand the heart of Buddhism.

What I was reminded of when I failed my exam is that I study, not for myself, but for the sake of others. It reminded me that we practice in order to "accumulate the treasures of the heart" to become warmhearted people. From that perspective, study, rather than being an exercise for the ego, can be said to be an integral component of our practice for others. SGI President Ikeda illuminated that perspective when he delivered a lecture to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in India just this past October. He said:

Buddhism ... is an endeavor directed toward human education. Conversely, education, to realize its full value, must be supported by the spirituality that enables us to extend faith and trust to others. What our world most requires now is the kind of education that fosters love for humankind, that develops character; that provides an intellectual basis for the realization of peace and empowers learners to contribute to and improve society.

The roots of the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) are to be found in the Soka Kyoiku

Gakkai (society for Value-Creating Education), founded in Japan in 1930. Both the first and second presidents, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, were educators. Motivated by the conviction that the goal of education is the lifetime happiness of students, they sought to understand the actual content of happiness. It was this pursuit that eventually led them to the philosophy of Buddhism, which elucidates the workings of life, and how we come to experience happiness and unhappiness.¹

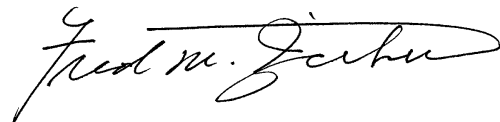
IN many Buddhist sects, studying and reciting the sutra are considered to be the privilege of priests. I recall during my childhood in Japan when priests visited our home a few times a year to recite the sutra in memory of our ancestors. Such memorial services are a major source of income for priests. On the contrary, the SGI is where people of all walks of life, regardless of social status, background or educational achievement can gather together and learn how one ought to live as a human being. No wonder President Toda called our organization a “university for the people.”

Whether we are preparing for the April examination or helping others prepare, this might be a good time to remind ourselves again how significant study is to our Buddhist practice. Returning to President Ikeda's lecture in India:

Unless supported and tempered by the wisdom of education, religious faith is always at risk of becoming blind and undirected. On

the other hand, when illumined by the light of wisdom that education brings forth, the spiritual values of religion shine that much brighter. I thus find it extremely natural, inevitable even, that the first and second presidents of the Soka Gakkai should have arrived, at one terminus of their pursuit of the real meaning and purpose of education, at the practice of Buddhism—carried out for, and in the midst of, the common people. In a sense, then, our movement has come full circle, as we now seek to promote a universal solidarity of education, culture and peace amongst the world's people based on the insights of Buddhism. Our actions are rooted in the conviction that this is the certain means by which to reduce, and eventually eliminate, the distances of the heart that separate people. (Ibid.)

As this is the last issue of *Living Buddhism* for the year, please allow me to thank you for your support this year and to extend to all of our readers and their families a safe, healthy and joyful holiday season.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

1. See Daisaku Ikeda's lecture titled "A New Humanism for the Coming Century" in the January 1998 issue of *Living Buddhism*.

New SGI-USA Study Department Curriculum

The following is the revised SGI-USA Study Curriculum for each level from 1998 through 2001. The page numbers listed indicate the material from which the exam questions will be derived. Pages 7–43 of this issue and the SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-level Textbook comprise all the necessary material for the Entrance-level Exam.

ENTRANCE-LEVEL

The Entrance-level Exam will be held on April 19, 1998; in spring 1999; in spring 2000; in spring 2001. Any SGI-USA member who has no Study Department position is eligible to take this exam.

1. SGI-USA Study Program Entrance-Level Textbook
 - “On Attaining Buddhahood” (pp. 6–12; 20–29)
 - “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon” (pp. 32–43; 47–52)
2. *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*
 - “Happiness in This World” (pp. 223–246)
3. *The Life of Nichiren Daishonin*
 - Nichiren’s Daishonin’s life (pp. 11–18; 56–78; 83–115)
4. *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* (pamphlet)
 - Introduction; Question No. 2; Question No. 4 (pp. 4–6; 9–10; 13–16)

ELEMENTARY-LEVEL

The Elementary-level Exam will be held in October 1998 and in the fall of 2000.

1. SGI-USA Study Program Elementary-Level Textbook
 - “Letter to the Brothers” (pp. 6–13; 22–5; 31–51; 57–61; 67–74; 80–84; 89–104)
 - “The Person and the Law” (pp. 107–127)
 - *Ichinen Sanzen* (pp. 128–160)
2. *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*
 - “One Essential Phrase I & II” (pp. 73–94)

3. Vol. 1 of *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*
 - The “Expedient Means” Chapter. (pp. 5–43; 53–83; 133–140)
4. *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* (pamphlet)
 - The entire pamphlet.

INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL

The Intermediate-level Exam will be held in the fall of 1999.

1. SGI-USA Study Program Intermediate-Level Textbook
 - “Risshō Ankoku Ron” (pp. 75–136)
2. *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*
 - “The Opening of the Eyes, I & II” (pp. 49–72)
3. Vols. 2 and 3 of *Lectures on the “Expedient Means” and “Life Span” Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*
 - The “Life Span” Chapter. (Specific sections to be decided.)
4. *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* (pamphlet)
 - The entire pamphlet.

ADVANCED-LEVEL

The Advanced-level Exam will be held in fall 2001.

1. *Selected Lectures on the Goshō*
 - “The True Entity of Life” (pp. 3–24; 30–38; 58–70; 87–89)
 - “Heritage of the Ultimate Law” (pp. 95–109; 121–123; 150–155; 169–172; 192–195)
 - “The True Object of Worship” (pp. 203–223; 240–281)
2. “Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra” Series
 - Specific sections for the exam will be decided in the future. (Please begin studying the series, which began in the April 1995 *Seikyo Times* and continues in *Living Buddhism*.)
3. *Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue* (pamphlet)
 - The entire pamphlet.

“Happiness in This World”

THERE is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The sutra says, “The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease.”¹ “Happy and at ease” here means the joy derived from the Law. You are obviously included among the “people,” and “there” indicates the entire world, which includes Japan. “Happy and at ease” means to know that our lives—both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings—are the entities of *ichinen sanzen* and the Buddha of absolute freedom. There is no greater happiness than having faith in the Lotus Sutra. It promises us “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.”² Never let life’s hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages.

Just chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and when you drink sake, stay at home with your wife. Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. Then you will experience boundless joy from the Law. Strengthen your faith more than ever.

With my deep respect,
Nichiren

The twenty-seventh day of the sixth month in the second year of Kenji (1276). (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* vol. 1, pp. 161–62)

*This material is reprinted from SGI President Ikeda’s Learning From the Goshō:
The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 223–246.*

WE practice faith to fully enjoy life, to lead the happiest possible existence. The Goshō we will study this time, “Happiness in This World,”³ explains the “secret teaching” that makes this possible. It is a short letter, but it offers a complete exposition of the ultimate principles of faith. When we deeply understand this Goshō, we have internalized the secret of faith and of life.

Chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Equals the Greatest Happiness

There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

HUMAN beings” at the outset carries great significance. This means all humankind; the Daishonin’s teaching can benefit all people without exception.

Buddhism is a teaching that exists for all human beings. It is not only for the Japanese or the people of one particular country or ethnic group. Nichiren Daishonin declares that, ultimately, for all people—whether poor or wealthy, famous or unknown, powerful individuals or ordinary citizens, artists or scientists—apart from chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, there is no true happiness, no true joy or fulfillment in life. That’s because when we chant daimoku, our lives become one with the life of the

Buddha, enabling us to draw forth the inexhaustible strength to carry out our human revolution and to help others do the same.

Fame, wealth and social status alone do not guarantee happiness. Many wealthy individuals suffer terribly within their mansions. Some people may be so bound up in vanity that they can find no peace of mind. Many famous people feel miserable the moment they slip from the limelight.

Let’s say there are two people who work in the same company, perform identical jobs and have equivalent material resources and social standing; yet one feels happy while the other feels nothing but despair. It is not at all uncommon to find such disparities among people



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MICHAEL BOYSCORRIS

Fame, wealth and social status alone do not guarantee happiness. Many wealthy individuals suffer terribly within their mansions. Some people may be so bound up in vanity that they can find no peace of mind. Many famous people feel miserable the moment they slip from the limelight.

whose lives are otherwise quite similar. The disparities arise due to differences in people's inner states, differences in their hearts.

Nor can it be said that the advance of science or economics necessarily brings happiness. In every case, whether we feel happy or unhappy ultimately depends on us. Without changing our state of life, we can find no true happiness. But when we do change our inner state, our entire world is transformed. The ultimate means for effecting such change is chanting daimoku.

The sutra says, "The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease."

THIS sutra passage is from the *jigage* section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It means that in this world people ought to live in happiness and ease. We recite this passage every morning and evening in gongyo.

We are born in this world to enjoy life. We are not born to suffer. This is the basic premise of the Lotus Sutra on the nature of human existence. To live happy and at ease in this world means to enjoy our work and family life, to enjoy helping others through Buddhist activities. If we have a truly high state of life, then even when unpleasant things happen we view them as making life all the more interesting, just as a pinch of salt can actually improve the flavor of a sweet dish. We feel true delight in life, whatever happens.

This sutra passage assures us that we can definitely develop such a great life force. And it urges us to exert ourselves in Buddhist practice toward that end.

"Happy and at ease" here means the joy derived from the Law.

TO experience the "joy derived from the Law" means to fully savor the eternally unchanging Mystic Law and the power and wisdom that derive from it. In contrast to this joy, there is the "joy derived from desires"—the enjoyment that comes from fulfilling desires of various kinds. While it might seem like genuine happiness, such joy is only temporary and superficial. It does not arise from the depths of our lives and it soon gives way to unhappiness and dissatisfaction.

Faith enables us to receive the eternal joy derived from the Law. So let us engrave in our hearts this point: We ourselves receive this joy. Because we receive it ourselves, our happiness does not depend on others. No one else can make us happy. Only by our own efforts can we become happy.

Therefore, there is no need to feel envious of others. There is no need to bear a grudge against

someone or depend on another person for our happiness. Everything comes down to our state of life. It is within our power to take our lives in any direction we wish.

To be dragged around by other people or the environment is not the way of life the Lotus Sutra teaches. True happiness is not feeling happiness one moment and misery the next. Rather, overcoming the tendency to blame our sufferings on others or on the environment enables us to greatly expand our state of life.

Also, at the most fundamental level, faith is for our sake, not for anyone else's. While we of course practice for ourselves and others and to realize *kosen-rufu*, ultimately we are the prime beneficiaries of all our efforts in faith. Everything is for our growth; everything contributes to the development of our state of life and the establishment of Buddhahood in our lives. When we practice with this determination, all complaints vanish. The world of Buddhahood that had been covered by the dust of complaints begins to shine, and we can freely and fully savor the joy deriving from the Law.

True 'Peace and Security' Is Having Courage to Overcome Hardships

You are obviously included among the "people," and "there" indicates the entire world, which includes Japan. "Happy and at ease" means to know that our lives—both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings—are the entities of *ichinen sanzen* and the Buddha of absolute freedom.

THE Daishonin says that this passage, "The people there [in my land] are happy and at ease," is about each of us. The sad thing is that no matter how much we read the sutra or study the Gosho, we still have the tendency to think, "That might be true for others, but my situation is different." Particularly, when we are assailed by storms of adversity, when it seems as though our hearts will burst with woe, we may think, "Only my sufferings are beyond help." But in this passage the Daishonin tells us that this definitely is not the case.

When this letter was written, Shijo Kingo, its recipient, had been libelously accused of various wrongs by his colleagues and had fallen from favor with his lord as a result. This was all due to envy. Kingo had enjoyed the deep trust of his lord, but he also had the straightforwardness to speak out when he felt it necessary. As a result, he had made many enemies.

People have the tendency to become envious over the slightest thing, which is perhaps human nature. They may try to undercut someone of whom they feel envious and then delight at the person's misfortune. We must not be defeated by this pitiful tendency. To allow ourselves to become caught up in or swayed by such whirlpools of emotion, going from elation one moment to dejection the next, is pointless.

As indicated by the phrase "[receiving oneself] the joy derived from the Law," the key is to develop such inner strength that we can look upon everything from the world of Buddhahood, the condition of supreme happi-



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If we have a truly high state of life, then even when unpleasant things happen we view them as making life all the more interesting, just as a pinch of salt can actually improve the flavor of a sweet dish. We feel true delight in life, whatever happens.

Attaining “peace and security in this life” doesn’t mean having a life free from all difficulties, but that whatever difficulties arise, without being shaken in the least, you can summon up the unflinching courage and conviction to fight against and overcome them. This is the state of life of “peace and security in this life.”

ness. And, as the Daishonin says, steadfastly chanting daimoku enables us to do this.

Also, as the Daishonin indicates where he speaks of “both our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings,” Buddhism is not abstract theory involving only the mind. Nor is it about changing our subjective outlook irrespective of other people and our surroundings.

The good fortune and benefit we accumulate in the depths of our lives become manifest on the material plane, as well as in our environment. In our bodies and minds, ourselves and our surroundings, it is the mind of faith, which is invisible, that moves everything with enormous power and strength in the best possible direction—toward happiness, toward the fulfillment of all our wishes.

Someone who puts this principle into practice is a “Buddha of absolute freedom.” Leaving aside a doctrinal discussion of this term, the Buddha of absolute freedom is a Buddha who, while remaining an ordinary person, freely receives and uses limitless joy derived from the Law.

Specifically, the Buddha of absolute freedom is Nichiren Daishonin. In a general sense, the



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term also refers to those striving to achieve kosen-rufu who have a direct connection in faith to the Daishonin.

“Absolute freedom” is interpreted by the Daishonin as meaning “the property to freely receive and use.”

In one place he says, “The ‘property to freely receive and use’ is the principle of a single life-moment possessing three thousand realms.” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 759)

JOSEI Toda explained that the Gohonzon is an inexhaustible store of benefit. And Nichikan declared, “[If only you take faith in this Gohonzon and chant Nam-myoho-rence-kyo even for a while,] no prayer will go unanswered, no offense will remain unforgiven, all good fortune will be bestowed and all righteousness proven.”⁴

The extent to which we can receive and use the vast, profound joy derived from the Law depends entirely on our faith. Will we take only a small cup of water from the ocean, or will we fill up a large swimming pool? Can we freely receive and use still more? This is determined entirely by faith.

If somewhere in your heart you have decided, “I alone am incapable of becoming happy,” “Only I cannot become a capable person” or, “Only my sufferings will forever remain unresolved,” then that one factor of your mind or determination will obstruct your benefit.

In this passage, therefore, the Daishonin’s intention is to tell Shijo Kingo, who was experiencing great hardship, “You, too, definitely can become happy just as the sutra states.” The Daishonin expresses his immense compassion here.



FRANZ MARC FREILICHBIS

There is no greater happiness than having faith in the Lotus Sutra. It promises us “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.”

THERE is a saying, “A small heart gets used to misery and becomes docile, while a great heart towers above misfortune.” True happiness is not the absence of suffering; you cannot have day after day of clear skies. True happiness lies in building a self that stands dignified and indomitable like a great palace—on all days, even when it is raining, snowing or stormy.

Attaining “peace and security

in this life” doesn’t mean having a life free from all difficulties, but that whatever difficulties arise, without being shaken in the least, you can summon up the unflinching courage and conviction to fight against and overcome them. This is the state of life of “peace and security in this life.”

And, as indicated by the dictum, “If you want to understand what results will be manifested in the future, look at the causes that exist in the present,”⁵ establishing a great state of happiness and security in this life is proof that in the future you will experience good circumstances; being born into a place conducive to

your further growth.

Some religions teach that people will become happy after death even if their present lives are filled with misery. But this is not the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, which explains that we can thoroughly enjoy both the present and the future. That is the essence of Buddhism.

Toward establishing such an existence, we need to develop a strong life force by chanting daimoku and thoroughly challenging the realities of our lives. It is through such efforts that we realize true “peace and security in this life” and “good circumstances in the next.”

The ocean, even when waves are crashing on its surface, is calm and unchanging in its depths. There is both suffering and joy in life—the point is to develop a profound, indomitable self not influenced by these waves. A person who does so receives the joy derived from the Law.

‘Regard Both Suffering and Joy As Facts of Life’

Never let life’s hardships disturb you. After all, no one can avoid problems, not even saints or sages.

NOT even saints and sages, the Daishonin says, can avoid difficulties. In society, people tend to suppose that if someone is vilified and persecuted, the person must be somehow bad or evil. But from the standpoint of Buddhism, it is possible that people may be verbally attacked and undergo difficulties even though they are without guilt or blame. People may label or write about a good person as though evil, assert that lies are true and depict the truth as a lie. This is a fact of human society.

Shijo Kingo, too, suffered on account of calumny. But the Daishonin told him, “Never let life’s hardships disturb you.” Those who resort to libelous accusations are defeated as human beings; nothing is more lowly and base. We should not be swayed in the least by such despicable actions. Just as we do not put garbage into our mouths, we must not permit such rubbish into our hearts. The Daishonin in effect encouraged Shijo Kingo to shut



DOUGLAS PERRELE/ISTOCKPHOTO

the cowardly behavior of his accusers out of his mind. The Roman philosopher Seneca (4 B.C.E.–C.E. 65) says that the arrows of slander cannot pierce the heart of a person of wisdom.⁶

Much human misery arises from people despairing over things that despairing cannot help. We should not worry about things that no amount of worrying will resolve. The important thing is to build a golden palace of joy in our hearts that nothing can disturb—a state of life like a clear blue sky above the storm, an oasis in the desert, a fortress looking down on high waves.

