

# 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.

## 2 From Our Readers

## 4 A Network of Hope for the New Century: SGI President Ikeda's New Year's Poem

## 6 Publisher's Commentary

## 8 A New Humanism for the Coming Century: SGI President's Address at Rajiv Gandhi Foundation in New Delhi, India

## 20 The Opening of the Eyes: Study Material for January and February from *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*

## 28 Maintaining a Positive Attitude in the Face of Obstacles: Craig Tachibana's challenge with the negativity within

## 30 Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra #25 "I Am a Bodhisattva of the Earth"—the Discovery of the Eternal Self

## 46 Global Friendships for Peace: SGI Activities Report

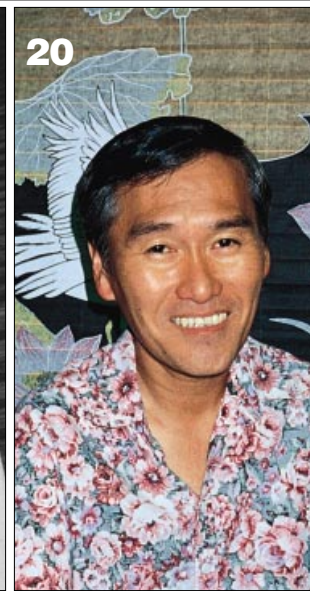
**COVER PHOTO** by SGI-USA member Michael Goodman of New York City: Puppets at a souvenir stand in the city of Jaipur in north-west India. (Michael Goodman is a freelance photographer who specializes in construction photography and is currently working on two books of his own photographs.)



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46

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# living BUDDHISM

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## FROM THE EDITOR

**B**EST wishes to everyone throughout 1998, the Year of Victory of the People for the New Century!

After one year of publishing under its new name, *Living Buddhism* continues to be a work in progress. We appreciate very much the tremendous support from our very talented membership, and can't thank enough all the artists

whose beautiful artwork has graced the magazine's covers since September 1994. Beginning with this issue, in addition to fine art, the covers will feature photography and other mediums.

Paramount among our concerns are that *Living Buddhism* become an effective source for the study and practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and that it can also play a vital role in bringing the Daishonin's Buddhism to popular consciousness.

Please continue to write us with your comments. The *Living Buddhism* staff values your feedback, and sincerely thanks you for your input.

—MARGIE HALL



Gary, Margie and Dave

## FROM OUR READERS

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

## APPRECIATION

**I**JUST received my November issue of *Living Buddhism*. It was an awesome experience. There are no words to express my appreciation for your efforts, your skills and your

personal gifts and talents that have gone into creating this magic every month. As a "behind-the-scenes" person, I really appreciate the many efforts it takes to bring "a work of art" together each month as you do.

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

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

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

Please extend this gesture of appreciation with everyone involved, especially those who are usually forgotten all the way to the clean-up crews of any sort. Thank you all!

ALICIA MOORE  
Charlotte, N.C.

I REALLY like getting to add to my fine art reproduction collection with every *Living Buddhism* I get! The covers make it very attractive to people who may not know much about Nichiren Buddhism. Also, hearing the artists describe their life and work from a faith perspective is always encouraging and usually full of insights that are expressed in an uncommon way.

I thoroughly enjoyed David Baldschun, Faye Hovey and artist Ed Lee's pieces on Sennichi-ama and Abutsu-bo. I've loved "The Drum at the Gate of Thunder" for a long time, and Ms. Hovey really brought to life its recipient, Sennichi-ama. I felt as though Sennichi-ama must be speaking through Ms. Hovey's pen.

The factual account of the elderly couple used language that was refreshing, emotive and full of vivid imagery. No sense of stuffy, just-the-facts-Ma'am textbook-itis here.

Ed Lee's drawings tell a story without words. They take

me right into the world of the two strong-faith followers.

Thanks very much for all your hard work—it shows.

LAVORA PERRY  
East Cleveland, Ohio

## HONORIFIC TITLE DAISHONIN

I'VE just been reading my November issue. In two places, I found mention of "Nichiren Buddhism"—on pages two and four. This "Nichiren Buddhism" is something new to me. I've always referred to our practice as Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, and have been taught over the years that the title *Daishonin* was an honorary name befitting the true Buddha to whom we owe so much.

In short, I'm not comfortable with your use of "Nichiren Buddhism" and would like to request that you explain your use of it. It seems radical to stop using the honorary "Daishonin" and must mean some philosophical change in thinking about Nichiren that I am unaware of. Please explain!

BRIGID WITKOWSKI  
New York

*Living Buddhism's general rule is to use the honorific title Daishonin in articles directed to SGI-USA members.*

*The use of the name Nichiren by itself or Nichiren Buddhism is what is commonly used in the field of religious studies. President Ikeda uses this treatment when he speaks at universities or other formal venues outside the Soka Gakkai. Not using the formality of the title is in no way a sign of disrespect. We may not use it if we publish an article by President Ikeda or others that did not use it (e.g., "A Buddhist Response to the Global Ethic," by Virginia Straus of the Boston Research Center, January 1997 *Living Buddhism*, p. 22).*

*The term Daishonin means "great sage" and was applied to Nichiren's name by the priesthood some time after he died to indicate that he was the true Buddha. In his writings he refers to himself as Nichiren.*

*The Soka Gakkai adopted the usage of Daishonin when it came into being in the 1930s. In Japan, the Soka Gakkai has used the expression Nichiren Buddhism for many years—way before the temple issue—when referring to our practice and Nichiren sects when referring to others. Actually, Nichiren Buddhism has appeared in the *Seikyo Times* as far back as the 1970s.*

*When he speaks to SGI members, President Ikeda generally uses the honorific title Daishonin. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to explain this.*

## 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 Network of Hope for the New Century

New Year's Poem by Daisaku Ikeda

Harbinger of the new millennium  
emerging from the folds  
of the mountain that will be thrust up  
by the new century,  
first comes light—  
the sun is rising.

For 50 years I have lived  
only to circle the globe in travel,  
to fill the skies with the light of peace,  
to erase with that light the shadows of misery  
on the face of the earth.

To you, who with me have climbed  
the mountains of this century  
to you my friends around the world  
I call again, now—  
it's time to take on the ridges and ranges  
of the new century.

Cast a network of hope over the world  
again, a thousand times again  
in and around society, around yourself.  
I call to myself as I call out to you  
again and again, wider and wider  
to cast lines of hope to the world  
and to all of you.

Going westward, traveling eastward,  
I have met the ancient civilizations  
and called upon the new cultures  
for half a century.  
I do not believe in the clash of civilizations.  
Rather, what I have found hidden in the fissures  
are gems in which multitudes have found  
that which charms them.  
If sought, revealed and illumined  
in the light of equality  
that I believe is the wisdom in Buddhist thought  
they will glow once more  
with new life's sheen  
regardless of time or the distance to be crossed.  
And so believing, I have traveled.

Beyond the iron curtain,  
the bamboo curtain as well,  
behind the base rock of ideology—  
if one searches one finds  
the indigenous soul,  
a universal light  
sparkling on that which is human.

In the West and in the East,  
at the crossroads where civilizations meet,  
whatever country, whatever people—  
the ground on which their culture stands  
is underlain with a sparkling gem,  
the cosmic spirit scintillating in global time.

If the "mystic" of the mystic law in which I believe  
is to revitalize,  
then to take each precious jewel  
of the multiplicity that is our world's cultures  
and set them into a connected whole,  
that they may interact and enrich each other  
in a network of values that work  
toward the good of all—  
that must be my lifework.