What matters most is that we fight thoroughly against injustice with a lofty, dauntless spirit. While waging a determined struggle against evil that nearly cost him his life, Nichiren Daishonin cried out [to Shijo Kingo, as they were being led to the execution grounds at Tatsunokuchi], “You should be delighted at this great fortune” (MW-1, 181). And he wholeheartedly anticipated that his disciples would “form their ranks and fol-

low him” (MW-1, 176).

Even a tiny speck of evil that causes people to be unhappy should not be tolerated. Attaining “peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next” lies precisely in carrying out such a struggle with the faith of indomitable courage.

Just chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, and when you drink sake, stay at home with your wife.

THE moment he set foot outside his home, Shijo Kingo was in danger of being attacked by enemies. The Daishonin cautions him not to act with imprudence but to stay at home and chant daimoku. And he advises that Shijo Kingo and his wife encourage one another. He taught his follower, in other words, the importance of faith for building a happy, harmonious family.

The Daishonin urged Shijo Kingo to live happily in the present, without brooding on events of the past or needlessly troubling himself over what might happen in the future.

Happiness does not lie far off in the distance. It is to be found in the here and now.

**Suffer what there is to suffer,
enjoy what there is to enjoy.
Regard both suffering and joy
as facts of life and continue
chanting Nam-myoho-renge-
kyo, no matter what happens.
Then you will experience
boundless joy from the Law.**

IN times of suffering, chant daimoku. In times of joy, chant daimoku. Chanting daimoku is itself happiness. In life, there are both times of suffering and of joy. These are all irreplaceable scenes in life's drama. Without suffering, we could not appreciate joy. Without tasting the flavors of both suffering and joy, we could not savor life's profundity.

"Suffer what there is to suffer," the Daishonin says. Suffering is inevitable in life. Therefore, we need to be prepared for hardship and to have the inner fortitude to rise above our worries and anxieties. We have to cause the "serene light of the moon of enlightenment" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1262)—the world of Buddhahood—to shine in our lives. Then earthly desires are transformed into enlightenment and we can use everything that happens in life to fuel our happiness.

To "enjoy what there is to enjoy" means to cause the "mystic lotus of the heart" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 978) to brightly blossom with a sense of appreciation and joy. Someone who can find joy, who can feel appreciation, experiences a snowballing exhilaration and joy in life. Such is the heart's function.

The ocean, even when waves are crashing on its surface, is calm

and unchanging in its depths. There is both suffering and joy in life—the point is to develop a profound, indomitable self not influenced by these waves. A person who does so receives the joy derived from the Law.

In the journey of kosen-rufu things will not always proceed smoothly. But we are eternal comrades. People who come together in good times but desert one another when the going gets rough are not comrades. Turning a blind eye to the sufferings of others, using the rationale that "it has nothing to do with me," is not the spirit of comrades. True comrades share both suffering and joy.

We suffer together, rejoice together and bring our lives to fruition together. We regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no matter what happens. To maintain this comradeship, this single-minded commitment to faith, is our eternal guideline in advancing toward kosen-rufu. Let us ever advance with the strong unity of faith!

**Strengthen your faith more
than ever.**

WHEN Nichiren Daishonin was taken to be executed at Tatsunokuchi, Shijo Kingo ran straight to his side. Clutching the reins of the horse on which the Daishonin rode, he resolutely stood by him, vowing to kill himself and join him in death. He was a person of immensely strong faith who boldly ran forward along the path of mentor and disciple.

Even to Shijo Kingo, who possessed such strong faith, the Daishonin says, "Strengthen your

faith more than ever." It's not a matter of what we've done in the past—it's what we do from now on that counts. Strength of faith is what everything comes down to. Faith is strength. It is the greatest power people have.

We receive the power of the Buddha and power of the Law embodied in the Gohonzon in accordance with the power of our faith and practice. Faith is the secret art for thoroughly infusing our daily lives with the inherent power of the universe.

Shijo Kingo exerted himself in faith just as the Daishonin instructed. After his difficulties passed, he showed actual proof by regaining the firm trust of his lord and having the size of his lands doubled. Those colleagues who harassed him suffered pitiful consequences.

To practice just as the Daishonin instructs is the fundamental spirit of the SGI. We are advancing in strict accord with the Gosho's teachings. As long as we remember this point, we can definitely achieve great victory in life and our efforts for kosen-rufu.

The Gosho is truly an eternal teaching, which we should be most grateful to have. Thanks to our having encountered this teaching, we can lead wonderful lives of eternal victory. □

1. LS16, 230.
2. LS5, 99.
3. "Shijo Kingo Dono Gohenji" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1143), written in June 1276 when the Daishonin was 55.
4. From his "Commentary on 'The True Object of Worship.'"
5. From Nichikan's *Shinjikan* Sutra. See MW-2 [2nd ed.], 172.
6. Seneca: *Moral Essays*, trans. John W. Basore (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 57–59.

The Life of Nichiren Daishonin

Seven chapters from the book *The Life of Nichiren Daishonin* are included in the Entrance-level curriculum.

Kominato, Awa Province—birthplace of Nichiren Daishonin.

The following chapter follows Nichiren Daishonin as the young Rencho on his journey to discover the truth about Buddhism.

Chapter 2 (pp. 11–18): Proclamation of True Buddhism

AFTER leaving Seicho-ji, Rencho went to Kamakura, seat of the shogunate government. Since Kamakura was the center of political power, it attracted priests from Kyoto, and Buddhist temples had been built there in quick succession. The Jodo, Zen and Ritsu sects were most prevalent, while Tendai, Shingon and Kegon were hardly in evidence. It was here that Rencho began his studies to determine exactly which sects taught what and how each related to his own enlightenment.

He spent several years in

Kamakura, reading through the sutras kept in the scripture library of the Hachiman shrine at Tsurugaoka. He briefly returned to Seicho-ji in 1242, at the age of twenty-one, and wrote a treatise entitled “On Attaining Buddhahood through the Entity of Precepts.” Then in order to study further the doctrines and sutras of various sects, he traveled to Kyoto and Nara, the centers of Buddhism in Japan. Just northeast of Kyoto, the Tendai sect had founded its head temple Enryaku-ji at Mount Hiei. Thus Mount Hiei had become the most distinguished center of Mahayana Buddhism based on the Lotus Sutra. Rencho studied at Mount Hiei under a priest named Nansho-bo Shumpan, who was acclaimed as a scholar of Buddhism by his colleagues at Mount Hiei. In “On Refuting Ryokan and Other Priests,” Nichiren

Daishonin wrote: “... and then I studied at Mount Hiei, Onjo-ji temple, Mount Koya and in other temples in the Kyoto and countryside regions.” So he obviously did not confine his activities to Mount Hiei but searched also among the documents at other temples. Onjo-ji temple, also known as Mii-dera and located by Lake Biwa at the foot of Mount Hiei, belonged to the Tendai sect. Mount Koya was the center of study and practice of the Shingon sect, which had been founded by Kobo (also known as Kukai).¹ By “the Kyoto region” he probably meant To-ji, another famous temple of the Shingon sect, and other temples which were located in the old capital. By “the countryside region” he probably meant the Osaka area, where there was a temple called Shitenno-ji that had been founded by Prince Shotoku² in 587. In addition, it is likely,

On April 28, 1253, Nichiren Daishonin first chanted Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

given the references in his later writings, that he studied Chinese history and Confucianism, as Japan's government in those days was deliberately modeled after China's and classical Chinese was the language used for most government documents.

Beginning with the treatise he wrote during his brief stay at Seichoji, the young scholar penned many writings³ during his years of intensive Buddhist study. These writings reveal his realizations about each of the sects he examined. As his studies progressed, he became increasingly critical in particular of the Shingon sect, along with the Zen, Judo, Ritsu and other sects.

WHEN Rencho was certain that the Lotus Sutra was the only teaching which contained the truth he had previously awakened to in front of Bodhisattva Kokuzo, he returned to Mount Kiyosumi. His colleagues and teachers were happy to see him and anxious to hear of life in the old capital, which many of them had never seen. It is said that on his return, he went to a room in the temple to seclude himself for a week. If so, it would not have caused concern; religious retreats were common in those days. Little did anyone realize that young Rencho was preparing for the proclamation of the correct teaching in the Latter Day of the Law.

Early on the morning of April 28, 1253, the thirty-two-year-old priest climbed to the top of a hill at Kasagamori, which commanded a clear view of the Pacific Ocean. There, as the sun



Illustrations by Ed Lee

rose, he greeted it with humankind's first invocation of the supreme Law. In a clear and resounding voice he chanted, "Nam-myoho-enge-kyo." Before heaven and earth, with the sun as his witness, he had proclaimed the correct practice of Buddhism for people in the modern era.

Myoho-enge-kyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra as it had been translated into Chinese by the monk Kumarajiva (344-413). But to young Rencho it was more than a title; it was the essence of the Lotus Sutra, the revelation of the supreme Law itself. It is better, perhaps, to let Nichiren Daishonin himself explain this. In a writing dated just two years after his climb to the hilltop to invoke the supreme Law and entitled "On Attaining Buddhahood," he wrote:

While deluded, one is called a common mortal, but once enlightened, he is called a Buddha. Even a tarnished mirror will

shine like a jewel if it is polished. A mind which presently is clouded by illusions originating from the innate darkness of life is like a tarnished mirror, but once it is polished it will become clear, reflecting the enlightenment of immutable truth. Arouse deep faith and polish your mirror night and day. How should you polish it? Only by chanting Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

What then does *myo* signify? It is simply the mysterious nature of our lives from moment to moment, which the mind cannot comprehend or words express. When you look into your own mind at any moment, you perceive neither color nor form to verify that it exists. Yet you still cannot say it does not exist, for many differing thoughts continually occur to you. Life is indeed an elusive reality that transcends both the words and concepts of existence and nonexistence. It is neither existence nor nonexistence, yet exhibits the qualities of both. It is the mystic

entity of the Middle Way that is the reality of all things. *Myo* is the name given to the mystic nature of life, and ho to its manifestations.

Renge, the lotus flower, symbolizes the wonder of this Law. Once you realize that your own life is the Mystic Law, you will realize that so are the lives of all others. That realization is the mystic *kyo*, or sutra. It is the king of sutras, the direct path to enlightenment, for it explains that the entity of our minds, from which spring both good and evil, is in fact the entity of the Mystic Law. If you have deep faith in this truth and chant *Myoho-renge-kyo*, you are certain to attain Buddhahood in this lifetime....(*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 4-5)

NAM, he later explained, means to make the heritage of the supreme Law one's own by fusing with it; literally meaning devotion, *nam* in this case denotes devotion to the Mystic Law of *Myoho-renge-kyo*. In other words, the practice of the Latter Day is to devote oneself to the supreme Law of life through chanting *Nam-myoho-renge-kyo*.

Now that Rencho had made his proclamation to the heaven and earth, he left the hilltop to return to Seicho-ji temple where he would have an audience of humans, many of them priests and students at the temple, others from the nearby villages. Already, it had been fourteen years since he had left for Kamakura and the Kyoto-Nara area. In all, it had been twenty years since he had entered Seicho-ji for the first time.

At noon before his audience in the main hall of the Shobutsu-bo,

or priests' lodging, of Seicho-ji temple, Rencho made his proclamation. In addition, he denounced the four other major sects of the day—Nembutsu, Zen, Shingon and Ritsu. Through his studies, Rencho understood that these sects were based on the partial truths contained in the provisional sutras and not the complete truth Shakyamuni had expounded in the Lotus Sutra.

effect denying Buddhism itself; hence he termed it "the work of devils." Shingon not only ranked its teachings above the Lotus Sutra but revered the Buddha Dainichi or Mahavairochana, not Shakyamuni who actually taught Buddhism in this world. The esoteric rituals of Shingon were employed to protect the nation, but because the sect itself was based on a misconception,



The Daishonin's execution at Tatsunokuchi was thwarted when a meteor lit up the night sky.

The Nembutsu sect attacked the Lotus Sutra as too profound to be grasped by people in the Latter Day of the Law, and urged them to recite the name of Amida Buddha in order to be reborn in the Western Paradise. However, in that Nembutsu slandered the Lotus Sutra, Rencho asserted that it led not to paradise but hell. The Zen sect claimed that enlightenment was transmitted apart from the sutras. In denying the sutras in general and the Lotus in particular, Rencho said, Zen was in

Rencho said, it would on the contrary work to bring about the nation's downfall. Ritsu adhered to the Hinayana rules of discipline which were valid only in the Former Day of the Law. Ritsu had supporters among top government officials; Rencho saw the confusion it generated about Buddhism as an influence which disrupted the nation spiritually and was therefore treasonous.

In addition to refuting the existing sects of Buddhism, he announced that he would

change his name to Nichiren, "Sun Lotus." The Goshō "Letter to Jakunichi-bo" states, "Giving myself the name Nichiren signifies that I attained enlightenment by myself" (MW-1, 236). Taking on the name Nichiren represents his conviction that he was the original Buddha. In "Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child," the Daishonin also says, "Is there anything brighter than the sun and the moon? Is there anything purer than the lotus flower? The Lotus Sutra is the sun and the moon and the lotus flower. Therefore, it is called Myōhō-rensō-kyō (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). Taking the name Nichiren indicates that Nichiren Daishonin is the Buddha who sheds light upon the impure and evil Latter Day of the Law and causes blossoms of happiness to unfold amid the torment of society, just as the sun and moon illuminate all people and the beautiful lotus blooms from an impure and muddy swamp.

His audience was not pleased. Not only had they never heard of Nam-myōhō-rensō-kyō, which he had said was the ultimate entity of Buddhahood and the direct path to enlightenment, but he had offended their long-cherished beliefs in other sects. Especially displeased was Tojō Kagenobu, the steward of Tojō Village in Awa Province and a passionate believer in the Nembutsu. He managed to hide his anger in the presence of the priests and villagers, but he ordered his men to ambush and do away with this man whom

he considered to be an impostor and a dangerous heretic.

Though an ardent believer in Nembutsu, Dozen-bo took pity on his former disciple and instructed Joken-bo and Gijo-bo, senior disciples, to show him a hidden trail to safety. It was dusk as Nichiren Daishonin entered the pathway. Thus the sun, which had been rising as the founder of true Buddhism chanted the supreme invocation and had been high in the sky as he delivered his sermon, now began to set as he hurried through the woods.

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During the ensuing years the Daishonin encountered many life-threatening persecutions including his first exile for which he was later pardoned. The greatest of these persecutions was an attempt to execute him on the beach at Tatsunokuchi one night in 1271. As the executioner was about to behead him, a meteor lit up the sky terrifying government soldiers. The next two chapters explain events immediately after the attempted execution.

Chapters 7 (pp. 56–59): Revelation of True Identity

THE near execution at Tatsunokuchi amounted to a rebirth for Nichiren Daishonin. He later said in "The Opening of the Eyes" that "this person named Nichiren was beheaded" (MW-2, 177). As his post-Tatsunokuchi writings testify, the man who emerged after his brush with the executioner's sword was decidedly transformed. This is not to say that the Daishonin underwent a change of heart but that the time had come for him to reveal his

true identity.

The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China had interpreted the Lotus Sutra by dividing it into two parts. The first fourteen of the twenty-eight chapters he called *shakumon* or the theoretical teaching, and the second fourteen *hommon* or the essential teaching. The Japanese word *hon* (*hom* is a phonetic change of *hon*) means substance and *shaku* means shadow. Thus the theoretical teaching is like a shadow of the essential, or substantial, teaching. The same comparison can be used with Nichiren Daishonin. Before the event at Tatsunokuchi, he carried out the role of Bodhisattva Jogyō,⁴ the votary whose appearance in an age after Shakyamuni's death was predicted in the Lotus Sutra. He thus spent all his time spreading the teachings of the sutra and propagating the faith in it. After the Tatsunokuchi Persecution, he revealed himself as the Buddha from time without beginning who is one with the supreme Law of Nam-myōhō-rensō-kyō. In other words, his former role was but a reflection of the true mission to which he had been born.

T'ien-t'ai had drawn the same distinction between the Shakyamuni depicted in the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra and the Shakyamuni in its second fourteen chapters. In the first half, T'ien-t'ai had said, Shakyamuni was merely a person who had attained enlightenment in India. In the second half, he was a Buddha who had attained his enlightenment in the unimaginably distant past and whose Buddhahood continued from that point to exist for all eternity.

This process of a Buddha casting off his transient provisional nature and revealing his true nature has come to be known in Buddhism as *hosshaku kempon* (literally, to cast off the transient and reveal the true). Nichiren Daishonin's *hosshaku kempon* came at Tatsunokuchi. That is why he could say that a man named Nichiren died at Tatsunokuchi. The individual who emerged after the execution attempt was the Buddha of time without beginning. In his earliest writings after the Tatsunokuchi persecution, Nichiren Daishonin began referring, albeit in an abstract manner, to the real nature of his existence. This was particularly evident in "The True Object of Worship," in which he identified himself as the original Buddha coexistent with the eternal Law of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

The contemporary Western mind often recoils at the mention of anything that could be construed as suggesting the existence of a superior being. In equating Nichiren Daishonin with the original Buddha since time without beginning, there is always the possibility that the mind will react in just this way. What the reader should bear in mind is that Nichiren Daishonin consistently stated throughout his writings that "the true Buddha is a common mortal, a common mortal the true Buddha." In other words, in each being there dwells the Buddha nature. However, if people are to attain Buddhahood, someone must show them how to manifest that nature. It was Nichiren Daishonin's unique mission, so to speak, to reveal the way for all people to manifest their latent Buddhahood. In him, the

state of Buddhahood was fully manifested to open the way to enlightenment for all, while in others, the state of Buddhahood must be established and perfected through constant practice. In other words, Nichiren Daishonin opened the way for the attainment of enlightenment by all humanity. Nichiren Daishonin was born into this world to lead a spiritual revolution that would irrevocably transform human beings and their surroundings. As he once wrote, when a person sits in worship of the true entity of life, the common mortal faces the original Buddha. In the process, he becomes a Buddha, too.