Such a network of values  
is connected firmly and directly,  
by the trust and friendship  
which you continue to spread around the world.  
In it are woven peace and happiness for humankind.

Linking person to person and thought to thought,  
plying back and forth on the streams of cultures,  
bridging civilizations, the past and the present—  
these are our joint venture.

Over the network of hope  
broadly threaded with Buddhist love of humanity  
is how dawn will arrive,  
to usher in the new century in which  
suppression will change to freedom,  
separation will become fusion,  
and confrontation will turn to coexistence.



SGI President Daisaku Ikeda

Seeking to meet friends and fellow human beings  
I will continue to travel around the world  
because my practice of faith means to create  
the mutual understanding between human beings  
that is the fulfillment of truth and amity.  
All this is ultimately the product of dialogue,  
and again dialogue.  
Therefore, let's join together

in a last challenge to the mountains of this century,  
making our final approach to the summit a happy  
one,  
abundant in hope, as we continue  
to engage in fruitful and rich dialogue.

January 1, 1998

# CROSSING THE THRESHOLD TOGETHER

**I**T'S hard to believe, but here we are celebrating the New Year again. It seems like only yesterday that we saw the calendar change from '96 to '97 and now, in what seems like the blink of an eye, it's already 1998.

I recall days long past—of course I was a lot younger than I am now—when I would eagerly anticipate the beginning of a new year. It is the custom in Japan to exchange gifts on New Year's Day. And we kids could count on lots of them from our relatives, often in the form of money. I couldn't wait for the day to come. It seemed as if it took forever for a year to pass. I still remember how excited I would get! Ah, New Year's, I thought. The beginning of something new.

I still get excited around this time of year, but

**One of my first tasks for the year will be what I call “calendar revolution.” I want to make sure I'm using my time as effectively and as efficiently as possible.**

in a different way. Now I look forward to what new thing I can tackle, what I can achieve this year that I didn't in the year that just ended. But these days I have to move at a good pace to complete all the tasks I've outlined for myself, because as we all know, before you know it, it'll be 1999. That's why I've taken as my personal challenge to learn how to use these coming days and weeks and months as efficiently as possible.

On that note, I am reminded of the goals I set for our organization when I became general director in 1992. That, too, seems like it was only yesterday. I determined then that we would have 100,000 active, happy members. That we'd become acquainted with 1 million friends of the SGI-USA. And that we would completely eliminate the neg-

ative influence of the Nikken sect in the United States. Thanks to all of your great efforts, a lot of progress has been made toward realizing those goals. But, we're not there yet, which is why I've decided to refresh my determination and deepen my prayers so that when 2001 arrives, they'll all have been accomplished.

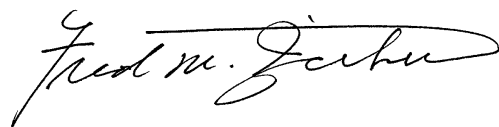
One of my first tasks for the year will be what I call "calendar revolution." I want to make sure I'm using my time as effectively and as efficiently as possible. From that standpoint, I am going to carefully scrutinize every meeting of an administrative nature to make sure I'm not having a meeting for something that could be handled in a memo or with a phone call. And when I find a meeting is necessary, to have an agenda so everyone taking the time to attend will know why we're meeting and what is expected to be accomplished. I can only imagine how much time I might be able to free up. Time I can use to serve the members.

**S**GI President Ikeda often says that he has no time to waste, that even a single moment is precious. When we can look at time in that way, we learn to conserve it—like water in the desert. You don't drink it all in a day. You certainly wouldn't mindlessly pour what might be the last bit into the desert sand. Thinking of the preciousness of time reminds me of Nichiren Daishonin's "Letter to Niike":

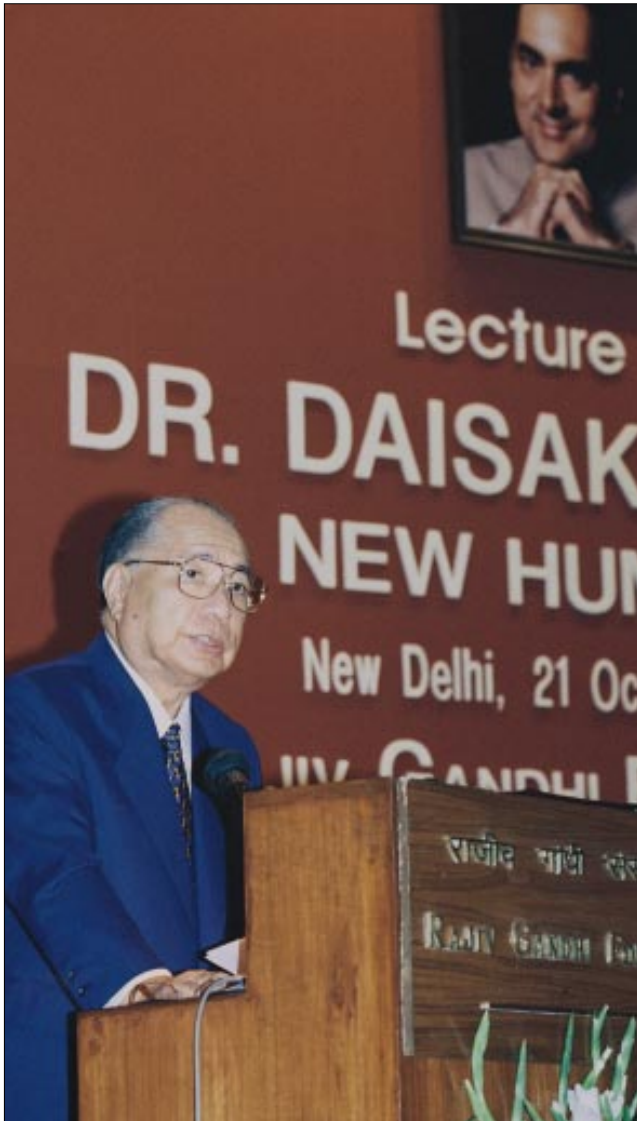
How swiftly the days pass! It makes us realize how short are the years we have left. Friends enjoy the cherry blossoms together on spring mornings and then they are gone, carried away like the blossoms by the winds of impermanence, leaving nothing but their names. Although the blossoms have scattered, the cherry trees will bloom again with the coming of spring, but when will those people be reborn? The companions

with whom we composed poems praising the moon on autumn evenings have vanished with the moon behind the shifting clouds. Only their mute images remain in our hearts. The moon has set behind the western mountains, yet we shall compose poetry under it again next autumn. But where are our companions who have passed away? Even when the approaching Tiger of Death roars, we do not hear. How many more days are left to the sheep bound for slaughter? (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 255)

If it sounds as if I am particularly concerned with time this year, you're quite right. You see, I am keenly aware that we are standing on the threshold of not only a new century, but of a new millennium. I am also mindful that we have the great good fortune to share this destiny with President Ikeda. Some people look at the changing of the millennium with superstition and fear. In fact, the beginning of our present millennium was the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law. Anticipating that time, people facing the year 1000 thought the world would end. But Buddhism, as it did then, dispels fear and gives hope. It is our responsibility to share the Buddhist view of hope with the world—our responsibility, our mission—but most of all, it is our privilege. With that, I bid you all great health and long life so that we can compose poetry under the autumn moon of the year 2001, as we step across the threshold into a new age together.