Chapter 8 (pp. 60–82): The Sado Exile

THE execution attempt frustrated, the forces of Hei no Saemon had no choice but to follow the original plan of taking Nichiren Daishonin to Homma Shigetsura's residence. The Daishonin stayed at the residence in Echi, Sagami Province, for almost a month, awaiting word of his fate from the government.

In the meantime, Hojo Tokimune encountered some sort of trouble, the details of which have been lost to history, but in consulting a fortune-teller he was told that it was connected with the attempted execution. He ordered the Daishonin to be freed, but events quickly militated against his decision. A wave of arson and murder swept the city, and the Daishonin's followers were blamed. The government then ordered that the plan for exile be set in motion. So, on October 10, Nichiren Daishonin was escorted by Homma's war-

riors northward. When the group reached the coast of the Sea of Japan, they were forced to stop for several days at a little haven called Teradomari. Snow covered the ground and the sea was in tumult. No crossing was possible.

In journeying to Teradomari, the Daishonin, as he recounted, had passed over "mountains beyond mountains"; now before him lay "waves upon waves" of the raging sea, a sea which he had never before seen. Beyond that lay Sado Island, cold and forbidding, waiting to swallow him in an exile from which none of his enemies ever expected him to return.

The faithful Nikko Shonin and several acolytes remained at his side, and lay believers kept sending messengers to inquire about his safety. The community of believers was more than a little shaken by the events, and the Daishonin sent a succession of letters to reassure them. In "Lessening One's Karmic Retribution," written while he was still at Homma's residence, he said that hardships are like a crucible in which a person can purge himself of his accumulated karma and bring forth the state of Buddhahood shining like a diamond. In "Letter from Teradomari," sent to Toki Jonin on October 22, he said that the persecutions he was facing were in perfect accord with the Lotus Sutra's prophecy that the votary would be banished "again and again." As some of his followers had been imprisoned on false charges during the wave of terror in Kamakura, he asked in the letter for Jonin to send back word of their fate.

In the "Letter from Sado," written five months later, he

The Daishonin's followers were falsely accused of setting fires in Kamakura.

enjoined his disciples not to lose faith in the face of difficulties, whether they be his or theirs. He told them that the only route to Buddhahood is through offering one's life—the most precious treasure to the Lotus Sutra. By this, he meant for his disciples not to be frightened by persecutions but to propagate true Buddhism confidently, no matter what might happen.

WHEN sea travel became possible, the Daishonin was escorted to Sado Island by boat. He and his captors landed there on October 28, and on November 1 he was taken to a place called Tsukahara. There he was assigned a hut in a graveyard as his abode. This broken-down former shrine where the original Buddha was to live for the next several months, was named Sammai-do. On November 23, the Daishonin sent another letter, entitled "Aspiration for the Buddha Land," to Toki Jonin. Probably he entrusted its delivery to some of his acolytes who had accompanied him from Kamakura. In it he commented: "I am sending back some of the young priests. You can ask them what this province is like and about the circumstances under which I live. It is impossible to describe these matters in writing" (MW-5, 132).

In this letter, the Daishonin also made a proclamation about his identity:

The advent of the Great Law is already before our very eyes. In the twenty-two hundred years and more since the Buddha's

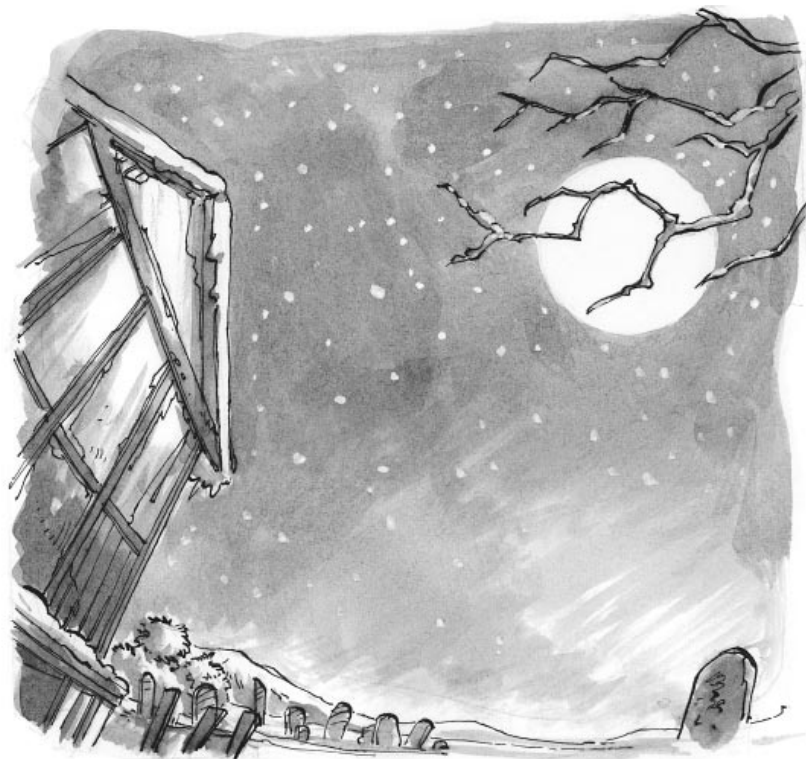


passing, in all of India, China, Japan and the entire world, [as the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai states:] "Vasubandhu and Nagarjuna⁵ clearly perceived the truth in their hearts, but they did not teach it. Instead, they preached the provisional Mahayana teachings, which were suited to their times." T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo gave a general indication of it but left its propagation for the future. Now this secret Law, the one great reason for which all Buddhas make their advent, will be spread for the first time in this country. And is not Nichiren the very person who propagates it? (MW-5, 130)

Even with their foe in exile, the leaders of the other sects were not content. Anything short of his demise was, for them, unthinkable. Early in 1272, scores of priests converged

on the island from their home provinces across the sea in the area now composed of Niigata, Nagano and Yamagata prefectures. They consulted with Homma Shigetsura about the matter, but he dashed their hopes for a quick end to their enemy by telling them: "An official letter has arrived from the government directing that the priest shall not be executed. This is no ordinary contemptible criminal and if anything happens to him, I will be guilty of grave dereliction. Instead of killing him, why don't you confront him in religious debate?"

The debate took place on January 16 and 17, 1272, and it pitted the Daishonin against several hundred priests of the other sects. He recounted the debate later when he wrote "On the Buddha's Behavior." According to this account, he first had to



The Daishonin was housed in a hut on Sado Island near a cemetery.

quell disorder—shouting and shoving among the participants—before the debate could begin. The priests proceeded to cite the doctrines of their various sects Nembutsu, Zen, Shingon and Ritsu. The Daishonin replied in turn, confirming the meaning of what each had said, and then asked questions. Very quickly he was able to expose their contradictory assertions and scriptural incompatibilities. The priests were speechless, no match for the Daishonin’s penetrating understanding of the sutras. Several of their followers professed belief in the Daishonin’s teaching on the spot.

THESSE were not the only followers Nichiren Daishonin was to win during his exile on Sado. There would be many more and even the year before he had succeeded in converting a believer in Amida Buddha who had come to Sammai-do to confront

him. The man’s name was Abutsu-bo, ardent in his belief. Once the Daishonin had managed to engage him in dialogue, however, Abutsu-bo had become convinced of the truth of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo and immediately became the Daishonin’s follower. He then went home and converted his wife, Sennichi-ama. These two believers in Amida Buddha became the Daishonin’s providers and protectors while he was on Sado Island, much as Funamori Yasaburo and his wife had been during the Izu Exile [the first exile]. The Daishonin later addressed many letters of thanks to them.

Ko Nyudo and his wife also converted to the Daishonin’s teachings while he was in exile on Sado, making offerings to him and providing him with various kinds of assistance. He lived in Ko, the capital of the province of Sado.

Sairen-bo, a priest of the

Tendai sect who for some reason had been exiled to Sado Island, was also one of the Daishonin’s converts. Sairen-bo had several unresolved questions about Buddhism, and he addressed them to Nichiren Daishonin. The reply came in the form of a letter, known today as “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” dated February 11, 1272.

In this, the Daishonin said that the Law which Bodhisattva Jogyo inherited from Shakyamuni Buddha at the Ceremony in the Air⁶ is Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, which is the life of the original Buddha since time without beginning. In a broader sense, he taught that Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the entity of all people’s lives, and that by believing in the Lotus Sutra and chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, one “inherits” the wisdom to realize that his own life is the Mystic Law. In other words, by chanting Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, one manifests the Buddha nature within oneself.

Short as it was, this writing carried an extremely profound message since it revealed the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the heart of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. It was the kind of thesis that the Daishonin was able to write only after he had a learned disciple such as Sairen-bo to receive it.

ON February 20, shortly after writing “Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life,” Nichiren Daishonin sent another thesis to Sairen-bo, entitled “Enlightenment of Plants,”

which discussed the potentiality of Buddhahood in insentient beings. Sairen-bo also received "The True Entity of Life" and "The Entity of the Mystic Law," both written in 1273. After his exile, he founded Honkoku-ji temple near Mount Minobu in the province of Kai.

In February 1272 the Daishonin also completed "The Opening of the Eyes," of which he later said: "I wanted to record the wonder I had experienced, in case I should be beheaded" (MW-1, 189). This was in reference to the mortal danger he faced. For, so long as rival priests conspired against him, the Daishonin had to live with the threat of death. After the debate, the priests, more angered than ever, had petitioned Hojo Nobutoki of the Kamakura government to help them stem the tide of defection from their sects. Nobutoki then issued a proclamation without the regent's knowledge, which decreed: "Those who become Nichiren's disciples from among the Sado inhabitants should be either banished or imprisoned. The Daishonin later wrote of this edict: "Some people were thrown into prison because they were said to have walked past my hut..." (Ibid., p. 192).

Shortly before the edict was issued, however, the Hojo clan was rocked by internal intrigue. Hojo Tokisuke, an elder half brother of the regent, conspired to seize power, but his plot was uncovered. Nagoe Tokiaki and Nagoe Noritoki, who were regarded as his coconspirators, were put to death on February 11. Four days later, Hojo Tokisuke was killed. The rebellion had been stopped before it

had a chance to get started, but even the prospect of rebellion was enough to send shock waves around the country.

All this worked in the Daishonin's favor. Since he had predicted internal strife twelve years earlier in the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," and since he had told Homma Shigetsura only a month before it broke out that it was imminent, the Daishonin was suddenly taken more seriously by both Homma and the government. When Homma learned that the Daishonin's prediction had come true, he is said to have discarded his belief in the Pure Land teachings. As a consequence, the Daishonin was transferred in April from the hut at Tsukahara to an ordinary residence at Ichinosawa.

During the Sado Exile, the Daishonin was able, through his writings, to lay virtually the complete theoretical foundation of his teachings. "Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life" had been the first major thesis, and in "The Opening of the Eyes," completed only a few days after "Heritage," he identified himself as the original Buddha, a vital first step in the process of clarifying the true object of worship. This would soon be followed by other important treatises. The Sado Exile thus provided Nichiren Daishonin with the opportunity to establish the philosophical groundwork of his Buddhism.

In "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin said that there are three people one should revere above all else—the sovereign, the teacher and the parent. The sovereign is the one who guarantees the security of human beings by wielding

social power, the teacher the one who imparts knowledge and helps people develop their wisdom, and the parent the one who gives birth to flesh and blood and nurtures life. There are many ways of looking at the concept of sovereign, teacher and parent, but what the Daishonin intended was the scriptural conception of the Buddha who embodies all three attributes, i.e., the Buddha who protects, guides and compassionately nurtures all people through the medium of the supreme Law. In the end, the treatise stated that in the Latter Day the person who encompasses these three qualities is none other than Nichiren Daishonin.

IN this way, the Daishonin defined the true object of worship in terms of the Person, i.e., in terms of the Buddha who eternally guides, protects and nurtures all people in their striving for Buddhahood. "The True Object of Worship," written in April 1273, one year later, clarified the object in terms of the Law which enables people to reach enlightenment. These two writings established the theoretical framework for the inscription of the object of worship.

After "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin wrote a short letter to his followers, the previously mentioned "Letter from Sado." As well as encouraging his followers, whose faith had been shaken by the Tatsunokuchi and Sado persecutions, this letter also served to restate the conclusion of "The Opening of the Eyes." The Daishonin wrote: "Nichiren is the pillar, sun, moon, mirror and eyes of the ruling clan of Kanto....

Nichiren is father and mother to the ruling clan..."(MW-1, 36). ("Pillar" refers to the virtue of sovereign; "sun, moon, mirror and eyes" to the virtue of teacher; and "father and mother" to the virtue of parent. And Kanto here is used to denote the Kamakura government.)

"Letter from Sado" was dated March 20. In April, Shijo Kingo journeyed from Kamakura to visit the Daishonin. In a letter entitled "The Causal Law of Life," the Daishonin praised the sincerity of Kingo's wife, who had sent her husband on the long trip. In May, a lady with her small child came from Kamakura, and the Daishonin was so moved by the effort she expended in making the journey that he gave her the Buddhist name Nichimyo Shonin (Sage Nichimyo). The title was apt, for the lady and her daughter continued to persevere in Buddhist practice long after the Daishonin's death.

Meanwhile, the number of people on Sado professing faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism continued to increase, and Abutsu-bo and his wife became the mainstays of this community of believers. At the house in which the Daishonin lived in Ichinosawa, the landlord's wife became a believer, and the landlord himself developed a favorable attitude, though he did not take up the faith. At nearby Nakaoki, a leading disciple appeared by the name of Nakaoki Nyudo.

NICHIREN Daishonin now set about refuting the Shingon sect, a task which he had undertaken before, but this time his goal was to pave the

way for "The True Object of Worship." He considered this refutation essential because the Shingon sect had preceded him in inscribing a mandala as an object of worship.

In a letter he gave to Shijo Kingo in May 1272, the Daishonin expounded the principle that earthly desires lead to enlightenment—that is, the mundane cravings of the individual, when tempered by faith in the True Law, become the fuel for enlightenment. In the same month, he addressed a writing entitled "The Errors of the Shingon and Other Sects" to Toki Jonin, and in July he wrote "The

observe one's mind (mind here being used more broadly to mean life) and thus realize that one is the entity of *ichinen sanzen*. This process of recognizing one's essential nature, he said, is the principle of attaining Buddhahood. He then revealed that the reality described by *ichinen sanzen* is nothing other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and declared that, for the first time in the history of Buddhism, he was going to inscribe the object of worship of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Thus he explained the Gohonzon as the object of faith for attaining Buddhahood.



Refutation of the Shingon Sect."

"The True Object of Worship" was issued on April 25, 1273. The original title of the work reads, in Japanese, *Kanjin no honzon sho*, which literally means "writing on the object of worship for observing one's mind." The Daishonin began the text by quoting from T'ient'ai's *Maka Shikan* (Great Concentration and Insight) a passage which explains the principle of *ichinen sanzen* (three thousand realms in a single moment of life).⁷ He then explained that *kanjin* means to

A passage from "The True Object of Worship" reads: "... Shakyamuni's practices and the virtues he consequently attained are all contained within the single phrase, Myoho-renge-kyo. If we believe in that phrase, we shall naturally be granted the same benefits as he was" (MW-1, 64).

In this way, the Daishonin explained that believing in and embracing the object of worship of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is equivalent to observing one's mind. By such worship the common mortal can attain Buddha-

hood in the present life, without undergoing any transformation or practice of austerities. A common mortal, in other words, can become a Buddha.

It was now clear, from a doctrinal viewpoint, that the object of worship the Daishonin intended to inscribe would embody Nam-myoho-renge-kyo as the Law, and the life of Nichiren Daishonin as the Person eternally manifesting that Law. The Daishonin carefully composed "The True Object of Worship" in classical Chinese, as was the practice for all important writings in those days. He gave it to Toki Jonin, and it has been preserved in its original form at Nakayama Hokekyo-ji temple, which developed from Toki's estate. In addition, the faithful disciple Nikko Shonin made a copy which has been preserved at Yoho-ji temple in Kyoto.

"The True Entity of Life," dated May 17 and given to Sairen-bo, abridged "The True Object of Worship," much in the way that "Letter from Sado" was used a year earlier to back up "The Opening of the Eyes." "The True Entity of Life" is famous for the passage with which it closes. This passage has continued to be quoted throughout the centuries as the basic spirit of Buddhist practice:

Believe in the Gohonzon, the supreme object of worship in the world. Forge strong faith and receive the protection of Shakyamuni, Taho and all the other Buddhas. Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study. Without practice and study, there can be no Buddhism. You must not only persevere yourself; you must

also teach others. Both practice and study arise from faith. Teach others to the best of your ability, even if only a single sentence or phrase (Ibid., pp. 94-95).

In the same month, Nichiren Daishonin addressed a letter to Gijo-bo, who had been his senior at Seicho-ji temple when he studied Buddhism there in boyhood. The Daishonin said that, of all the chapters in the Lotus Sutra, the Juryo [Life Span] (sixteenth) chapter was especially important to him. He quoted a passage, "Single-mindedly yearning to see the Buddha, they do not begrudge their lives," and noted: "I, Nichiren, have called forth Buddhahood from within my life by living this sentence. This means that I actualized the Three Great Secret Laws, the embodiment of *ichinen sanzen* in the Juryo chapter" (MW-2, 236).

THIS is the first written mention in his extant works of the Three Great Secret Laws: the invocation (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo), the object of worship (the Dai-Gohonzon, toward whose inscription he was working), and the place of worship (the sanctuary of the true object, whose construction he would leave to his disciples). He clarified these three in "Repaying Debts of Gratitude" in 1276, though it is possible that he also did so prior to 1273 in writings which may have been lost.

He authored several other important writings in May 1273. In the Goshō "On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings," the Daishonin took the opportunity to state that refuting misleading sects and converting their believers, based on unwavering faith in the Lotus Sutra, comprise the

practice that accords exactly with Shakyamuni's teachings. In this work he also stated that the three powerful enemies will surely arise to confront those who practice correctly.

In "On the Buddha's Prophecy," another important writing, the Daishonin said that the appearance of his Buddhism had been predicted in the Lotus Sutra. In addition, he confidently stated that his teaching would never fail to spread throughout the world. Further, in writings he addressed to Toki Jonin and Hakiri Sanenaga (MW-6, 46-48) he expressed his complete confidence that his teachings were far superior to those of the Great Teachers T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo.

By this time the Daishonin had already begun bestowing individual Gohonzon (objects of worship) on his staunchest disciples. In fact, he had begun inscribing mandalas shortly after the Tatsunokuchi Persecution. Those that he bestowed on his disciples have come to be known as "the Gohonzon of specific receptivity and relatedness." Some of these are still extant, and from them one can see that they were rather simply inscribed in comparison to the elaborateness of the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary he would bestow upon all humankind several years later. Still, these mandalas carried the inscriptions, "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" and "Nichiren," which contained the expression of the oneness of the Person and the Law.

In the accompanying letters that Nichiren Daishonin sent to the recipients of these Gohonzon, he taught the relationship between the object of worship and the life of the original Buddha, and the correct attitude

in faith. A letter dated August 15, 1273, and sent to Shijo Kingo is typical of these. It was a reply to Kingo's report of the illness of his daughter, Kyo'o. The Daishonin wrote:

Always cherish the Gohonzon which I sent some time ago for her protection. This Gohonzon was never known, let alone inscribed, by anyone in the Former or Middle Day of the Law. The lion, king of beasts, is said to advance three steps, then gather himself to spring, unleashing the same power whether he traps a tiny ant or attacks a fierce animal. In inscribing this Gohonzon for her protection, Nichiren is equal to the lion king. This is what the sutra means by "the power of an attacking lion." Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle? (MW-1, 119)

Then he went on to say, in one of the most famous passages of his writings:

A sword will be useless in the hands of a coward. The mighty sword of the Lotus Sutra must be wielded by one courageous in faith. Then he will be as strong as a demon armed with an iron staff. I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in sumi [black Chinese ink], so believe in the Gohonzon with your whole heart. The Buddha's will is the Lotus Sutra, but the soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. (Ibid., p. 120)

He concluded with a final

exhortation about faith: "Muster your faith and pray to this Gohonzon. Then what is there that cannot be achieved?"

The two most essential writings of the Daishonin, "The Opening of the Eyes" and "The True Object of Worship," dealt with the theoretical or doctrinal basis of the Gohonzon. A writing given to Sairen-bo in 1273, but of uncertain date, now broached the subject of what one attains by embracing faith in this object of worship. It was called "The Entity of the Mystic Law."

In this, the Daishonin said that in theory every single human being is the entity of Myoho-rence-kyo, but in practice only those who invoke Nam-myoho-rence-kyo with faith in the Lotus Sutra are truly manifesting Myoho-rence-kyo or the Buddha nature within themselves. He then added that Myoho-rence-kyo is the enlightenment of the original Buddha of *kuon ganjo*,⁸ or time without beginning, and that all kinds of Buddhist teachings have been expounded as a means to let people understand *Myoho-rence-kyo*. The Law that was transferred by Shakyamuni Buddha to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth during the Ceremony in the Air was this very Myoho-rence-kyo.

He then stated that teachers such as Nan-yueh⁹ and T'ien-t'ai in China and Dengyo in Japan all perceived the Law of *Myoho-rence-kyo*, and he quoted from their diaries to show that they themselves had cherished Nam-myoho-rence-kyo. He concluded by saying that they did not teach Nam-myoho-rence-kyo because it was not yet the Latter Day.

The importance of "The Entity of the Mystic Law" lies in

its teaching that people need not transform themselves through rigorous self-discipline, austerities or self-mortification to reach Buddhahood. By embracing the true object with faith, all people can attain the enlightenment of Buddhahood just as they are.

On March 8, 1274, a government envoy arrived with a pardon for the Daishonin. No reasons were given for the government's action, but it appears in retrospect that the officials were concerned about the arrival of a Mongol emissary and the abortive coup of Hojo Tokisuke, events which seemed to bear out the Daishonin's earlier predictions. And so Nichiren Daishonin ended more than two years of exile, a period during which he had authored some of his most important writings and laid the foundation for inscribing an object of worship to be bestowed not on individuals but on all human beings.

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Upon his return to the capitol, Kamakura, the Daishonin remonstrated again with the government, but to no avail. He then took up residence in the remote mountains of Minobu where he continued to write important works and instruct his disciples.

Chapter 10 (pp. 83–89): Mongol Invasion

THE Mongols struck in October 1274 in massive numbers: 15,000 Mongols and Chinese, 5,000 Koreans, 5,000 colonials and 6,000 mariners borne aboard 300 warships, 300 swift boats and 300 water-supply vessels, all constructed by the

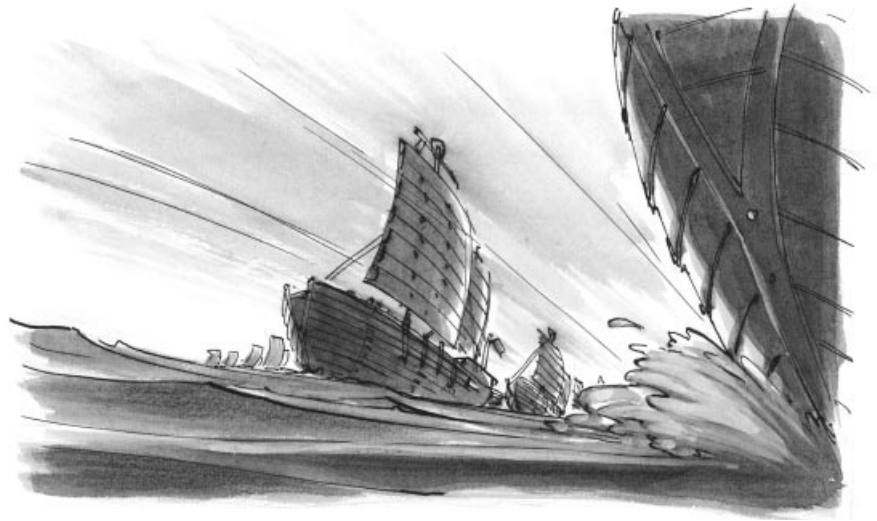
Overwhelming Mongol forces attacked Japan in October 1274.

Koreans at the order of Khubilai Khan. The odds overwhelmingly favored the Mongol forces, whose close-order tactics and use of gunpowder rendered the Japanese warriors, with their bows and arrows and reliance on hand-to-hand combat, almost defenseless.

At first, the Japanese losses were staggering, and the Mongols seemed unstoppable. The would-be conquerors swept through the islands of Tsushima and Iki, and by the middle of the month were pressing their attack in Kyushu, the southwestern island of the Japanese archipelago. Hirato, Chikuzen and Imazu came under attack, but the main part of the invading force struck at the port city of Hakata, the first and only barrier to the political center at Dazaifu. The local government rushed its warriors to Hakata, but they were cut down in rapid order. When things looked the bleakest, however, a storm came to the aid of the Japanese and sank more than two hundred of the Mongols' battleships. Staggered by their losses, the invaders withdrew to Korea.

News of the attack did not reach Kamakura until November 1, and Nichiren Daishonin commented on the invasion in a letter dated November 11 and sent to his follower Nanjo Tokimitsu:

Since I hear that the Great Mongol Empire has invaded this, country I think with regret what the situation would have been like if they had heeded what I, Nichiren, had warned. Tears do not stop flowing when



I think of the destiny of the Japanese people, which will be the same as that of Iki and Tsushima which have now been destroyed (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1509).

The Mongols, of course, were still determined to conquer Japan, and they sent envoys again in March of the next year. The Kamakura government set up coastal defenses and ordered tight security around the western perimeter of Kyushu. The envoys were beheaded in September.

While the government was worrying about foreign invasion, the Daishonin was in retirement on Mount Minobu. Retirement, however, did not exactly mean a life of leisure for the Daishonin; he was busy writing letters (some 120 between 1274 and 1278), training his disciples and followers, and giving lectures on the Lotus Sutra. The task of propagation had now been assumed by the senior priests, who were scattered in various regions of the country, and by the lay believers, who heretofore had concentrated on supporting the Dai-

shonin through offerings.

As the lay followers became more active in propagation, they ran into various difficulties and persecutions of their own. Each time, the Daishonin hurried letters of guidance and encouragement to them. Perhaps the two most famous cases involving individual followers were those of the faithful warrior, Shijo Kingo, and the Ikegami brothers, Munenaka and Munenaga.

AROUND 1274, Shijo Kingo began trying to convert his lord Ema to the Daishonin's Buddhism. Lord Ema did not take kindly to these efforts at propagation and, fueled by slander from Kingo's colleagues, reduced the believer's fief. The situation worsened in 1277 when Kingo attended a debate between Sammi-bo Nichigyō, a disciple of the Daishonin, and Ryuzo-bo, a follower of the Tendai sect. Kingo's colleagues again assailed him before Lord Ema, this time for what they claimed was an attempt to disrupt the debate and embarrass Ryuzo-bo.

The Daishonin wrote Shijo

Kingo several letters and even went so far as to write an appeal to Lord Ema on Kingo's behalf. In these letters, the Daishonin offered much practical advice as well as guidance in faith. He told Kingo that he should regard service to his lord with the same reverence and dedication that he showed toward the Daishonin's teachings. He thus stated a principle of Buddhist practice that has endured as one of the fundamental guidelines for more than seven centuries—faith is not separate from daily life but reveals itself precisely in the realm of worldly affairs.

Later, Lord Ema contracted an illness, and Shijo Kingo used his medical skills to cure him. The grateful lord then restored and actually increased Kingo's fief. Shijo Kingo had remained steadfast in his faith throughout the ordeal.

THE circumstances involving the Ikegami brothers were somewhat similar, but they pitted sons against father, rather than vassal against lord. Both Munenaka and Munenaga had been believers in the Daishonin's Buddhism for many years, but around 1275 their father, Yasumitsu, the director of the Office of Construction and Repairs of the Kamakura government, started making demands of them. He disowned the older, Munenaka, and informed the younger, Munenaga, that he would have to choose between his faith and his father. If he chose the former, he, too, would be disowned.

The reason for Yasumitsu's abrupt change of sentiment toward his sons' faith is not clear, but it appears that Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple had a

hand in influencing him. Nichiren Daishonin encouraged Munenaka and Munenaga in the "Letter to the Brothers," telling them that faith in the Lotus Sutra will invariably invite the persecution of others and urging them never to retreat. Yasumitsu's repudiation was withdrawn, temporarily, in 1277, but he soon disowned the elder son again. This time, the Daishonin wrote a letter to Munenaga telling him that he should not discard his faith just to curry favor with his father and win an inheritance, but that he should continue his faith until his father became a believer. The Daishonin's advice was heeded, and Yasumitsu became a believer in 1278. He died shortly after.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote many important treatises during the period from 1274 to 1278, including "On the Buddha's Behavior" (MW-1, 173-202) in which he described the events from Tatsunokuchi until his retirement to Minobu. "The Selection of the Time" (MW-3, 79-184) noted that the most essential requirement is to understand the time and which teaching befits it. "Teaching, Practice and Proof" (MW-4, 111-32) said that Shakyamuni's teachings have become inappropriate in the Latter Day of the Law and that only Nam-myoho-enge-kyo taught by the Daishonin combines the three elements of teaching, practice and proof essential to making Buddhism viable.

On hearing that Dozen-bo had died, Nichiren Daishonin wrote "Repaying Debts of Gratitude." In this he said that he was repaying his debt to his

teacher, whom he had left at an early age, by spreading the true teaching to save all people. He wrote, in explanation of the doctrine he taught:

First, in Japan and all the other countries throughout the world, the object of worship should in all cases be the Lord Shakyamuni of true Buddhism.¹⁰ The Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha who appear in the Treasure Tower, as well as all other Buddhas, along with the four bodhisattvas¹¹ including Jogyo, shall act as attendants to this Buddha. Second, there is the high sanctuary of true Buddhism. Third, in Japan, China, India and all the other countries of the world, every person, regardless of whether he is wise or foolish, shall set aside other practices and join in the chanting of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. (MW-4, 271)

There was a constant stream of visitors at the Daishonin's cottage, including Abutsu-bo who, despite his advanced age, made the hazardous journey from Sado Island at least three times. Other followers came as well, but the Daishonin seems to have spent most of his time training the youths who were entering the priesthood from the families of lay believers. One of these, who hailed from the Nitta family, which was related to the Nagoe family, became the Daishonin's disciple in 1276. He was seventeen at the time; he went on to become the third high priest, Nichimoku Shonin.

AS a way of fostering the faith of these disciples, Nichiren Daishonin gave a series of lectures on the Lotus

Sutra, using as his reference material the major works of the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai. The series began with a lecture on Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and they proceeded through each of the twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. When it was completed, it was set down as the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) by Nikko Shonin. The Daishonin himself revised and edited the manuscripts, and they appeared in their final form in January 1278.

Thus, the Daishonin spent a fruitful four years following his frustrated attempt to convince Hei no Saemon of the validity of his predictions and teachings. In those four years, he had not budged from Mount Minobu despite his earlier hesitation about staying. Now, as the lay believers grew more determined in their propagation activity, the Daishonin saw that the time was rapidly approaching when he would have the chance to fulfill the purpose of his life. He would not have to wait long, for the next year the opportunity arose.

Chapter 11 (pp. 90-96): Inscription of the True Object of Worship

FROM the moment he declared the essence of Buddhism, he had been hunted and hounded almost to the point of death. Two disciples had died in the process Kudo Yoshitaka and Kyonin-bo at Komatsubara—but the Daishonin had always been the prime target. Now in their zeal to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, his followers were beginning to feel the brunt of official persecution. A

confrontation was in the making.

In his retirement, the Daishonin was attended by Nikko Shonin, who had accompanied him throughout the years since their meeting at Jisso-ji temple. Being a native of the Minobu region, Nikko Shonin would spend much of his time in the neighboring villages converting friends and relatives. On the days that the Daishonin would

Nichiren Daishonin wrote an appeal calling for a debate to settle the issue, but it was ignored.

NIKKO Shonin moved on to the Tendai temple Ryusen-ji in Atsuhara Village in the Fuji area of Suruga. His efforts again won him converts among the priests, and, what was more significant, among the local farmer



The persecution of believers in Atsuhara culminated in the execution of three of them.

give lectures, he would hurry back. He was particularly active at Shijuku-in temple in Suruga Province, where he was registered as a priest. He converted several of the resident priests, including Nichiji, who later became one of the six seniors. Nikko Shonin's success at proselytizing quickly drew the suspicious eye of the temple's administrator Gon'yo, who petitioned the government in 1278 to have Nikko Shonin and the others expelled on the grounds that they were spreading heresy.

population as well. And once again his actions drew the ire of temple officials, this time in the person of Gyochi, deputy chief priest. Gyochi demanded that Nichiren, Nisshu and Nichizen, who had converted and been renamed, as well as Mikawa-bo Raien, who had also taken faith, write an oath to discard their faith in the Lotus Sutra and begin reciting the Amida Sutra again. Only Mikawa-bo Raien agreed. Gyochi then demanded that the other three leave the temple. Nichizen did; the others stayed.

In addition to the growing number of farmer believers, Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of Ueno Village, under Nikko Shonin's direction, had begun converting his immediate family and relatives. Gyochi grew furious at the success of the Daishonin's Buddhism in attracting believers in the Atsuhara area, and he started

not belong to Nisshu, whom Gyochi had told to leave, but also had descended on the deputy chief priest's lodging, armed and angry. The farmers were taken to Kamakura and detained for trial.

Nichiren Daishonin, sensing the gravity of the situation, sent a letter on October 1 "to the peo-

appeal was written in part by the Daishonin, but it was of little avail. First, Hei no Saemon had the lay believers tortured. Then, on October 15, after they had steadily refused to give up their faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism, he had three of the believers—the brothers Jinshiro, Yagoro and Yarokuro—summarily executed. Even so, the others refused to recant.

Nikko Shonin immediately sent word of the executions to the Daishonin, who received the letter two days later, on the seventeenth. He wrote back that it "is something extraordinary that they chanted Nammyoho-renge-kyo at the time of execution" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1455).

HIS letter of October 1, written in the midst of the persecution and entitled "On Persecutions Befalling the Buddha," proved to be more than just an attempt to encourage his lay followers; it was also a proclamation of the purpose of his life. He wrote:

Now in the second year of Koan (1279) it is twenty-seven years since I first proclaimed the true teaching at Seicho-ji temple. It was noon on the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month in the fifth year of Kencho (1253),... The Buddha fulfilled the purpose of his advent in a little over forty years; T'ien-t'ai took about thirty years, and Dengyo, some twenty years. I have repeatedly spoken of the indescribable persecutions they suffered during those years. For me it took twenty-seven years, and the persecutions I faced during this



At the time of the Atsuhara persecution, Shijo Kingo was having his own difficulties.

venting his anger on laymen as well as priests. In April 1279, Gyochi conspired to harm a lay believer, and in August a believer by the name of Yashiro, who had been converted by Nisshu, was decapitated for unknown reasons.