Fred M. Zaitso  
SGI-USA General Director



# A New Humanism for the Coming Century

*At the invitation of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation's Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, SGI President Ikeda delivered a forty-minute lecture at the foundation's headquarters in New Delhi on October 21, 1997. In his speech, Mr. Ikeda referred to the spiritual values of religion that shine much brighter in contemporary society when illuminated by the light of wisdom that education brings forth. Concerning international relations, he predicted the emergence of three pivotal countries—China, the United States and India—that will play central roles in the twenty-first century.*

IT is indeed both an honor and privilege to be given this opportunity today to speak before this extremely distinguished audience.

I profoundly appreciate the invitation extended to me by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, which seeks to honor and preserve the memory of that great man through its many and various endeavors. I myself cherish sentiments of profound respect for the late prime minister and this intensifies immeasurably

my feelings today.

I should like to express my particular gratitude to the chairperson, Madam Sonia Gandhi, vice chair of Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, Dr. Abid Hussain, and all those whose support and understanding have made this occasion possible.

Twelve years ago, in 1985, I had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in Japan. The memory of that brilliant autumn day

remains fresh in my heart to this moment.

These words of Rajiv Gandhi, spoken before the United States Congress, express the clear and serene gaze that he directed toward the twenty-first century:

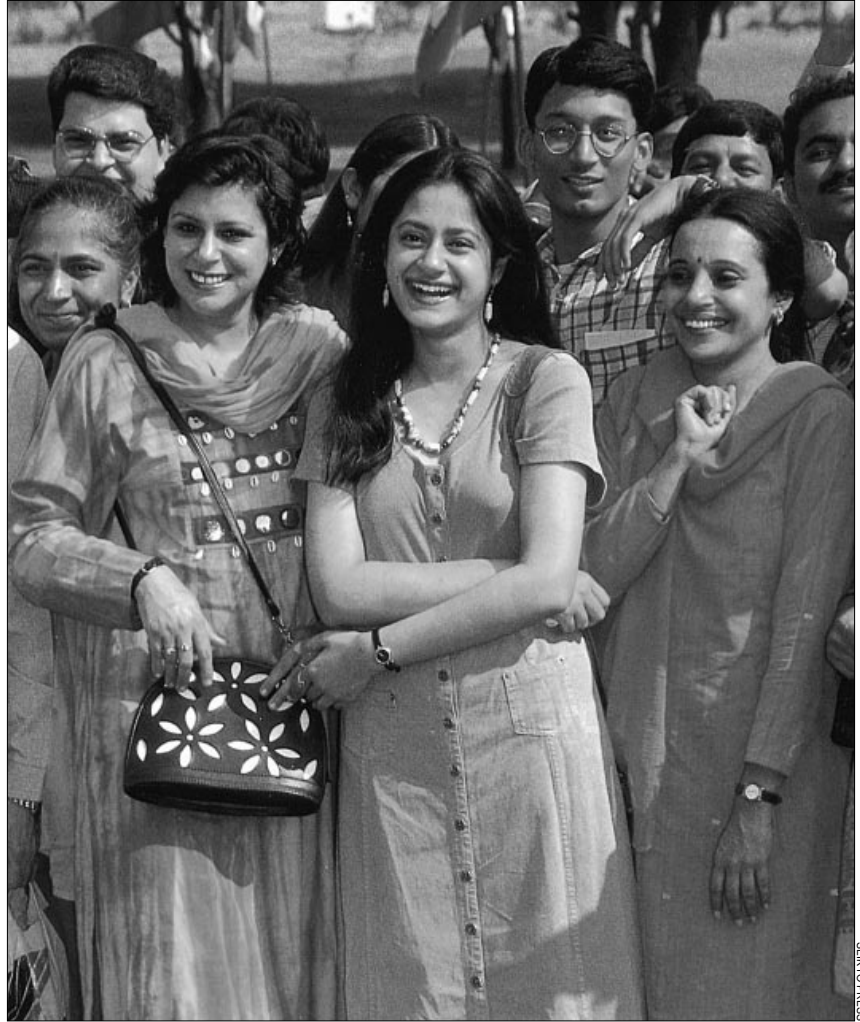
I am young, and I too have a dream. I dream of an India—strong, independent, self-reliant and in the front rank of the nations of the world in the service of mankind.<sup>1</sup>

Rajiv Gandhi, whose eyes were always set on the coming century, had a profound dislike for the old-fashioned, the outdated, the obsolete. This does not mean, of course, merely that he disdained that which lags behind in terms of material civilization. The old-fashionedness that he hated had rather the opposite sense.

Technology has, of course, made extraordinary strides. It was possible for me to arrive in India the same day I left Japan, a trip that, in days past, would have required months or even years. The great historian Arnold Toynbee, with whom I had the privilege of conducting a dialogue, described the salient feature of the modern era as that of "annihilating distance."<sup>2</sup> Over the course of this century, the world has grown steadily closer and "smaller." Today, communications technologies make it possible to connect instantaneously with the entire world.

Despite greatly increased connectedness of this kind, the twentieth century has seen the unprecedented slaughter of humanity by humanity. In other words, the spiritual distance between human beings, far from being "annihilated," has hardly been reduced at all. Humanity has not responded to the new realities. It was this, more than anything, that Rajiv Gandhi considered old-fashioned and out-of-date.

We have all the necessary resources and capabilities to eliminate poverty and hunger from Earth. And yet we persist in squandering vast resources on the development of nuclear



Members from India, Nepal and Sri Lanka attend the opening of the Ikeda Friendship Hall in the Soka Bodhi Tree Garden on the outskirts of New Delhi, October 19, 1997.

and other weapons of mass destruction. Such behavior is also old-fashioned, obsolete.

Humanity is at an impasse. We confront an entirely new reality unrenewed, intransigent. In a world of astonishingly rapid change, we have yet to develop the new ways of living, new ways of thinking, new ways of relating to one another that meet the needs of the new era. This is the central challenge facing the world today. This can be thought of as a demand, a

call for action, echoing back to us from the twenty-first century. No one lent a more attentive ear to this clarion call from the future than Rajiv Gandhi.

Today, while recalling the treasured memory of the visionary prime minister, I would like to share a few thoughts on the subject of a new humanism for the coming century.

From the perspective of the present, the future appears obscured in uncertainty. But if we stand back and take a more

macroscopic view, we can posit the emergence of three pivotal countries—China, the United States and India—that will play central roles in the world of the twenty-first century. This might be likened to the design of ancient, three-legged kettles, which cannot stand on two legs but attain stability on three.

One of the classics of Chinese literature is *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. In it is described the attempt to establish peace amidst a conflict between two powers. This is done by establishing a third country to create a new and peaceful balance. Expanding on that ancient lesson, we can see how a world dominated by two great powers will tend inevitably toward conflict, whereas the emergence of a third can open the way for continuous dialogue and contact, moving the entire world toward peace. This kind of order can be thought of as one ideal or vision for world peace. It can also open the way toward a world federation that would effectively guarantee peace and forestall conflict.

In this sense, India's continued flourishing and development are of undeniably vital importance to world stability. It is for this reason that so many people—myself included—regard with high hopes the sight of India poised for a dramatic leap into the twenty-first century, supported by market economics and advanced technology. There is a powerful sense of expectation for a brilliant new "Indian Renaissance."

At the same time, I believe that India's message of nonviolence is of paramount signifi-

cance to humanity now and in the future. India is already demonstrating the direction toward which the world must move.