The situation became critical on September 21 when the government arrested twenty farmer believers who were harvesting rice from Nisshu's fields on the temple grounds. The arrest had been requested by Gyochi, who claimed the farmers not only were harvesting rice that did

ple there" meaning the imprisoned farmers and other lay believers in Kamakura facing persecution in the wake of the Atsuhara incident. He advised them to use the persecutions to deepen their faith. "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month," he said. "Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage" (MW-1, 241-42).

Meanwhile, Nikko Shonin drafted an urgent appeal to Hei no Saemon who had taken charge of the farmers. The

period are well known to you all. (MW-1, 239)

“For me it took twenty-seven years” was the Daishonin’s reference to the fulfillment of his lifelong purpose. He did not just mean that his followers were now actively pursuing his will to spread his Buddhism, but something far greater. In the perspective that history allows, it is clear that he was referring to the inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon which would take place eleven days later.

Though he greatly cared for his followers and did not want to see any of them harmed, Nichiren Daishonin deemed it extremely meaningful that they now showed a steadfastness of faith that had been lacking during the Tatsunokuchi and Sado persecutions. Then, many of them had wavered; now they showed they were willing even to die for their beliefs. To the Daishonin, the crucial factor in his being able to inscribe a universal object of worship had been fulfilled. Before, he had bestowed Gohonzon only on those with the staunchest faith; now that staunch faith was the rule rather than the exception, he could bestow the Dai-Gohonzon (*dai* in Japanese means supreme or great) upon all humanity. This he did on October 12, 1279.

The writings of Nichiren Daishonin, especially “The Opening of the Eyes” and “The True Object of Worship,” had led him step by step to that inscription. In one of his orally transmitted teachings, the Daishonin said that he had seen his life reflected in a pond at Seicho-ji temple as “the great mandala.”¹² Thus, the image of the object he was to inscribe was

clearly in his mind even before he actually gave it concrete form.

What is the Dai-Gohonzon? Down the center the Dai-Gohonzon contains the inscription, “Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, Nichiren,” referring to the fusion of the Law of life and the original Buddha. On both sides of this are the representatives of the ten worlds, indicating the aspects of *ichinen sanzen*. By this graphic arrangement, the Daishonin showed that Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the true entity of all phenomena. At the top of the ten worlds stands Buddhahood, at the bottom the condition of Hell. All are essential to life, but the way to bring them into perspective and release their full creativity is through the supreme Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo, which, when invoked, allows a person to take complete charge of his or her life.

In the lower left-hand corner of the Dai-Gohonzon is a dedication to a fictional lay believer, who represents the common people of the world at last able to realize their own Buddha nature. On the right are the words, *ichiembudai soyo*—“bestowed upon the entire world.” So, far from being an individual Gohonzon, the Dai-Gohonzon is a gift to all people for all time, i.e., the fundamental principle for them to wrest control of their destinies and create peace and prosperity.

The Daishonin once said that he had “inscribed my life in sumi [ink].” By this, he meant that he had embodied his state of Buddhahood in the mandala and that the purpose of his life lay in that mandala; it was his legacy. In the case of the

Dai-Gohonzon, however, the Daishonin took extra precaution to insure its survival. He inscribed it in ink on a plank of camphor wood and had his disciple Nippo carve the characters into the wood so that it would last, as traditionally said, “for ten millennia or more.”

Believers who visited Nichiren Daishonin at Minobu would invariably pray to the Dai-Gohonzon. When they sent offerings to the Daishonin, he would write back, “I have respectfully placed them in front of the Lotus Sutra,” by which he meant he had placed them in front of the Dai-Gohonzon enshrined in the main temple at Minobu. The Daishonin himself recited the Hoben [Expedient Means] (second) and Juryo (sixteenth) [Life Span] chapters of the Lotus Sutra and chanted Nam-myoho-rence-kyo in front of this object of worship.

The government eventually relented in the face of the farmers’ steady faith and the pleas of Nikko Shonin and Nichiren Daishonin, and thus the worst phase of the Atsuhara Persecution drew to a close at the same time that the year 1279 neared its end. Twenty-seven years after the establishment of his Buddhism, the Daishonin completed the task of laying the foundation for the peace of the world in the Latter Day of the Law. Though only few knew of the inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon at the time, the Daishonin, remaining at Mount Minobu, took steps to insure its preservation for all time. To that task, and to the care of his beloved followers, he devoted the remainder of his life.

Chapter 12 (pp. 97–110): Transferring the Heritage

EVEN as the Atsuhara persecution was taking place, Shijo Kingo was getting into difficulties again in Kamakura. The Daishonin had repeatedly warned him not to be boastful or arrogant and to take every precaution lest his jealous comrades in Lord Ema's employ attack him in the middle of the night, but that was exactly what happened. The skilled Kingo drove them off, news of which prompted the Daishonin to write him again. He said:

It is a matter of rejoicing that your usual prudence and courage, as well as your firm faith in the Lotus Sutra, enabled you to survive unharmed.

When one comes to the end of his good fortune, no strategy whatsoever will avail. When one's blessings are exhausted, even his retainers will no longer follow him. You survived because you still possess good fortune. Moreover, in the Zokurui chapter, the heavenly gods pledged to protect the votary of the Lotus Sutra... Never doubt that all gods protect those who embrace the Lotus Sutra.... Therefore, you must summon up the power of faith more than ever. (MW-1, 245-46)

Nanjo Tokimitsu soon fell into disfavor with the government for having protected many of the farmer believers who might otherwise have been rounded up and detained during the Atsuhara incident. The year after the persecution, the Hojo regime had the taxes on Tokimitsu's estate raised to the

point of nearly forcing him into destitution: Tokimitsu had to pay so much that he could not even afford a horse.

Seeing the difficulty that his samurai follower was undergoing and seeing also that his faith was not being shaken in the least, Nichiren Daishonin wrote a letter of praise to Tokimitsu and gave him the title of Ueno the Wise. One of his letters to Tokimitsu delineated two types of faith—one that is temporarily as brilliant as fire but soon lapses, and one that continues onward like the flow of a river:

Today there are people who have faith in the Lotus Sutra. The belief of some is like a fire while that of others is like water. When the former listen to the teachings, their passion flares up like fire, but when by themselves, they are inclined to discard their faith. To have faith like water means to believe continuously without ever regressing. Since you pay frequent visits to me regardless of the difficulties, your belief is comparable to flowing water. It is worthy of great respect! (MW-2, 296)

The Daishonin during his later years seems to have been most involved in training the young priests who had come to Mount Minobu to learn Buddhism. Most outstanding among them was Renzo-bo Nichimoku, later to become the third high priest. He was barely twenty years old at the time of the inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon, but already he had been a believer and a resident at Minobu for three years. Legend has it that each day Nichimoku would descend the mountain slopes for a bucket of

water. On the way back up, he would carry the bucket on his head. After years of doing so, he found that the top of his head had developed a depression where the bucket rested on it.

Lay followers like Shijo Kingo, Nanjo Tokimitsu, Toki Jonin, Soya Kyoshin and Ota Jomyo continued to make visits to Mount Minobu, but the journey that the aged Abutsu-bo made in 1278 appears to have been his last. He died in March 1279 at the age of ninety-one. In a letter addressed to his wife, Sennichi-ama the Daishonin wrote: "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, [toward the Buddhas Shakyamuni and Taho]" (MW-6, 297).

ABUTSU-BO had bequeathed his legacy of faith to his son, Tokuro Moritsuna, and on July 2, 1279, the son brought Abutsu-bo's ashes to be laid to rest at Mount Minobu. The son came again the next year to pay homage to his father's grave.

The Daishonin's writings in the last years of his life contained no new or lengthy revelations, being mostly letters of encouragement to lay believers. Among them, however, were some important works which elucidated the Daishonin's Buddhism. "The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas throughout the Three Existences," addressed to Sairen-bo in October 1279, and "On the Three Great Secret Laws," given to Ota Jomyo on

April 8, 1282, remain indispensable to the study of his thought.

In “The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas throughout the Three Existences,” Nichiren Daishonin said that all the earlier teachings of Shakyamuni were but steps leading to the great revelations of the Lotus Sutra, the true and essential teaching affirmed by all the Buddhas. He added, however, that this true teaching came to life only within the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin.

“On the Three Great Secret Laws” provided him with an opportunity to define the substance of the true teaching handed down to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth in the Jinriki [Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One] (twenty-first) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. He said it consisted of the Three Great Secret Laws which the Daishonin had revealed during his lifetime—the object of worship, the invocation and the sanctuary. He wrote in part:

These Three Great Secret Laws I, Nichiren, have certainly inherited directly from Shakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One of Great Enlightenment and the lord of teachings, in person as the head of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth more than two thousand years ago. What I, Nichiren, am doing now does not deviate in the slightest from the bequeathal that took place at Eagle Peak, nor does it differ from the actual phase of the three great principles gleaned from the Juryo chapter. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1023)

He explained these three laws. He said: (1) the object of

worship means the Buddha of absolute freedom who has existed since time without beginning; (2) the invocation refers to the chanting of Nam-myohorenge-kyo for both oneself and others (in contrast to the self-oriented practice taught by T’ien-t’ai and his followers); and (3) the high sanctuary should be built in a place of magnificent beauty, like the pure land of Eagle Peak.

It was this last, the construction of a sanctuary, which would insure the survival of the Dai-Gohonzon—coupled with the pure flow of the Daishonin’s teachings throughout the future. Of course, his training of disciples was meant to guarantee the latter, but even the Daishonin lamented that the seeking spirit was lapsing in places away from Mount Minobu. His health deteriorating, the Daishonin could do nothing outside the confines of his center at Minobu.

MEANWHILE, the Mongols attempted another invasion of Japan in 1281. This time the forces came in even more massive and awesome numbers: 140,000 Mongol and Korean troops, and more than 4,000 battleships. The strategy was the same—to land in Kyushu, take the government headquarters at Dazaifu and sweep northward to engulf the entire country.

The Japanese had been preparing for a second invasion for years. Around 1276 the government enjoined the samurai to build stone ramparts along the coast of northern Kyushu and to drive piles into the sea to prevent the Mongol battleships from landing. Some warriors grew so anxious that they gathered at

Hakata hoping to invade Korea, but this plan never materialized. In July 1279 the Mongols dispatched envoys again, but they, too, were beheaded.

The stage was set for a massive confrontation. The first wave of 40,000 troops left Korea and quickly overran Tsushima and Iki islands in May. They were supposed to rendezvous with another force of 100,000 men sailing from southern China and together descend on Kyushu, as in the previous invasion. But the troops from China were delayed, and the stone ramparts prevented the first force from entering the bay at Hakata. The groups joined up in June, but before they could organize a full-scale invasion a terrible storm struck on the night of July 30. All but about two hundred of the warships were sunk; only about one-fifth of the troops were able to return home.

Though nature had once again turned back the invaders, the cost to Japan was tremendous. The warriors entrusted with the task of defending the homeland had to raise so much money that many were forced to sell their fiefs. As a result, the system by which the Kamakura government bought the warriors’ support by granting them fiefs was undermined, and the Kamakura regime itself was destined to an early death.

If Nichiren Daishonin wrote any comments on the second invasion, they have not survived the centuries. At any rate, by 1281, the Daishonin’s health was already declining rapidly, and he found it increasingly difficult to carry on the many activities to which he had grown accustomed, including the writing of letters.

In the best of times, the area around Mount Minobu was never very warm, and a minor glacial epoch in the thirteenth century made the conditions even worse. It was biting cold. Food was another problem. Following the custom of Buddhist monks in those days, the Daishonin abstained from eating fish and meat, and the food provided by his disciples and believers did not render all the nutrition he needed. In addition, from 1277 through 1278 he was bothered by chronic diarrhea. In a letter he wrote to Shijo Kingo in October (intercalary) 1278, he reported:

I, Nichiren, am not as healthy as others, and in addition, I dwell in this remote mountain forest. This year was especially difficult, with widespread epidemics and famine in spring and summer, which worsened in autumn and winter. My sickness grew worse again, too, but you prescribed various medicines and sent them to me along with quilted silk clothes. Thanks to your remedies, I improved steadily; I have now recovered and feel much better than before. (MW-1, 225)

The cure evidently did not last long, for in November 1281 he wrote Ikegami Munenaga that the diarrhea had returned. By this time, the Daishonin knew that he could not live much longer. As early as the previous May he had written the Ikegami brothers of his condition, saying:

Already I have been expounding this doctrine for no less than twenty-nine years. The past

seven or eight years my strength has ebbed markedly with each year and I have suffered from illness, perhaps because my body has been weakened and my mind exhausted by the debates in which I have engaged daily, the persecutions which have assailed me every month, and the two exiles to which I have been subjected. Still, I have been able to survive until now. Since the first month of this year, however, I have felt fatigued and ill, and it now seems that my life is drawing to a close. In addition, I have already reached the age of sixty. If, with one chance out of ten, I were somehow able to make it through this year, I do not know how it would be possible to survive the following year or two. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1105)

In December, he wrote the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu, lamenting, "I have never taken a step out of this mountain forest from the seventeenth day of the sixth month in the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274), when I retired here, through the eighth day of the twelfth month this year" (Ibid., p. 1583) In January 1282 he wrote a letter to Nanjo Tokimitsu, thanking him for his gifts of rice and noting:

Thin are the garments I wear and sparse the food I have, and I am no better than the Kankucho bird [which is tortured by the cold in the Snow Mountains] during the night. In the daytime I can never even for a single moment contain my desire to go down to the village. The voice reciting the sutra has all but ceased and the seeking spirit has faltered. (Ibid., p. 1585)

When spring came in 1282, the warm weather enabled the Daishonin to regain his health. He wrote that he felt like he had "captured a tiger" and was "riding a lion." His vitality returned, but he and his disciples knew that it would last only until autumn. As summer waned, he was urged to go to the hot springs at Hitachi (presently Ibaraki Prefecture), and he accepted the advice. Before setting out on September 8, he wrote the "Document for Entrusting the Law That Nichiren Propagated throughout his Life." In this he named Nikko Shonin as his legitimate successor:

I, Nichiren, transfer all of the teachings I have propagated throughout my life to Byakuren Ajari Nikko, who should be the supreme leader for propagating true Buddhism. When the sovereign accepts this Law, the high sanctuary of Hommon-ji temple should be erected at the foot of Mount Fuji. Simply wait for the time to come. This is the actual high sanctuary of true Buddhism. Above all, my disciples should observe this document.

The ninth month of the fifth year of Koan (1282), cyclical sign *mizunoe-uma*.—Nichiren

The order of heritage: from Nichiren to Nikko (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600)

THUS, the Daishonin ensured the perpetuation of his teachings in their entirety. He also named the place where the sanctuary should be constructed, whereas before he had only said a spot of great splendor. As for his successor, it appears that by 1280 or earlier he had already decided upon Nikko Shonin. In 1280, he had transferred his document,



Nichiren Daishonin spent his final years at the remote Mount Minobu.

“The Hundred and Six Comparisons,” to Nikko Shonin, proclaiming: “As the teacher of the True Cause¹³ [and the teacher of the Buddhism of sowing], I, Nichiren, hereby respectfully incorporate my teachings in this writing and transfer it to my immediate disciple, Nikko, [who is to save the people of the Latter Day of the Law for ten thousand years and more into the future]” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 854).

THE central message of this document was the declaration that the Buddhism of sowing, or the Buddhism which implants the seed of Buddhahood in the lives of all people, is the highest form of Buddhism.

After leaving Mount Minobu, Nichiren Daishonin traveled northward around Mount Fuji

and, sensing that death was imminent, shunned the hot springs in favor of a trip to the home of Ikegami Munenaka in which is presently Ota Ward of Metropolitan Tokyo. There he took final measures to ensure the perpetuity of his teachings. On October 8, he named six priests as seniors. They were Nissho, Nichiro, Nikko, Niko, Nitcho and Nichiji. On October 13, he drafted a second transfer document, called the “Document for Entrusting Minobu-san.” He declared:

I transfer Shakyamuni Buddha’s teachings of fifty years to Byakuren Ajari Nikko, who should become the chief priest of Minobu-san Kuon-ji temple. Those priests and lay believers who disregard this will be slanderers of the Law.

The thirteenth day of the tenth month in the fifth year of Koan (1282), cyclical sign *mizunoe-uma*

At Ikegami, Musashi Province
Nichiren (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600)

It was the last thing he would ever write. As he and his disciples chanted Nam-myohorenge-kyo, Nichiren Daishonin breathed his last early on the same morning, October 13, 1282, three years and one day after the inscription of the Dai-Gohonzon.

Hearing the news, disciples and followers rushed to the Ikegami residence, where the Daishonin’s body had been placed in a coffin. The next evening at eight o’clock, a formal funeral was conducted. At midnight, everyone bid farewell to their revered master and committed his body to cremation. As an

expression of utmost respect, a funeral procession was held in the manner befitting a deceased worthy samurai, with the lay believers taking virtual charge.

A life of passionate commitment to the welfare and happiness of all humanity had come to a close after sixty-one years, but Nichiren Daishonin lived on—in the hearts of his disciples and followers, in the teachings he left behind, in the Dai-Gohonzon he bestowed upon all humanity throughout the world and in the gratitude of the millions of people who would find solace and fulfillment through the practice of his teachings in the Latter Day of the Law. His life and achievements proved to be in accord with the stanzas of eternity which conclude the Juryo (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra:

Because of the befuddlement
of ordinary people,
though I live, I give out word I
have entered extinction.
For if they see me constantly,
arrogance and selfishness arise
in their minds.

Abandoning restraint, they
give themselves up to the
five desires¹⁴
and fall into the evil paths of
existence.

Always I am aware of which
living beings
practice the way, and which do
not,
and in response to their needs
for salvation

I preach various doctrines for
them.