One Japanese thinker has described the twentieth century as a century of regrets. Indeed, humanity embarked on this century with gallant stride and filled with confidence in the certainty of progress. What in fact awaited was an era of unprecedented "mega-death," environmental destruction and a growing and shameful disparity between the planet's "haves" and the "have-nots." Where, one has to wonder, did we go wrong? At which turning did we go so fatally astray?

WHEN I consider the psychic landscape of humanity at century's end, the image of Ashoka the Great (acc. c. 273 B.C.E.), India's outstanding ancient sovereign, comes inevitably to mind. Among the countless monarchs our world has known, he was indeed a peerless king among kings. I recall the unstinting praise lavished on this king and his achievements by Professor Toynbee and by Count Coudenhove-Kalergi, an early proponent of European unity. I have also had the pleasure of discussing Ashoka's reign with such leading thinkers as André Malraux, Linus Pauling and Henry Kissinger.

Among the edicts of King Ashoka, there is one in which he expresses his profound remorse and contrition: "That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret..."<sup>3</sup>

What was the cause of his remorse? What could this most powerful king, who united all India, have had to regret?

It was, needless to say, his conquest of Kalinga. This neighboring state was developing rapidly, emerging as a power in its own right, when Ashoka invaded. His forces won an overwhelming victory; the conquest was a complete success. But the suffering that accompanied this victory was also overwhelming, the price paid in life and blood entirely too high. It is said that 100,000 died in battle in Kalinga and 150,000 were taken prisoner. Civilian casualties exceeded these several times over. Untold numbers of people were forced to abandon their homeland for wandering and uncertain lives as refugees.

One can almost hear the heartrending cries and lamentation that filled the earth as people were torn from one another, separated forever—parents from children, wives from husbands, teachers from their students, friend from friend.

In the face of this portrait of hell, King Ashoka felt the torment of an unendurable remorse. What, he must have asked himself, was the purpose of this conquest? To what end did I expand the territory under my control? For what cause was such force exercised? Isn't the purpose of life to be happy? Isn't life precious and irreplaceable? What is war that wreaks such devastation and destruction? Why should people kill one another?

From the great distance of time, I can almost hear the cry of King Ashoka's soul. And yet



Meeting between SGI President Ikeda and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India in November 1985, at the state guest house in Tokyo. Rajiv Gandhi's years as prime minister (1984–1989) were marked by strident changes in India's economy and the reform of its political institutions. His grandfather, Jawaharlal Nehru, was India's first prime minister, and his mother, Indira Gandhi, was prime minister for fifteen years.

our century has seen the sort of tragedy that so profoundly moved King Ashoka repeated a hundred, a thousand times over. It is for this reason, above all others, that we must learn the lessons of Ashoka's change of heart.

Ashoka's remorse was not marked by half measures. He reproached himself relentlessly. And it was then, in a moment's realization, that he saw that the victory of force is not true victory. What it in fact signals, he knew, is defeat as a human being. It is entirely empty and void of value. The great king realized that it is not conquest by force, but conquest by *dharma*, that represents true victory.

Let me note that when I speak of force, I am not referring only to military force, but also to the weight of superior economic might.

The word *dharma* of course has many meanings, including truth, justice and virtue. The poet-sage Rabindranath Tagore said that *dharma* was the word closest to the real sense of civilization. Mahatma Gandhi, father of India's independence, used the Gujarati term *sudharo*, meaning "good conduct," as suggesting the original sense of civilization. Guided by these insights, I would like to offer my own view that *dharma* can best be thought of as genuine civilization, as a path of humanity, as true humanism.

Thus the revolutionary change that took place in the heart of Ashoka the Great transformed the beat of war drums into a symphony of humanism based on *dharma*. The central theme of my own life is this: That a great revolution in just a single individual can change the destiny

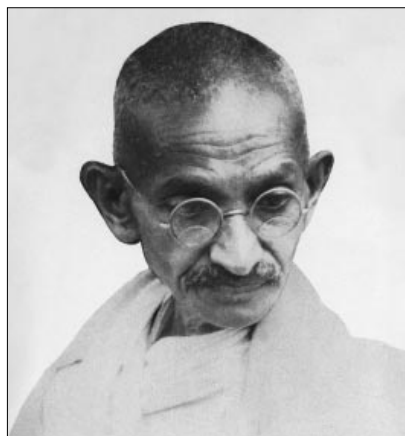
of an entire society and even of humankind. King Ashoka is indeed a model of this principle in action.

King Ashoka was not a dreamer, but was a man of action. "Passive humanism" is a contradiction in terms. The great king commenced an unprecedented experiment based on an entirely new philosophy, a completely new vision.

**H**IS policies focused on the welfare of citizens. Through these policies, he sought to implement the spirit of treasuring life above all else, of accord- ing it the highest value. He constructed medical treatment facilities not only for people, but also for animals. He promoted the cultivation of beneficial medicinal herbs and the planting of roadside trees, thus preserving and protecting the natural envi-



Prime minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964) addresses a crowd at a factory opening, 1952.



Mahatma Gandhi (1869–1948), the leader of India's passive resistance campaign against British rule.

ronment. He encouraged the digging of wells and the construction of rest houses for travelers.

He established the post of minister of women's affairs to respond to the specific needs and requests of women. While he himself was a devoted follower of Buddhism, he never denied, but always respected the spiritual values of all religions. His was an example, rare in the ancient world, of a reign that guaranteed religious liberty.

A strong economic foundation is necessary to support such humanistic policies. To that end, Ashoka improved the transportation network and expanded trade with what is now Greece and the Middle East. At the same time, he endeavored to reduce economic disparity by practicing the economic ethic of equitable distribution that had been demonstrated by Gautama Buddha.

Having attained the wisdom to discern the proper ends for which power should be used, Ashoka acted without hesitation or doubt.

He took positive steps to pro-

mote cultural exchange with other countries. He pursued a policy of peaceful diplomacy, dispatching emissaries of peace west to Syria, Egypt and Macedonia. It is said that in each of the countries these emissaries visited, their compassionate attitude and behavior enabled them to transcend the differences of language and custom. One scholar has described their activities as the "peace corps of the ancient world."

**T**HROUGH these and other acts, the humanism of the great king linked the people of the world in friendship and mutual understanding. His achievements stand unchallenged in the annals of history.

The endeavors of Rajiv Gandhi, the first Indian prime minister to visit China in thirty-four years, and who sought friendship with Pakistan, are a similarly famous example of an inspired diplomacy of peace.

On a number of occasions I have had the pleasure of conferring with Mikhail Gorbachev, former president of the Soviet

Union, the record of our discussions having been published as a book. President Gorbachev has described to me the sentiments behind the Delhi Declaration that he and Rajiv Gandhi issued in November 1986, delineating principles for a world free of violence and nuclear weapons.

He recalled the unconditional opposition to terrorism they voiced at their joint press conference following the Declaration, and reflected that he considered Rajiv a fine and dear friend. President Gorbachev also expressed his profound respect for India, describing her people as possessing a powerful sympathy for the suffering of others and a strong aspiration toward peace, freedom and justice.

I consider King Ashoka, Mahatma Gandhi, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Rajiv Gandhi leaders who sought to implement this aspiration, this yearning for peace, freedom and justice, amidst the political realities of our world. They never, however, adapted the ideals of nonviolence to fit the realities that confronted them. Rather, their efforts were based on the understanding that violence solves nothing, and only makes worse and more intractable any problem. Their efforts were based on the realization that nonviolence is in fact the most realistic policy.