At all times I think to myself:
how can I cause living beings
to gain entry into the
unsurpassed way
and quickly acquire the body

of a Buddha? (The Lotus Sutra, pp. 231-32)

Chapter 13 (pp. 111–115): Epilogue

AS the legitimate successor of Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko Shonin inherited the totality of the Daishonin's teachings. He and his disciples carried the Daishonin's ashes to Minobu to fulfill their master's desire that his ashes would rest there. On January 23, one hundred days after the Daishonin's death, his ashes were placed in a small temple built especially for their repose.

Eighteen representatives, including the six seniors, were to take turns watching over the Daishonin's ashes and studying the Daishonin's commentary on the sutra there. But all failed to do so except Nikko Shonin and his immediate disciples. After the death of the Daishonin, the five seniors, other than Nikko Shonin, had returned to their various regions of responsibility and begun extending their influence: Nissho in Kamakura, Nichiro in Kamakura and Ikegami, Niko in Boso territory (presently Chiba Prefecture), Nitcho around the residence of Toki Jonin, and Nichiji in the area that is presently Shizuoka Prefecture.

Although he had devoted the last few years of his life to training disciples, Nichiren Daishonin had actually been able to spend little time with the senior priests, except for Nikko Shonin; they were too valuable as central figures for propagation in the various territories. Consequently, they knew little of the Daishonin's ultimate teachings or of the purpose of

his life. They began to feel that the Daishonin had only taught a form of Tendai Buddhism, so they sent their disciples to Mount Hiei, center of the Tendai sect. They discarded the object of worship, the Gohonzon, in favor of images of Shakyamuni Buddha, totally misreading the Daishonin's intention to save people through faith in the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo as embodied by the Daishonin himself. They even destroyed many of his letters and treatises that were not written in classical Chinese, for they felt them to be uncultured and a disgrace to their deceased master.

NIKKO Shonin, only thirty-six years old when the Daishonin died, grew increasingly concerned. He was more than happy when Niko came to Mount Minobu in 1285, and he appointed him chief instructor of the priests. But Niko soon showed his true colors. Under his influence, Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of the Minobu area, committed what are called the four slanderous acts: He commissioned a statue of Shakyamuni, made pilgrimages to Shinto shrines, donated a tract of land for the construction of a Nembutsu monument, and even had a Nembutsu seminary built.

Nikko Shonin strictly warned Niko and Lord Hakiri about the nature of these acts, but to no avail. He recalled the words of the Daishonin's will that should the steward of Minobu turn against his teachings, the Daishonin's spirit would not remain there. Though Nikko Shonin felt deep regret at having to leave Kuon-ji temple, he also knew that the only way to answer his master's expectations was to protect the true

teachings of Buddhism and perpetuate them for the sake of future generations. In 1289 he pronounced Minobu to be a land of heresy, and took the treasures of his faith—the Dai-Gohonzon, the letters, treatises and ashes of his master—and left. He stayed for a while at the residence of his maternal grandfather in Kawai Village in Fuji District, but he soon moved on to the estate of Nanjo Tokimitsu, steward of Ueno Village in the same district. Lord Ueno offered Nikko Shonin a tract of land called Oishigahara, located northeast of his residence, as a temple site. In October 1290, Nikko Shonin's followers, with the help of Lord Ueno, completed a building there called the Dai-bo, which was hardly more than twenty-four square meters. And so, with the construction of the Dai-bo, Taiseki-ji temple was founded. The site accorded with the Daishonin's will that the sanctuary of true Buddhism be constructed near the foot of Mount Fuji.¹⁵

Nikko Shonin continued to work actively, lecturing on important writings such as the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," collecting and copying the Daishonin's works, promoting his teachings and instructing disciples and followers—whom he charged with the task of propagation after his death. All his efforts were aimed at ensuring the eternal prosperity and perpetuation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

He stated in his "Gonin Shoha Sho" (On Refuting the Five Priests): "Just as the Sanskrit texts have already been translated and introduced into China and Japan for the sake of propagation when the Buddhism of India spread eastward, so should the Japanese

be rendered into Sanskrit and Chinese for the sake of transmission when the day comes for the sacred teachings of this country [Japan] to spread far and wide" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1613). (Sanskrit is an Indo-European language and thus, in a broader sense, here represents Western languages as a whole.)

Shortly before his passing, Nikko Shonin wrote the "Nikko yuikai okimon" (Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko); his pur-

pose was to protect the purity of the Daishonin's teachings and to convey a correct understanding of the Daishonin's intention. Nikko Shonin summed up the Daishonin's will for the future in admonition number thirteen: "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). He then transferred the entirety of the Daishonin's teachings to his lineal

successor, Nichimoku Shonin, and passed away at the age of eighty-eight.

The flow of Buddhism, which originated with Shakyamuni Buddha, reached its culmination with the advent of Nichiren Daishonin. His establishment of the supreme teachings of Buddhism has generated a fresh movement toward the far-reaching goal of attaining kosen-rufu, or world peace and the happiness of all humanity throughout time. □

1. Kukai (774-835): The founder of the Shingon sect in Japan. His posthumous name and title are the Great Teacher Kobo. While denouncing the Lotus Sutra he asserted the supremacy of the Dainichi Sutra over all other sutras.
2. Shotoku (574-622): The second son of Emperor Yomei and the regent during the reign of Empress Suiko. He is best known for his application of the spirit of Buddhism to government.
3. In the Japanese edition of Nichiren Daishonin's writings called the *Gosho Zenshu*, these early works are not included because they were written simply to organize the knowledge he had gained through his studies.
4. Jogyo: The leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who appear in the Yujutsu [Emerging from the Earth] (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Shakyamuni transfers the essence of the sutra to Bodhisattva Jogyo in the Jinriki [Entrustment] (21st) chapter entrusting him with its propagation in the Latter Day of the Law. Jogyo is a provisional entity of the original Buddha of kuon ganjo.
5. Vasubandhu (4th or 5th century) and Nagarjuna (2nd or 3rd century): Indian Mahayana scholars. Vasubandhu criticized Mahayana but later converted to it at his older brother Asanga's urging. He wrote many treatises clarifying the Mahayana teachings. Nagarjuna mastered Hinayana [Theraveda] Buddhism but later he devoted himself to the study and propagation of Mahayana Buddhism. He wrote many treatises concerning Mahayana.
6. Ceremony in the Air: The second of the three assemblies described in the Lotus Sutra in which the entire gathering floats in space. The ceremony continues from the Hoto [The Emergence of the Treasure Tower] (11th) to the Zokurui [Entrustment] (22nd) chapter. During the ceremony Shakyamuni reveals his original enlightenment in the remote past and transfers the essence of the sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth led by Jogyo.
7. *ichinen sanzen*: A philosophical system that Tien-tai set forth based on the Lotus Sutra. It clarifies the mutually inclusive relationship of the ultimate truth and the phenomenal world. *Ichinen* is the life that is manifest at each moment and *sanzen* (three thousand) the varying aspects and phases it assumes. Both a theoretical and an actual *ichinen sanzen* exist. Theoretical *ichinen sanzen* refers to the life of the common mortals of the nine worlds and actual *ichinen sanzen* to the life of the Buddha. Nichiren Daishonin embodied actual *ichinen sanzen*—the life of the Buddha in the concrete form of the Gohonzon.
8. *kuon gango*: Defined as the infinite past in contrast with a specific point in time indicated by the distant past of *gohyaku-jintengo*. *Kuon ganjo* is an expression suggesting a dimension that is outside the temporal framework and that has neither beginning nor end. The "original Buddha of *kuon ganjo*" means the Buddha who has been enlightened since time without beginning.
9. Nan-yueh (515-577): Tien-t'ai's teacher. He dedicated his entire life to the practice of the Lotus Sutra and for this reason suffered many persecutions.
10. Lord Shakyamuni of true Buddhism: The Buddha of the teaching indicated in the depths of the Lotus Sutra, who appeared as Nichiren Daishonin in the Latter Day of the Law and expounded the ultimate Law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo.
11. four Bodhisattvas: Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo and Anryugyo. They are the leaders of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth described in the Yujutsu [Emerging from the Earth] (15th) chapter of the Lotus Sutra.
12. *Fuji shugaku yoshu* (Selected Works of the Fuji School), vol. 1, pp. 32-33.
13. teacher of the True Cause: Another name for the Buddha of *kuon ganjo*. Although Shakyamuni revealed his enlightenment in the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, he did not clarify the cause that led him to Buddhahood. The original cause for the enlightenment of all living beings is the Law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo. The Buddha who directly reveals and himself embodies the Law of Nam-myohorenge-kyo is called the Buddha of *kuon ganjo*, that is, Nichiren Daishonin. His Buddhism is called the "Buddhism of sowing" because it plants the original seed of Buddhahood in the lives of all people.
14. five desires: Here, earthly desires stimulated by the five sensory organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue and skin.
15. The Sho-Hondo (Grand Main Temple) was completed in 1972 approximately 700 years after the Daishonin passed away, the result of the initiative and leadership of Daisaku Ikeda, president of the Soka Gakkai International, and of donations from more than 7.5 million Soka Gakkai members. The Dai-Gohonzon is enshrined within it.

Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue

The following excerpts from the pamphlet Questions and Answers on the Temple Issue include the "Introduction" and questions 2 and 4. These are the only sections in the pamphlet required for the Entrance-level Exam.

Introduction

THIS pamphlet attempts to outline some key elements of what has become known in the Soka Gakkai International (SGI) as the "temple issue"—events and information related to Nichiren Shoshu's attacks on the SGI, and its continued efforts to undermine SGI's movement.

When the priesthood of Nichiren Shoshu began a series of measures against the SGI at the beginning of this decade intended to disband and destroy the organization, it may have been shocking and disturbing, but it was not surprising from the standpoint of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings and of history. Many incidents and events going back to the Soka Gakkai's inception before World War II indicated that within the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood there existed the potential for hatred and jealousy toward lay believers. It was evident in the attitude and behavior of more than a few priests. As the Gakkai's growth and influence increased, so did the number of priests who harbored such an attitude until, eventually, it reached the office of high priest.

Buddhism means growth, progress, improvement—of the individual and of society; it spurs development through a deep inner reformation. This reformation, as it progresses in the life of the individual, sends waves of vitality, humanity and harmony into the family, the workplace, the community and society. This is the process of human revolution as it unfolds into the broader process we call *kosen-rufu*. The ultimate aim is to secure a world of peace, harmony, fulfillment and happiness.

This most elemental purpose of Buddhism has never been well received by those with a strong stake in the status quo, in the established order—particularly when that order is stagnant and calls for passivity or unquestioning obedience on the part of ordinary people.

The Soka Gakkai since its inception has been based on the purest intent of Buddhism, aiming at a fundamental reordering of the lives of the people who embrace its practice and philosophy. Because of this, the movement and its leaders have been maligned, hated and looked

upon with contempt by those who feel threatened by its energy and the changes it promises to bring. There is no question that the passage in the Lotus Sutra, "And since hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound even when the Thus Come One is in the world, how much more will this be so after his passing?" (LS10, 164), applies precisely to the Soka Gakkai's situation, as it did to Nichiren Daishonin.

The human revolution and social renaissance of the SGI are particularly distasteful to those whose authority and power are rooted in a weak and dependent people. The practice of Buddhism produces a happier and more aware populace; a socially responsible and politically involved citizenry; a people who know what true leadership means, whether religious or secular, and who are perceptive and courageous enough to unmask self-serving authority.

History abounds with examples of oppression by religious or secular authority over those who advocated a new way of thinking or tried to empower

ordinary people. Many new traditions sprang from the courage of these ordinary individuals who overcame such oppression. The world's major religions have all experienced such opposition during their early history.

Examples of opposition to those who spread Buddhism in its true spirit are many in Buddhist scripture, particularly in the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Daishonin chronicles in detail the persecutions, by cunning and self-serving priests and political leaders, that he and his supporters underwent in thirteenth-century Japan.

Buddhism characterizes opposition by authority as devilish functions, as obstacles, as influence by "bad friends" or ultimately, as opposition by the third of the "three powerful enemies," and also addresses the internal ramifications of these in the life and faith of the believer. But in its harshest form, the formula of oppression in the history of Buddhism is always the same: A religious authority perceives the teachings or movement promoted by a genuine Buddhist leader as a threat, and then, colluding with secular authorities, attempts to use whatever means are at his disposal to suppress, disband or do away with that leader or movement. Because that leader is innocent of any secular wrongdoing or religious error, crimes and misdeeds are invented and rumored, with the ultimate aim to quash the influence and respect afforded to those committed to Buddhism.

Another vital point to keep in mind is this: Meeting opposition to our efforts to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism does not mean that the SGI has done some-

thing wrong and is therefore experiencing retribution.

On the contrary, as we know from the Daishonin's own history, he himself experienced many persecutions from the government and harassment from the religious authorities of his day. Such obstacles, the Daishonin explains, are not only a natural consequence of one's efforts to spread Buddhism but also an indication of the correctness of the teaching that he or she practices:

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. One passage from the same volume reads, "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 fall under their influence, you will be led into the paths of evil. 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 for future generations. (MW-1, 145)

And:

When I examine these passages, I know that if I do not call forth these three enemies of the Lotus Sutra, then I will not be a true votary of the Lotus Sutra. Only by making them appear can I be a true votary. (MW-4, 20)

When the Lotus Sutra states,

"hatred and jealousy toward this sutra abound," it puts no limits on who might become susceptible to such base impulses. Any of us is prone to selfish or spiteful emotions. It is only through a life devoted to developing the "greater self," to ceaseless efforts to improve ourselves and take responsibility for the happiness of others, that we can guard against succumbing to such tendencies. Position, status or role in the realm of Buddhism or society do not guarantee the nobility of one's deeds.

The Daishonin admonishes: "Strengthen your faith day by day and month after month. Should you slacken even a bit, demons will take advantage" (MW-1, 241-42), so that we may win over our weaknesses and never fall victim to our own "demons" of greed, anger and foolishness.

To criticize anti-Buddhist attitude and behavior or to refuse to follow those who maintain such an attitude and behavior in no way contradicts Buddhism. It is in fact the only correct action to take if one regards the Daishonin's teachings on such matters seriously. This has been the stance of the Gakkai toward the "Nikken sect," the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in its corrupt state under the leadership of Nikken Abe.

Ultimately, all the difficulties that the Soka Gakkai and SGI have undergone in regards to the temple issue herald the arrival of a glorious time—a time when Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism will be spread widely by the Bodhisattvas of the Earth to serve as the philosophical basis of world peace and humanity's happi-

ness in the centuries to come. This is called the Soka Renaissance.

Therefore, we can confidently say that by being excommuni-

cated by Nikken, the Soka Gakkai has actually liberated itself from the shackles of the priesthood and its authoritarianism. This also means that the

Daishonin's Buddhism has been given the grand opportunity in this time period to be taught exactly as it was by Nichiren Daishonin. □

Question 2:

Why Is It Important To Know About the Temple Issue?

THE temple issue speaks to the essence of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. To understand the issue challenges each of us to realize that taking full responsibility for our own happiness is the path of correct faith and practice.

Simply put, the temple issue provides a real-world, modern-day opportunity to witness the principles that Nichiren Daishonin spoke about 700 years ago. For this reason, we should avoid viewing the problem as something of the past or of another place, something that is not our personal concern. To do so would mean missing an irreplaceable learning opportunity. We would also do a disservice to those who join the SGI in the future: If we do not understand and transmit the profound implications of these events to future generations, then those to follow may face similar obstacles without the benefit of the example and understanding we could pass on.

In many of his writings, Nichiren Daishonin cautions how futile it is to practice Buddhism without correctly grasping the meaning of faith. If we fail to understand the fundamental principles of our faith, he says, no matter how much time we may put into it, our

practice will "become an endless, painful austerity" (MW-1, 4), and our Buddhist knowledge will "not relieve [us] of mortal sufferings in the least" (MW-1, 4). He goes so far as to say that without a correct understanding of faith, "it would be useless to embrace the Lotus Sutra [i.e., the Gohonzon]" (MW-1, 25).

"Correct faith" in the Daishonin's Buddhism means to view things as Nichiren Daishonin taught, share his convictions, and practice and develop our lives in accord with that understanding. Question 4 of this pamphlet lists a few examples of how the temple's view on certain matters of faith diverges significantly from that of the Daishonin.

In another Goshō, he writes:

It is a time when...truth and error stand shoulder to shoulder, and when Mahayana and Hinayana dispute which is superior. At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law. This is the practice of shakubuku. (MW-5, 103)

Erroneous views in Buddhism are often propounded by those well versed in theory yet

who fail to grasp the heart or spirit of Buddhism, those who lack a compassionate practice. It is up to those who do understand the heart of Buddhism to shed light on what is true and what is erroneous.

As SGI members, we might ask ourselves whether we could clearly explain this issue to someone else, even to someone outside our organization or someone interested in practicing for the first time. If we are asked: "What is the temple issue about?" or "How can you say that the SGI is correct and Nichiren Shoshu is wrong?" can we give a convincing answer?

When we can answer these questions through our own understanding and conviction, then we have grasped something important for our own faith and lives. We will also gain insight into fundamental issues affecting humanity: the nature of justice, the qualities of a true leader, equality, tolerance, and the purpose of religion. The temple issue gives us an excellent opportunity to learn about the Daishonin's Buddhism, which is, after all, about our own lives and humanity.

It is no secret that the intention of Nichiren Shoshu is to disband the SGI and destroy our move-

ment, denying millions of believers the source of nourishment for their faith and practice and stopping the progress of kosen-rufu.

In a recent speech at the head temple, Nichiren Shoshu General Administrator Nichijun Fujimoto is reported to have said, "Now is the time to crush the Soka Gakkai." Efforts by priests and temple members in the United States to convince members to leave the SGI by creating doubts regarding the Gohonzon or spreading misinformation about the SGI are clearly increasing.

The Daishonin writes, "Simply to chant one four-phrase verse or the daimoku, and to protect those who do so, is called the essential practice" (MW-3, 9). The best way to protect ourselves and our fellow members from being misled is to arm ourselves with correct information and understanding. Our study of the temple issue will help us do this. □

Q2 Key Points:

- The temple issue gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding of the basics of the Daishonin's Buddhism.
- It causes all of us to ask: "What is the meaning of correct faith and practice?"
- It teaches us about our own lives, about how to deepen our faith.
- Understanding the issue can help us educate others, thus helping them become aware of the priesthood's designs.

Question 4: What Is the Real Difference Between the Temple and SGI?

THE difference between the Soka Gakkai International and Nichiren Shoshu clearly can be seen in at least four key areas:

1) View of Equality

THE Lotus Sutra is a teaching of absolute equality — it affirms that all people, regardless of status, gender or background, are potentially Buddhas.

Nichiren Daishonin reaffirms this in many places throughout his writings. To a lay believer named Abutsu-bo, he writes:

You, yourself, are a true Buddha who possesses the three enlightened properties. You should chant Nam-myoho-enge-kyo with this conviction. (MW-1, 30)

In another letter he writes:

There should be no discrimination among those who propagate the five characters of Myoho-enge-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law, be they men or women. (MW-1, 93)

While the SGI bases itself on absolute respect for the individual, and its activities focus on thorough dialogue with people on all levels of society, Nichiren Shoshu staunchly asserts that it is a "sin" to speak of the equality of priests and lay practitioners, as

we can see in a letter to the SGI from the temple's chief administrator, Nichijun Fujimoto:

To talk about the priesthood and laity with a sense of equality are expressions of great conceit. In fact, they correspond to the five cardinal sins.... (January 12, 1991)

Representative of such beliefs is the following comment from a priest's sermon at a temple in Japan:

A priest who wears this robe is special and different from lay believers. He is always seated with the Gohonzon behind him, but whatever the priest may do on other occasions and no matter how luxuriant his lifestyle, it is totally all right. You lay believers are confused about this point. These matters are of no account. (Seido Oyabu, at Horin-ji, January 1991)

Around this doctrine of absolute clerical superiority, it created an atmosphere in which the actions and intentions of priests can never be questioned; in which lay believers are obliged to serve priests, but priests have no obligation to serve the believers. Even funeral and memorial services are conducted with the expectation of receiving donations, and with undisguised dissatisfaction if

those donations fall below par. This is in stark contrast to the attitude of Nichiren Daishonin, which was one of appreciation, respect, service and support of the believers.

2) View of the Gohonzon

NICHIREN Daishonin clearly indicates in the Goshō that the Gohonzon is a manifestation of his life as an enlightened human being, and that it is no different from the enlightened potential within all ordinary people.

He 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-myōhō-rengē-kyō. (MW-1, 213)

In another letter, he writes: "Abutsu-bo is the Treasure Tower itself, and the Treasure Tower is Abutsu-bo himself. No other knowledge is purposeful" (MW-1, 30). Later in the same letter, the Daishonin equates the "Treasure Tower" to the Gohonzon.

Nichiren Shōshū's position is that these teachings by the Daishonin are to be interpreted by priests only, not by lay believers. Their teaching on the Gohonzon is as follows: The Law of Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō is not inherent in all phenomena or in the lives of ordinary people. It exists only in the physical object of the Dai-Gohonzon and in the life of the current high priest, who has received it through a secret ceremony conducted with his predecessor.

Only the high priest can empower a Gohonzon by personally conducting a special ceremony. Any benefit comes to the believer directly through the auspices and sanction of the office of the high priest. Temple publications state, "The sanctioning of the object of worship by the High Priest, who is the only person to be bequeathed the Daishonin's Buddhism, is what makes the attainment of Buddhahood possible" (From an NST publication, *Refuting the Soka Gakkai's Counterfeit Object of Worship*" 100 Questions and Answers, p. 36).

The temple's stance is that believing the Law or the Gohonzon to exist within one's own life will send that person to hell.

Nichiren Shōshū's position on the Gohonzon stands in stark contrast with that of the Daishonin himself. The Soka Gakkai embraces the Daishonin's view that the Gohonzon is the embodiment of the Buddha's wisdom and compassion. The Daishonin inscribed it so that we can awaken the same wisdom and compassion within us. One's power of faith and practice to the Gohonzon enables him or her to tap the power of the Gohonzon within to which the Daishonin so adamantly refers. For the high priest or anyone to claim sole possession of the Law and control over the power of the Gohonzon is the basest form of exploitation of the Daishonin's teachings.

3) View of the "Heritage" of the Law

IN his letter "Heritage of the Ultimate Law of Life," Nichiren Daishonin clearly

describes and defines what it means to receive the "heritage" or "lifeblood" of faith in his Buddhism:

Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment countless aeons ago, the Lotus Sutra which leads all people to Buddhahood, and we ordinary human beings are in no way different or separate from each other. Therefore, to chant Myōhō-rengē-kyō with this realization is to inherit the ultimate law of life and death. (MW-1, 22)

In addition, the Daishonin writes:

All disciples and believers of Nichiren should chant Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō with one mind, transcending all differences among themselves to become as inseparable as fish and the water in which they swim. This spiritual bond is the basis for the universal transmission of the ultimate law of life and death. (MW-1, 23)

And:

Be resolved to summon forth the great power of your faith, and chant Nam-myōhō-rengē-kyō with the prayer that your faith will be steadfast and correct at the moment of your death. Never seek any other way to inherit the ultimate law and manifest it in your life. (MW-1, 25)

Before 1991, Nikken himself supported the view of the heritage as expressed by the Daishonin in these passages, saying: "This lifeblood of faith is

inherited not only by a high priest. It is also inherited by all priests and lay believers who inherit the true teaching. When these priests and lay believers carry out pure faith in the true teaching and practice accordingly, they unlock the pure water of the law within their lives and equally attain enlightenment through believing in and understanding the Law.” (*Dai-Nichiren*, April 1987)

The priesthood today repeatedly refers to the exclusive transmission of the heritage of the Law to the high priest through what it calls the “Face to Face Bestowal of the Living Essence of the Law,” insisting that the nature of this bestowal is beyond the capacity of ordinary people to comprehend. In a section called “Absolute Faith in and Strict Obedience to the High Priest,” we see the following passage:

When the priests and lay believers of the faith of Nichiren Shoshu have the occasion to be in the presence of the High Priest, with palms pressed earnestly together in sincere gratitude, we pay prayer-like reverence to him as the Master who embodies the Living Essence of the Body of the entirety of the Law of all existence.... In short, with perfectly sincere faith and self-imposed, strict obedience, we should hold the High Priest’s instruction in deepest reverence—and we must realize that it is **right there** (sic) that the great, direct path of the true relationship of unfiltered, unrestricted faith between Master and disciple, which leads to ultimate enlightenment in this lifetime, is to be found. (*Dai-Nichiren*, Special

Edition: On the Soka Gakkai Problem (II) pp. 13–14)

The SGI firmly rejects this idea of the exclusive possession and bestowal of an intangible “essence” of all Buddhism to a single individual by virtue of his religious position. Not only does Nichiren Daishonin never mention such a rite, he clearly refutes it.

4) Attitude and Behavior

THE most essential difference lies in the realm of commitment and action taken toward the accomplishment of kosen-rufu and the people’s happiness, toward securing a peaceful world based on the spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

SGI members have continuously exerted themselves for decades to spread Buddhism, devoting their evenings and weekends to chant and work for the happiness of their friends. SGI President Ikeda, in particular, has met with one person after another, Buddhists and non-Buddhists of all nations and fields of society, to share his commitment to peace and engender an understanding of Buddhist humanism.

It is evident, however, that priests have played a far more passive role, spending most of their time at the temple attending primarily to ceremonies and services. While many Gakkai members were at activities in the evenings, visiting and encouraging friends or studying Buddhism together, most priests remained at home. It also became clear that many were indulging themselves by joining expensive country clubs or frequenting night-clubs, lavishly

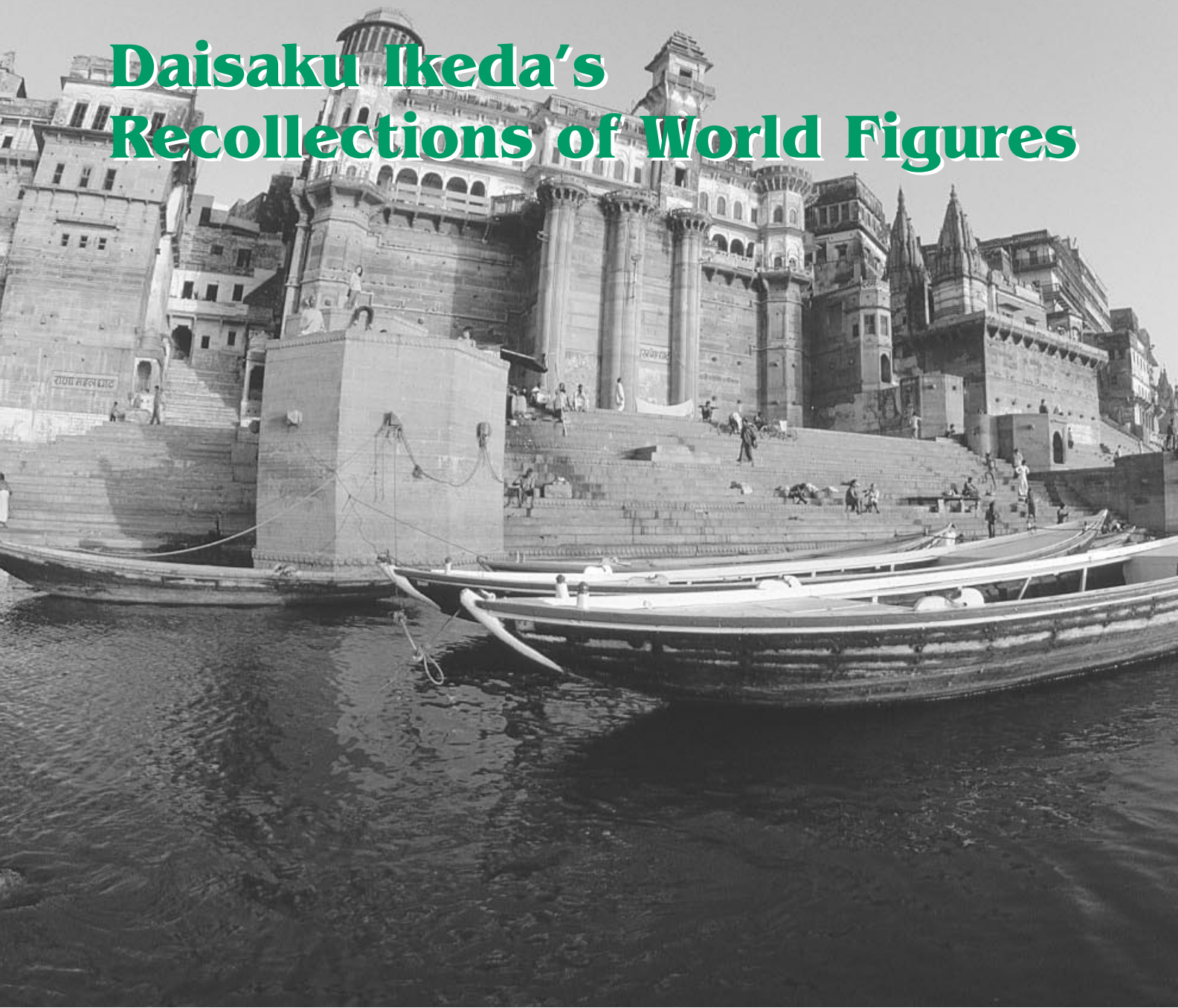
and frivolously spending money earned from the members’ donations.

Nevertheless, Nichiren Shoshu priests continued to maintain an air of superiority and even condescension toward hard-working Gakkai members. Their aloofness toward the laity is still evident in their relationship with Hokkeko or temple members. For example, at a May 1997 ceremony at a temple in Los Angeles after which the lay temple members held a potluck lunch in the parking lot, the dozen or so priests in attendance quickly exited to a separate room to enjoy their own catered feast. There was no exchange or interaction with the laity, other than with a few appointed representatives. □

Q4 Key Points:

- The SGI and Nichiren Shoshu differ fundamentally in their action and commitment to kosen-rufu and their respect and support of ordinary believers.
- While the SGI advocates and practices the highest respect for the individual, the temple demands that believers place their highest respect in the priests.
- Nichiren Shoshu has twisted the Daishonin’s teachings, interpreting them only from the standpoint of the assumed superiority and infallibility of the priesthood.

Daisaku Ikeda's Recollections of World Figures



Eternity is here
in infinite Now,
in illumined Now,
in freeze of Fate
in death of Hate:

*(from "Fire," The Five Elements,
by Krishna Srinivas)*

WHEN I first met Dr. Krishna Srinivas, he shared with me his long-cherished desire to celebrate through his poetry the five universal elements of Indic tradition—earth, water, fire, wind and void. Speaking with natural rhythm, Dr. Srinivas said, "Fulfilling this is my mission. Once it is complete, I don't care what

happens to me."

The voice most honestly conveys a person's true nature. The cadence of Dr. Srinivas' speech more than his words themselves revealed the selfless nature of his character.

I was in Kanagawa when we first met. I remember the magnificent summer clouds that rose in the sky at the far end of

**Krishna Srinivas—
President of the
World Poetry
Society; Cofounder
of the World
Congress of Poets**



Ganges River at Varanasi, India

BRIAN WANDER/ORBIS

I will never forget Madras. It was there in 1961, some eighteen years before we met, that I first set foot on Indian soil, that great “land of the spirit.” I was deeply impressed by the bustle, the dynamism and, at the same time, the serene air of eternity that pervaded the city. It was as if time flowed differently there.

Since 1960, Dr. Srinivas has published a monthly poetry magazine, *Poet*, from Madras with subscribers in over fifty nations. He is also the president of the World Poetry Society and one of the cofounders of the World Congress of Poets. Our first meeting took place when he stopped over in Japan on his way home after attending the fourth meeting of the World Congress of Poets, in Seoul, South Korea.

“The great poets have disappeared,” he told me with a deep sigh. “Through my work on *Poet*, I read poetry from around the world. While there are many good poems, there are no great ones. Some years ago, I published a collection of my own poetry entitled *Dance of Dust*. In it, I make the point that though the poetry we see today is somehow insubstantial like a dance of dust, someday a great poet will definitely appear.”

Dance of Dust, published in 1946, was highly acclaimed by many of this century’s most respected poets and critics, including T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender and others. Such praise naturally contributed to making a name for Dr. Srinivas. “A true poet,” he maintains, “is one who speaks of the cosmos, the spirit

and the truth.... A poem must always have a message; it must be eternal.”

By “message” he means something that a poet feels an irrepressible compulsion to articulate. Once this task has been completed, a poet would feel no regret even if facing death. If this message could not be communicated to others, however, life would not be worth living. A poet is one in whom such a flame burns and explodes into words.

The flame that burns within Dr. Srinivas led to the creation of a long poem titled *The Five Elements*. The five elements, I remarked to him, “are the components of our lives. Each life, just like the cosmos, is comprised of earth, water, fire, wind and void. In other words, the five elements express the philosophy of oneness of the individual and the cosmos. At the same time, the five elements correspond to the five Chinese characters of Myoho-renge-kyo.”

Dr. Srinivas completed *The Five Elements* in 1981. It is an epic poem that ennoble the essence of each of the five elements that pervade the universe. He infuses his whole life into this poem—becoming one with the river, rising up with surging waters and cleansing the banks that represent the twin forces of creation and destruction. He becomes the wind, galloping without obstruction through space. He becomes the sacred flame, purifying all humanity, and he becomes the earth, building a heavenly realm where we live. And then there is the void.

Yokohama Harbor that July in 1979. The sky was filled with light and the sea sparkled, as if laughing at the inexplicable rivalries and conflicts of humanity.

Here, I received my tall, slim, distinguished Indian guest, who hails from the port-city of Madras, and together we spent the afternoon enjoying a wonderful discussion over poetry.



Taj Mahal, Uttar Pradesh, India

WOLFGANG KAETHER/CORBIS

“Alone? No ... You are not alone!” ...

A whisper from Afar—
from beyond galactic clouds
of interstellar dust
measuring light years
and millions of suns —

•••

I come from realm of Reality—
everlasting pyramidal
creations—

•••

From this phoenix realities
will sudden bloom a
new Eden—
a Race of stalwart men
and flower women
with eyes to see
histories in make and
ears to hear
luring music from far off
spheres.

(from “Void,” *The Five Elements*, by
Krishna Srinivas)

Dr. Srinivas’ poetry reaches the height of a timeless and mythic realm. He listens intently to the profound silence of the universe—to the void from which all things are born. And at the same time, he predicts that from its depths will emerge a new humanity that will have “ears to hear/luring music from far off spheres.”

HE comments, “The language of the poet is only a small part of the craft of poetry; the rest is silence. It is from that endless, vast silence that the great poets—Homer, Dante and Kalidasa—have extracted their timeless epics and expressed themselves. In that great void of sacred silence where ideas that no poet has yet discovered rest,

lies the font of lyrics that no poet has yet sung.”

I think that poets are those who see the eternal. Because they experience the eternal with their entire beings, they are keenly aware of the impermanence of all things. The constant flow of life is forever in their gaze. That is why they realize just how precious and irreplaceable every single moment is—this moment now, this fleeting instant. Because of their love for each life-filled moment, poets cannot refrain from giving expression to the poetic spirit within.