In human society, it is the power of humanity, of humanism, that will exert the greatest, most profound force over the long term. This is only natural.

What, however, is humanism? How can we come to a clearer, more useful understanding of this vitally important concept?

The evolution of the idea of humanism can be analyzed from many different angles. Here, I would like first to note the tradition of individualist humanism that developed in the West over the course of the Renaissance and the Protestant Reformation, becoming the ethical basis for civil society in the modern era. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, as the contradictions and limitations of this mode of humanism became more evident, they gave rise to the experiment of socialist humanism.

WHILE these different forms of humanism succeeded in liberating humanity from its medieval thralldom to the Absolute, humanity thus liberated found itself trapped by its own egotism, by what Buddhism calls the "lesser self." Humanity has come to be ordered about by the dictates of desire and its gratification. The ills that result take the form of the complex of problems facing humanity already referred to: the unraveling of social and community ties, environmental degradation, the growing gap between rich and poor. The depth of the crisis gripping our post-ideological world is powerfully symbolized by the emergence of a wide range of fundamentalism.

What, then, can provide the motivating energy and inspiration to move beyond the present impasse? How can we initiate, with joy and conviction, the work of creating a global civilization of peace?

Here I would like to propose a new humanism, one firmly rooted in an accurate and com-



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The great Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941), an educational, social and religious reformer who counted Albert Einstein and Helen Keller among his friends.

passionate cosmology, as a means of transcending the limitations of humanism to date and showing a way out of the present impasse. My reason for making this assertion is this: Ideology, which in one form or other has been at the heart of modern humanism, tends to emphasize dualism and conflict, producing discrimination and rejection of others. Cosmologies, in contrast, seek to include and embrace others; tolerance is inherent in cosmology.

The *dharma*-based humanism that supported Ashoka's reign is an excellent example of an embracing cosmology. It is succinctly expressed in the fundamental principles of his rule: 1) non-killing, and 2) mutual respect.

WHILE it is probably appropriate to discuss the principle of non-killing with regard to forms of life other than human beings, for the present instant, I would like to assert the minimalist stance that humans should under no circumstance kill other humans. This, I believe, should be in the preambular paragraph of any charter that humanity might choose to adopt in the twenty-first century.

History has been stained by too much blood shed in the name of "justice." The French Revolution, for example, is a seminal event in the development of the modern tradition of humanism, and yet how many innocent people lost their lives to the justice of the guillotine? Likewise, in the experimental stages of socialist humanism, its original intent was betrayed and tens of millions of lives

were sacrificed. This, again, is one of the immovable historical facts of our century.

Such suffering must never be repeated. Thus, the first provision of a new humanism must be an absolute injunction against the taking of human life. In whatever logic or rationale it may be cloaked, "justice" accompanied by violence is empty and false. As Rabindranath Tagore declared throughout his life, any god who demands living sacrifice is a false god.

What, then, is the underlying weakness of the kinds of humanism that have prevailed until now?

While this is not the time or place to attempt a complete and rigorous analysis, I would like to state simply that the fundamental failure of humanism to date has been a failure to fully believe in people and to trust them.

Thus we understand the importance of Ashoka's second policy—of mutual respect. When mistrust of humanity is directed against oneself, one experiences powerlessness. When directed against others, it takes the form of the refusal of dialogue and ultimately violence. Mistrust breeds mistrust. Hatred breeds more hatred. How can this deadly cycle be broken?

Here I believe we need to call forth what might be termed a holistic, or even cosmological, humanism, one that regards the life of the individual human as extending out to and embracing the entire cosmos, and therefore meriting the most profound reverence.

In India this view has flowered in different forms over the

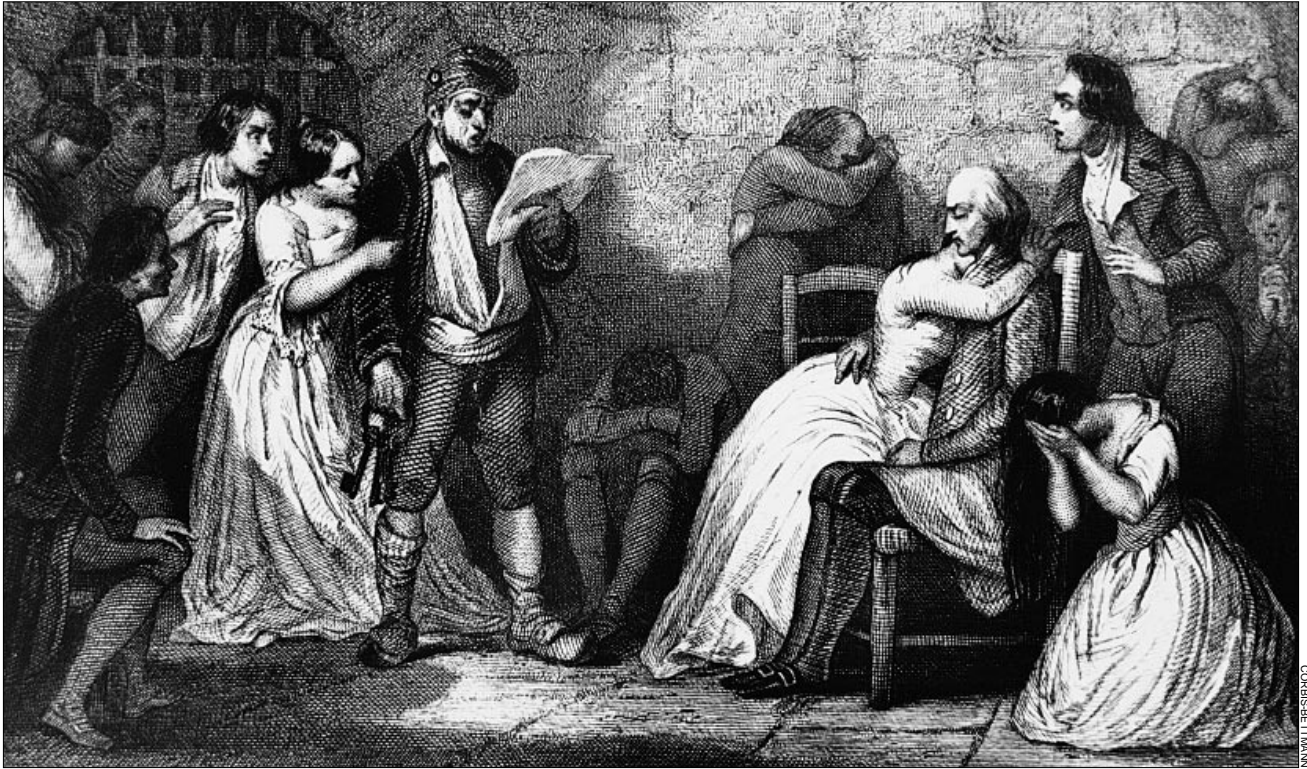
millennia, from the sages of the *Upanishads* to the teachings of Gautama Buddha.

The Lotus Sutra, which stands at the pinnacle of the teachings of Gautama Buddha, represents the ultimate crystallization of this philosophy. This is because it teaches people to abandon their attachment to difference, and urges them to awaken to the "great earth of life," which supports us all. When we stand on that common ground, difference ceases to be the cause of conflict, but instead serves to enrich our experience of life. "The Parable of the Medicinal Herbs" chapter of the Lotus Sutra describes the example of a great variety of trees and vegetation that are nurtured by the same rain, growing luxuriantly from the same earth.

It will not suffice, however, simply to call for a new humanism, or to discuss in abstract terms the possibilities of a cosmologically based humanism. We must discover the means by which to actualize a universal respect for the sanctity of life.

ONE of the most important supports for such an effort must, I believe, be sought in education. Without the ameliorating influence of education, strongly held beliefs, whether political or religious, can quickly succumb to the pitfalls of dogmatism and self-righteousness.

The trend of the times is clearly for religious matters to be left to the discretion of individuals. This is all the more reason education must help assure that religious sentiment does not become self-righteous



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Engravings of the French Revolution. (Top) The calling of the condemned.  
(Bottom) The execution of Louis XVI in 1793.

or intolerant and is always directed toward the most peaceful and valuable outcome. It was, after all, education and intellect that gave Rabindranath Tagore's pro-

found religiosity a universal appeal accessible to the people of the Western world. Nor did he stop at his own education; he established a university and throughout his life devoted

himself to the cause of human development.

Education makes us free. The world of knowledge and of the intellect is where all people can meet and converse. Education

Model of Soka University of America's Orange County campus, located east of Laguna Beach, California. The first phase of construction will be completed in 2000. An independent, private, liberal arts university, SUA is designed to be student-centered; for example, seminar-style classrooms will be conducive to dialogue, with a 12:1 student/professor ratio.

liberates people from prejudice. It frees the human heart from its violent passions. It is education that severs the dark fetters of ignorance about the laws that govern the universe.

Finally, it is through education that we are liberated from powerlessness, from the burden of mistrust directed against ourselves. To awaken the abilities that have been lying dormant within. To arouse and extend the soul's aspiration to become full and complete. Can there be any more sublime experience in life?

The individual who has been liberated from self-doubt, who has learned to trust in him- or herself, is naturally able to believe in the latent capacities of others. One becomes able to look beyond the present appearance of another to perceive and believe in the wondrous treasures hidden within.

Education enables us to look beyond superficial difference to perceive the great earth, the great sea of life that sustains us all. Such are the gifts wrought by education.

The endeavors of Gautama Buddha can be described as essentially educational. The Lotus Sutra includes the phrase



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“to open, to show, to awaken and cause to enter.” The ultimate purpose of Buddhism, then, is to open, to show, to awaken and cause people to enter the infinite realms of wisdom they already possess. This accords perfectly with the methods and objectives of education. Buddhism, in this sense, 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.

**W**HAT 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 their 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.

At the same time that Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were waging the struggle against colonialism, Toda and Makiguchi were fight-

ing against the evils of Japanese militarism. Their resistance led to imprisonment and eventually to Makiguchi's death there at age 73.

Rising above the indescribable grief he felt at the loss of his beloved mentor, Toda discovered, in the confines of his solitary cell and guided by the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and other scriptures, the basis within his own life for a cosmic humanism.

I encountered Josei Toda soon after the end of the war. Remarkably, the date of our first encounter was August 14, 1947, the very eve of Indian independence. We met on the day that Jawaharlal Nehru called on the Constituent Assembly to realize Gandhi's dream to “...wipe every tear from every eye.”<sup>4</sup>

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.

During a short period in 1974, I visited both the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, traveling twice to China that year. At the time, relations between the two countries were extremely tense and, from the standpoint of a concerned private citizen, I urged the leaders of both countries to work for improved relations.

**L**EADING up to my visit to the Soviet Union, in particular, I found myself subject to repeated criticism by those who questioned my motive in visiting a country whose ideology fundamentally denied religion. On each occasion, I responded simply that I was going because there are people there; because the Soviet Union is home to my fellow human beings.

Last year, after visiting the United States, I traveled to Cuba where I was able to build firm bonds of trust and friendship with President Fidel Castro.

It is my belief that, when viewed from the broader perspective of our common humanity, even the barriers posed by mistrust and tension between states are not insurmountable.

When I consider this matter, the crisp and courageous tones of the late Rajiv Gandhi reverberate within:

The single greatest contribution of India to world civilization is to demonstrate that there is nothing antithetical between diversity and nationhood. Through 5,000 years of



Education is the hope of youth everywhere.

living experience, we have demonstrated to the world that our unity in diversity is a vibrant reality.<sup>5</sup>

The task facing our planet on the verge of the twenty-first century is that of realizing the unity of diversity. Now more than ever, it is imperative that humanity learn, with attentive humility, from the invaluable experience and wisdom of India.

India this year celebrates the fiftieth anniversary of independence as the first country in history to be born of nonviolence. In this sense, India is at once the world's oldest country, and the newest. India stands at the forefront of human progress. The grand experiment that is India has not been confined by your borders, but has offered inspiration to people throughout the world. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fight against racism and discrimination is one example, as is the nonviolent revolution that

swept Eastern Europe in 1989.

There is an ancient aphorism to the effect that the deeper the source, the longer the stream. If we wish to see a grand river of peace flow into the infinite future, we must seek out the most profound wellsprings of the human spirit. If we desire an unshakable peace, it must be built on unshakable foundations.

Citing the example of Ashoka the Great, I have sought here to describe the message of peace that I am confident India will continue to broadcast to the world of the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries.

There may be those who say that my outlook is entirely too optimistic. I will not, however, under any circumstance, abandon my faith in humanity. I direct implacable faith toward the inner grandeur of humanity.

When Rajiv Gandhi and I met in Tokyo, we agreed on our common determination to remove the barriers of the heart which separate humankind.

When those walls fall, we see before us the vast expanses of life itself. It is on the great earth of symbiosis that the broad rivers of peace flow, flower gardens of culture bloom, and the great trees of education stretch toward the heavens. In that moment, the prime minister and I found the same melody of peace resonating in our hearts. We felt a connection beyond and unhindered by any superficial difference.

Rajiv Gandhi advanced without fear, toward the realization of his dream. He immersed himself in the midst of his fellow citizens. He offered himself to his dream. He gave everything for the cause of humanism. His example continues to shine brilliantly at this very moment. The light of the magnificent drama of his life and death illuminates the path along which humankind must progress in the coming century.

The Rajiv Gandhi Foundation continues, as heirs to his vision, to pursue the realization of his noble dream. I wish to assure you that, as you do so, you are joined by people of goodwill not only in India, but from throughout the entire world.

In conclusion, I would like to recite a portion of Tagore's "Last Poems," which I have loved since the days of my youth. For I feel this poem gives perfect expression to my own sentiments: Humankind! Follow the example of Rajiv! There you will find peace!

Now has come Man Supreme  
 Man after God's own heart!  
 The world is a-tremble with  
 wonder

And the grass quivers.  
In heaven resounds the  
conch,  
On earth plays the drum of  
Victory—  
The sacred moment has come  
That brings the Great Birth!

The gates guarding the  
moonless night have  
fallen,  
The hill of sunrise rings with  
the call of "Fear not"  
And ushers in the dawn of a  
new life!

The heavens thunder the song  
of Victory:  
"Man has come!"<sup>6</sup>

(Translated from the full text, which originally appeared in the October 23, 1997, issue of the Seikyo Shimbun.)