Poets always stand on the horizon of time without beginning. They are born anew each morning. For poets, every day is the very first day. They see the world with the pure eyes of the eternal child. And through those eyes, how beautiful the day is! The light of the sun fil-

Indian poet Dr. Krishna Srinivas talks with SGI President Ikeda on July 13, 1979, at the Kanagawa Culture Center, Yokohama, Japan.



SEIKO PRESS

tered through the leaves of the trees—what a miracle! Silver drops of rain dancing down a window pane—what precious jewels!

Poets, as seekers of the invisible laws of the universe, see all things as expressions of the golden wonder of life itself. That is why poets are forever praising all existence. Poets know that the eternal permeates every aspect of our so-called “ordinary” existence. As a result, they do not value things for their utility. They do not ask, “How can I use that?” but, instead, are more interested in whether things are shining with life.

Poets, by nature, appreciate each thing for its own sake. They do not operate according to the market values of consumer society. Rather, spiritual values are the yardstick they embrace. Even a small scrap of paper, if it is a token of another’s heartfelt sincerity, is more precious to them than a million dollars. Science declares that everything is replaceable. Poetry, on the other hand, insists that each and every

thing is unique.

Poets are also fighters. They feel a sense of responsibility for the fate of humanity. The inhuman treatment of even a single person, anywhere in the world, is unendurable. Given that each of us is a knot in the great tapestry of cosmic life, the loss of even one individual would make the universe less than complete. These are the sentiments of poets.

THAT is why I told Dr. Srinivas, “In a society that is buried in mundane concerns, poetry opens a window for our hearts—a window through which the refreshing breeze of life can blow. Poetry is the proof of a society’s humanity, the noble song of the human spirit. When love and appreciation for poetry spread to people from all walks of life, including our leaders, society will become a brighter, more beautiful and vibrant place to live.”

The world today is suffering from a serious malaise. People seem to have lost their ability to

feel and to care, living in a vacuum of spiritual death. As if the black virus of materialism had blighted their hearts and turned them into automatons, they can feel neither sadness nor joy, seeking only to drown their spiritual frustration in momentary distractions.

Poetry has the power to revive such spiritual desolation. On a broader level, I am speaking of the power of culture, of beauty. Poetry is the dynamic energy that lifts through the summer skies like clouds; it is a living, pulsing spirit that can feel and care for others; and it is the light that sparkles in our eyes. Poetry is where eternity resides.

Dr. Srinivas is 82. He is in good health and continues to work for peace through his poetry, seeking ever to cultivate himself on his epic journey of life. He personifies the dignified words he shared with me on that wonderful summer day: “Yes, poetry is a state of being. Great poetry can only be produced by a great person.” □

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Giving Back Beauty

By Joyce Martin

Fort Worth, Texas

I CAN best be described as an emerging artist. For now, I create folded paintings that are three-dimensional and emerge and recede from a flat plane. This series of works began because I was trying to teach myself how to make a paper lantern using *origami* folding techniques. The end result was not a lantern but a series of mountains and valleys with highs and lows rhythmically undulating across the white paper. My whole life was captured in that single piece of folded paper. I don't now why, but I knew I wanted to paint that surface.

Many influences have shaped my artwork into what it is today. Reared primarily in the Southwest, I feel an affinity with the art of the American Indian. I think that textiles, rugs and tapestries have all played their part, and I believe they are valuable sources of original art work, often overlooked. Most important, the evocative beauty of nature has held me enthralled for many years. I love the textures and contrasts of tree bark after a shower when freckles of celadon moss and ochre lichen suddenly take center stage, spotlighted against bark, transformed into black velvet canyons by the rain. And what could be more beautiful than the autumnal splendor of a maple tree gloriously ablaze with myri-

ad shades of red? There is so much in the world that delights me, inspires me and that sparks ideas for my art. Rather than trying to duplicate the perfection of nature's beauty in my work, I try to suggest an emotion and hint at a memory. Often I am caught up in the process of experimentation and discovery, enjoying the feel of the medium and the evolution of the product. I have painted in most of the mediums available, but presently favor soft pastels and dry pigment over other painting vehicles.

Since joining this practice, there has been a subtle shift in the way I view myself as an artist. I used to say, "I want to be an artist." Now, without effort, I can say, "I am an artist," and I understand that I have actually been an artist all my life. I can reflect the beauty contained in the depths of my being, just as a pool gives up its images to the eye willing to see beyond the surface. Each time I create a piece of art, I feel as if my soul is laid bare for the universe to see. By creating I am able to give back, in appreciation, some of the beauty that sustained me for so long. Having my slides returned, unaccepted, does not drop me into the depths of despair. I no longer feel the need to compare my work with that of other artists. I am content to paint as I see fit, confident that my



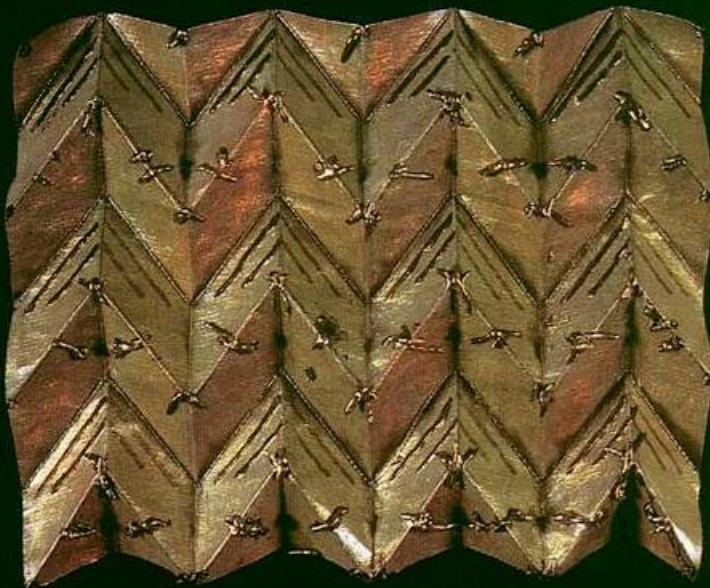
style is as valid as any other. Only my attitude is different.

"The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon" that contains the message "Never seek the Gohonzon outside yourself" has been an important guidance. Another quote that has helped me greatly is: "The mirror of the Lotus Sutra reflects not only our physical form but our inner being as well. Furthermore, the sutra reflects with complete clarity one's past karma and its future effect." When I first read these words, they didn't mean a great deal, but I have slowly come to the understanding that I must look inside, study and chant, to find happiness and peace. Polishing my mirror does not just mean to clean the surface but to see clearly as well.

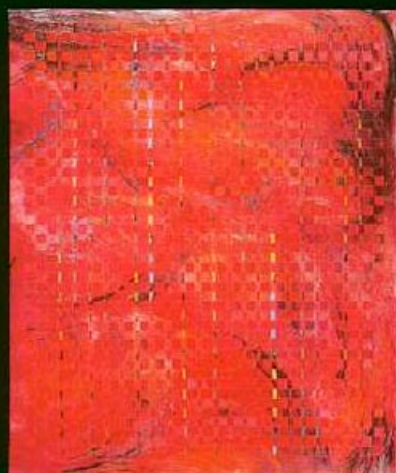
Since October 1996, I have illustrated two children's books, had paintings accepted into three juried art shows and been selected as one of the winners of an Award of Excellence in the 1997 6th Annual Manhattan Arts International Competition. If the beauty that I create with my art can touch another person's heart, then surely that must be a step for *kosen-rufu*. □



left, *Fire and Brimstone*, 1997, aluminum screen, pulp, dye, pigment, and acrylic paint, 20 x 14 in.



right, *Untitled #1*, 1996, acrylic paint on paper, 7 x 8.5 x 1 in.



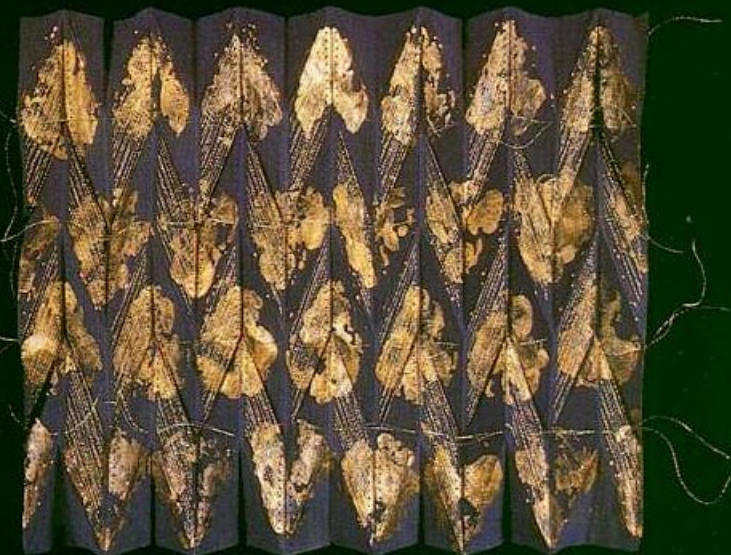
far left, *Hot Flash*, 1997, pastel on woven vinyl coated paper, 12.25 x 10.25 in.



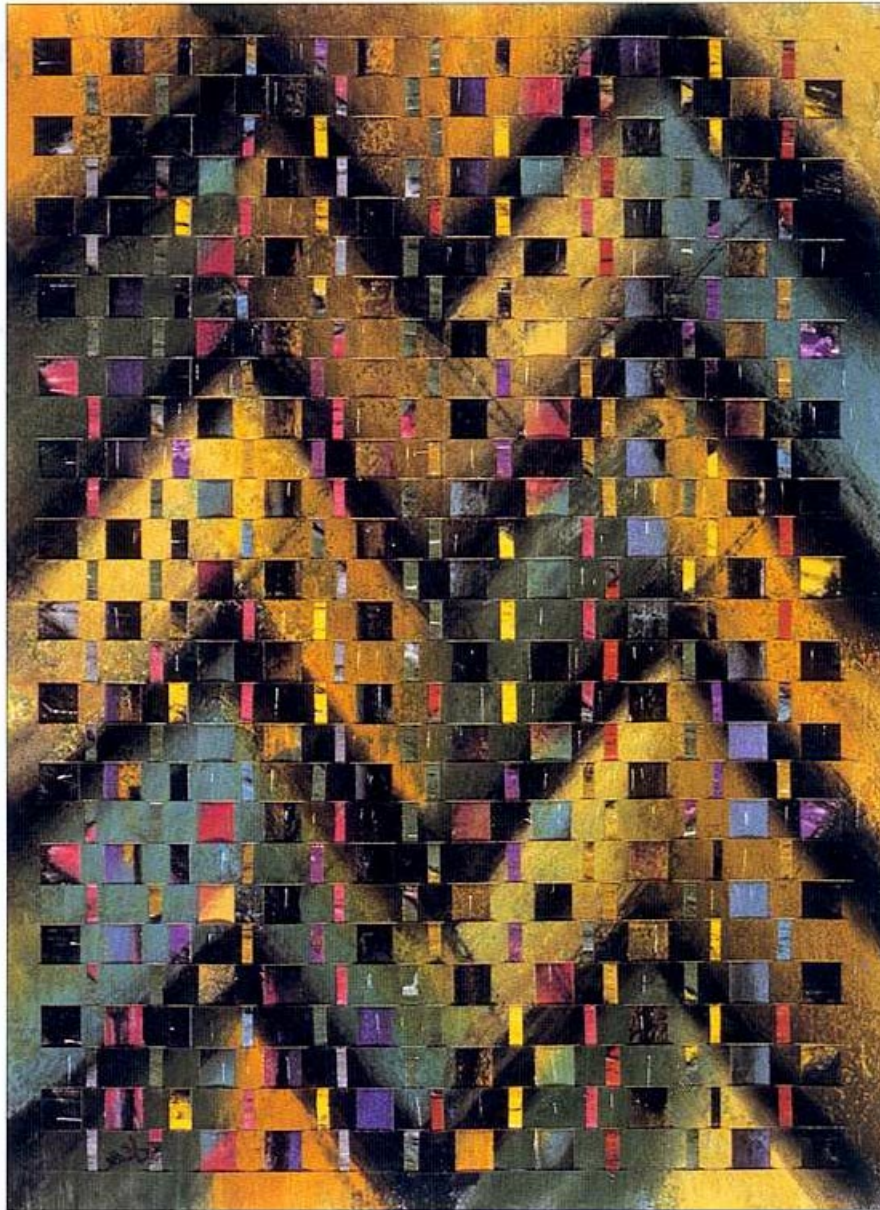
left, *Brush Fire*, 1997, aluminum screen, paper pulp, dye, dry pigment, and acrylic paint, 20 x 17 in.



left, *Tree Series: Autumn*, 1996, pastel and ink on paper, 10 x 7 x .5 in.



right, *Sari*, 1996, ink, acrylic, and thread on paper, 10 x 11 in.



Acid Rain, 1997,
woven pastel on vinyl coated paper, 7.5 x 5.5 in.
by Joyce L. Martin

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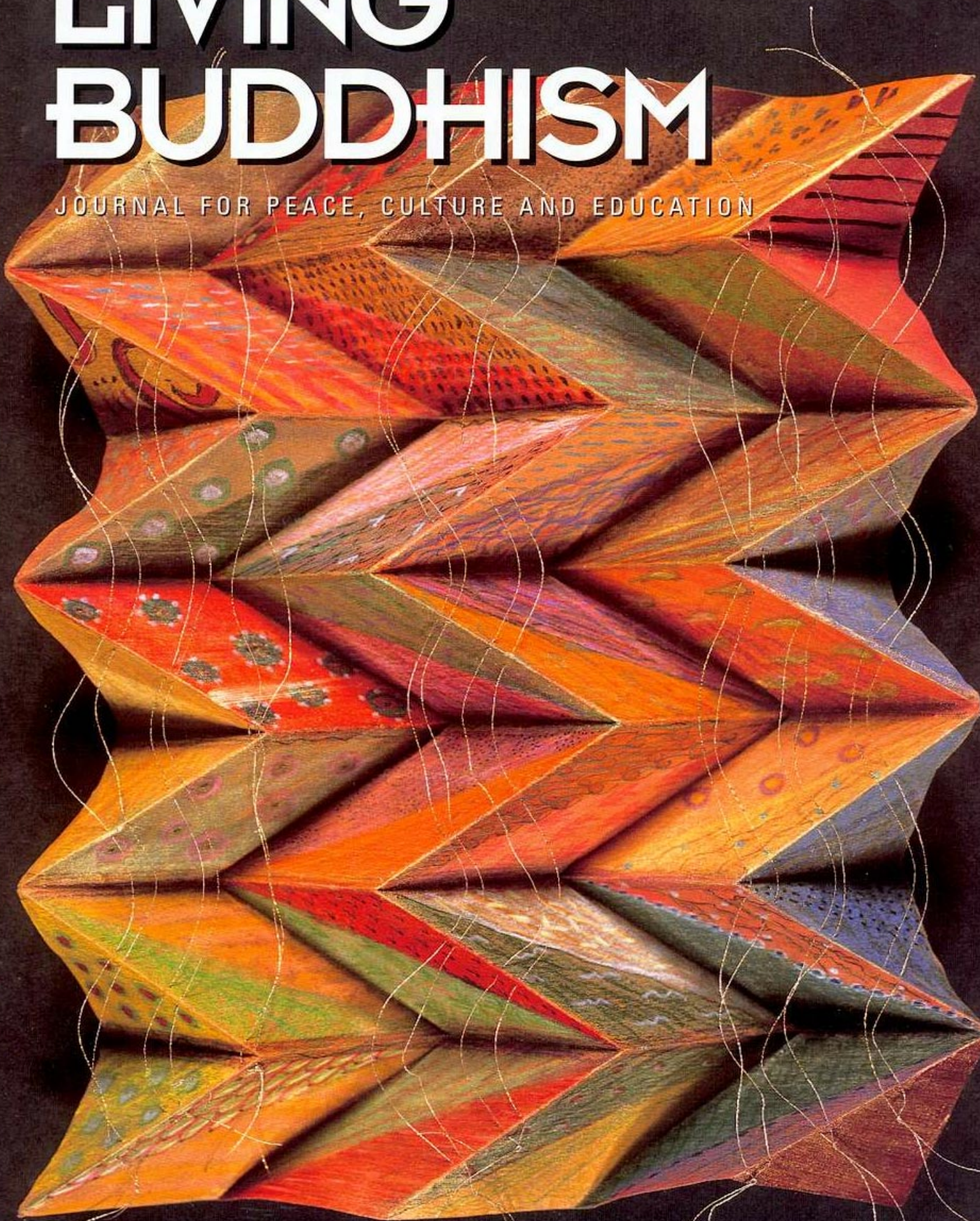
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Taplow Court Grand Culture Centre



TAPLOW Court, situated in the lush green Buckinghamshire countryside of rural England, is an estate with more than 2,000 years of history. It is now the national center for SGI of the United Kingdom (SGI-UK). Taplow is used for religious ceremonies, weddings, small training courses and committees that plan future events, as well as being a place where members can come and practice together.

From time to time, Taplow plays host to international members, such as the 1992 conference of delegates who gathered to discuss humanistic approaches to the then

forthcoming United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Symposia at Taplow draw SGI members from America and across Europe.

Also situated on the premises are the Institute of Oriental Philosophy European Centre (IOPEC) and its developing reference library of source and secondary literature on Buddhism and other philosophies. The IOPEC organizes lectures at Taplow Court and serves as a research center for scholars.

SGI President Ikeda attended the opening ceremony of the Taplow Court Grand Culture Centre on May 21, 1989.