### Footnotes

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5. Rajiv Gandhi, "Secular India Alone Can Survive," *Selected Speeches and Writings*, vol. 5, p. 32.
6. Rabindranath Tagore, *Wings of Death*, trans. Aurobindo Bose (London: John Murray, 1960), p. 88.
7. Rajiv Gandhi, "Friends in Human Causes," in *Rajiv Gandhi: Selected Speeches and Writings*, 5 vols. (New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1987-91), vol. 1, p. 335.
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# General Lecture Study Material for 1998

THE SGI-USA Study Department has announced the general lecture study material for 1998. It is from the lectures on the writings of Nichiren Daishonin by SGI President Ikeda in his book, *Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*. The SGI president emphasizes in his lectures the humanism of the Daishonin's teachings and how it applies to the present age. The study department has supplied some additional information that is not in the book. In the beginning of his book, Mr. Ikeda states a few words in general about the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, which follow. (To the right is the schedule for 1998 page numbers refer the location of the works in the book).

THE Gosho, the collected writings of Nichiren Daishonin, elucidates the means for all people to attain enlightenment. It is the eternal teaching. The Gosho is a scripture of boundless hope. As long as we continue to study the Gosho and put its teachings into practice, we definitely will never become deadlocked.

"Some Gosho, of course,

are very doctrinal and complex. But we do not necessarily have to understand all of the Daishonin's writings. The important thing is to have a keen desire to read the Gosho and to expose our lives, even for just a short time each day, to Nichiren Daishonin's spirit.

"Having such a seeking mind enables us to securely anchor our lives to the orbit of true happiness, to the path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. And it becomes the engine for advancing kosen-rufu.

"To meet the requests of members, for one year I lectured on "Expedient Means" and "The Life Span of the Thus Come One," the second and sixteenth chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Now begins a series of lectures on the Gosho with the aim of helping members strengthen themselves in the two ways of practice and study.

"I will take up Gosho individually, and may devote more than one installment to particular writings. In the case of longer Gosho, I may limit myself to discussing only a portion. In all instances, my purpose will be to clarify the humanistic philosophy of Buddhism." —*Daisaku Ikeda*

## January / February:

"The Opening of the Eyes," p. 49

## March / April:

"The Opening of the Eyes," p. 59

## May / June:

"Letter to Ko-ama Gozen," p. 95

## July / August:

"Letter to Ko-ama Gozen," p. 107

## September / October:

"A Letter of Condolence," p. 154

## November / December:

"The Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future," p. 178

## Study Material for January • February

# “The Opening of the Eyes”

*(The following passage is taken from the book Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, pp. 49–58, and can also be found in The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2, pp. 186–87.)*

## Spiritual Victory in the Midst of a Great Storm

**A** TOTALLY cloudless sky. An endless sea of blue. My mentor, Josei Toda, once used these images to describe Nichiren Daishonin's life state while in exile on Sado Island:

If it were people like us [who were in exile on Sado], our lives would be in the depths of hell itself. But in the case of Nichiren Daishonin, who was utterly invincible and free from fear, we find that his life from moment to moment was as [vast and serene as] the ocean or the sky.

In “The Opening of the Eyes,”<sup>1</sup> the Daishonin says: “I, Nichiren, am the richest man in all of present-day Japan. I have dedicated my life to the Lotus Sutra, and my name will be

handed down in ages to come” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 151).

In the Daishonin's day, the winters on Sado were a great deal more severe than they are today. And he was living at Tsukahara in a dilapidated shrine called Sanmai-do. Socially, he was an exile. His life was constantly in jeopardy. Under such conditions, with the roar of a lion, he voiced this declaration as a king of the spirit.

Arriving at Tsukahara on November 1, 1271, Nichiren Daishonin began composing lengthy manuscripts with an awesome vigor; the image that comes to my mind is that of a great waterfall. In the second month of the following year, he entrusted a messenger from Shijo Kingo with a Goshō intended for all of his followers

— “The Opening of the Eyes.”

Even amid the blowing snows on Sado, his conviction in the justice of his actions was like a flame. It definitely was not extinguished; rather, his burning spirit to lead all people to happiness blazed all the more brilliantly.

With this writing, he wanted to convey his immense life state to his followers, to show them that only through waging a great life-or-death struggle can one manifest a truly immense state of life. He wanted to establish this truth for all time.

While the original manuscript of “The Opening of the Eyes” is not extant, it is said to have been sixty-six pages long, with sixty-five pages of text and a cover page reading “Opening of the Eyes.”

The title refers to opening the eyes, or the minds, of the Japanese people. In light of the sutras, it is clear that Nichiren Daishonin was truly a person of justice. With this writing, the Daishonin declares that he is the votary of the Lotus Sutra and, hence, the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law.

I hope that, by studying the final section of this writing, we can learn about the Daishonin's towering state of life.

**Question:** When you condemn the evil of the followers of the Nembutsu and Zen sects and arouse their enmity, what merit does that bring?

**Answer:** The Nirvana Sutra says, "If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him or to bring his offense to light, then you should realize that that monk is an enemy of Buddhism from within. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him or exposes his offense, then he is my [the Buddha's] disciple and a true voice-hearer."

Chang-an comments on this as follows: "One who destroys or brings confusion to the Buddha's teachings is an enemy of Buddhism from within. If one befriends another person but lacks the

mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy. But one who reprimands and corrects an offender is a voice-hearer who defends the Buddha's teachings, a true disciple of the Buddha. One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent. Those who reproach offenders are disciples of the Buddha. But those who do not oust offenders are enemies of Buddhism from within."<sup>2</sup> (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 186)

**I**T is one thing if a person does something wrong, but all too often those doing good are vilified and attacked. While completely unreasonable, this is the reality of society.

The great author Leo Tolstoy said: "You cannot live without enemies.... And the fact of the matter is, the more upright you live, the more enemies you will have."<sup>3</sup>

Never has anyone called out for justice as did the Daishonin. Never has anyone fought so hard for the happiness of all people. As a result, he encountered one persecution after another. And, in what was tantamount to a death sentence, he was exiled to Sado Island.

The persecution was directed against his followers, too. Some were imprisoned, others had fiefs taken away and still others were banished. The confusion and unrest among the Daishonin's followers was intense. Fearful, many discarded their faith or simply fell silent.

Some disciples even, with

knowing looks on their faces, criticized their mentor, telling people things like, "If you are more flexible in spreading the teaching, you won't face persecutions like those besetting our revered teacher."

At the end of "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin addresses this. He poses the question: In propagating this teaching, what merit does it bring, what can you gain, if you arouse the enmity of those around you? Citing a sutra passage, the Daishonin replies: Doesn't the Nirvana Sutra say that those seeking to destroy the Law should be reproached and driven away, that their offenses be made clear, that they cannot be simply disregarded? Doesn't it say that people should be reproached for their evil, ousted and their offenses brought to light?

In essence, treating someone who tries to subvert the teachings in this manner is a practice of compassion necessary to protect Buddhism. Therefore, although those who carry this out may encounter persecution, they can definitely attain Buddhahood. And, the Daishonin says, there is no greater merit or benefit than this.

"My disciples," he cries, "do not be afraid!" "Live with pride and dignity, chests out and heads held high, like lion kings!" Out of his immense compassion, he wishes to convey to all his disciples his desire for them to lead good lives and continue advancing along the path of belief that they have resolved to follow.

Buddhism only exists in action. Through action, the

Mystic Law inherent in our lives begins to shine. The Buddhist gods and all Buddhas protect people of action; those who consistently take action for justice are truly happy.

Nichiren Daishonin was stronger than anyone. And

what was the source of his strength? It was his concern for the people.

But it seems that the Daishonin's strength was generally misunderstood. Toward Hei no Saemon and wicked priests, the Daishonin was the

severest foe. Yet he teaches his followers that in spreading the teaching to others, they should conduct themselves courteously. For example, he advised one person to always speak "mildly but firmly in a quiet voice with a calm gaze and an even

## King Ajatashatru

*In his lecture on "The Opening of the Eyes," President Ikeda mentions Shakyamuni Buddha's concern for King Ajatashatru. The story of King Ajatashatru is related in the following:*

**D**URING the time of Shakyamuni, King Ajatashatru ruled the kingdom of Magadha, one of the most powerful regions of India. Ajatashatru's father was King Bimbisara, who became a devoted follower of the Buddha.

Bimbisara and his wife, Vaidehi, desperately wanted to conceive an heir to the throne but had been unable to do so. The king consulted a seer who said that there was a hermit presently living in the nearby mountains who, after he died, would be reborn as Bimbisara's son. Bimbisara was so impatient for an heir that he had the hermit killed. Shortly after, Vaidehi conceived, but the seer foretold that the child would become the king's enemy. This child was Ajatashatru. The Chinese version of his name means "enemy before birth."

In fear of this child, Bimbisara dropped him from a high tower, but Ajatashatru only broke a finger. He was sometimes called "Broken Finger."

According to legend, Shakyamuni met Bimbisara at some point during his search for enlightenment. Impressed with Shakyamuni's noble bearing, the king offered him riches and command of his armies. Shakyamuni replied that he was only seeking the truth of enlightenment and refused the generous offer. The king then requested that when Shakyamuni found

the truth he was seeking that he return to Magadha and teach it to the king. After Shakyamuni's awakening, he did indeed return and the king became his follower.

When Ajatashatru was a young man, he fell under the influence of an enemy of Shakyamuni's, Devadatta. Devadatta told Ajatashatru the story of his birth and convinced him to turn against his father, the king. Ajatashatru had both his parents imprisoned and assumed the throne under the evil council of Devadatta.

Eventually, Ajatashatru became seriously ill and came to regret the treatment of his father. However, by the time Ajatashatru's men arrived to release his father, Bimbisara had died. According to several accounts, Bimbisara either starved to death or took his own life.

Tormented over the death of his father, Ajatashatru's body broke out in boils and it was predicted that he would die an early death on the seventh day of the third month. On the advice of his physician, he sought out Shakyamuni Buddha who taught him the doctrines of the Nirvana Sutra, enabling him to change his karma and prolong his life. After the death of the Buddha, Ajatashatru assisted in the gathering of Buddhist scriptures in what is known as the First Council. □

Buddhism only exists in action. Through action, the Mystic Law inherent in our lives begins to shine. The Buddhist gods and all Buddhas protect people of action; those who consistently take action for justice are truly happy.

expression" (MW-4, 122).

Again, in his landmark treatise the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," which takes the form of a dialogue between a traveler and a host, the host (representing the Daishonin) never at any point raises his voice. On the contrary, when the guest becomes agitated, the host soothes him, smiles brightly and tenaciously continues the dialogue. We can take it that the Daishonin depicts the host in such a way because this was how he himself conducted dialogue.

If we examine the Hoto chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we find Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha and the various Buddhas from the ten directions who are emanations of Shakyamuni Buddha gathering together. And why? As the sutra itself says, "Each ... has come to this place on purpose to make certain the Law will long endure" (LS11, 177). Shakyamuni, Taho and the other Buddhas intend to insure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra so that it can be made available to every

single living being, the children of the Buddha, in times to come. We may surmise from this that their concern and compassion are even greater than that of a father and mother who see their only child inflicted with great suffering. Honen, however, indifferent to their pain, would tightly shut the gates to the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law so that no one would have access to it. Like a person who tricks a demented child into throwing away his treasure, he induces people to discard the Lotus Sutra, a shameless thing to do indeed!

If someone is about to kill your father and mother, shouldn't you try to warn them? If a bad son who is insane with drink is threatening to kill his father and mother, shouldn't you try to stop him? If some evil person is about to set fire to the temples and pagodas, shouldn't you try to stop him? If your only child is gravely ill, shouldn't you try to cure him with moxibustion treatment? To

fail to do so is to act like those people who see but do not try to put a stop to the Zen and Nembutsu followers in Japan. As Chang-an says, "If one befriends another person but lacks the mercy to correct him, one is in fact his enemy." (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 186-87)

#### The Buddha Yearns To Save Those Most Miserable

WITH what intention do Shakyamuni, Taho and Shakyamuni's emanations, the Buddhas of the ten directions, gather in one place in "Emergence of the Treasure Tower" (*Hoto*), the eleventh chapter of the Lotus Sutra? They do so entirely out of their desire to ensure the future propagation of the Lotus Sutra, to see to it that the Lotus Sutra is made available to all living beings, who are all children of the Buddha, in the future.

The Nirvana Sutra relates that just before Shakyamuni died, he lamented: "I will shortly die. The matter of King Ajatashatru is my only misgiving."

King Ajatashatru was for many years bitterly hostile toward Shakyamuni, and even

tried to kill him. He had murdered his own father, the king, to take over the throne. But even as king, inwardly his life was impoverished and empty. Shakyamuni was deeply pained by the thought of Ajatashatru's unhappiness.

A disciple then asked Shakyamuni, "If the Buddha's compassion is directed toward all beings equally, then why are you concerned only about King Ajatashatru?"

Shakyamuni answered: "Consider the case of a couple that has seven children. The parents love all their children equally and without discrimination. But if one child falls ill, won't the parents be most concerned about that sick child?"

"I will definitely not abandon—I will not forget—the person who is the most miserable. Rather, I will try hardest of all to save that person." This is the Buddha's conviction.

Nichiren Daishonin strove to save all the people of Japan, including those who had persecuted him and even exiled him to Sado.

President Toda said, "Because of the Daishonin's love for the people of Japan, he directly accepted the onslaught of the three powerful enemies, thinking nothing of the great persecutions that befell him time and

again." The Daishonin, while on Sado, goes so far as to say, "I pray that before anything else I can guide to the truth the sovereign and those others who persecuted me" (MW-1,117).

What a magnanimity of spirit!

From the time he declared the establishment of his teaching, the Daishonin never retreated a step in his great and merciful struggle for the people, whom he loved as his own children.

In "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin indicates his frame of mind prior to establishing his teaching on April 28, 1253, saying he was fully aware that if he did not speak out and proclaim the correct Buddhist teaching for the Latter Day, he "would be lacking in compassion" (MW-1, 95).

To spread this Buddhism would mean encountering great obstacles. Had he not spoken out, he could well have led a peaceful and secure existence—but to have done so, he says, would have been lacking in compassion.

No matter how compassionate some might appear, if they fail to take action it is the same as if they have no compassion; they lack compassion.

The opposite of compassion is "false friendship"—falsely

befriending another. This term clearly mirrors the state of society today. President Toda proclaimed: "People's lives today lack any sense of compassion.... Isn't a lack of compassion the prime characteristic of the present age?"

Society today is very cruel and unforgiving. In this compassionless society, SGI members are working to relieve people of their sufferings and impart true joy, while proclaiming the truth from the very depths of their lives out of genuine concern for others.

Through our efforts at dialogue, through our actions, we are fundamentally changing a society that lacks compassion and is awash with false friendship.

We are transforming the destiny of our society, which has a tendency to be discriminatory and lacking in compassion. We are sending the sunlight of spring to a society that is locked in a frigid winter. We are thawing people's hearts with a warm current of humanity.

I am confident that, without a doubt, the Daishonin most highly praises all of you who are steadfastly carrying through with the bodhisattva practice of compassion as true disciples and as "followers who share my spirit." □

1. "The Opening of the Eyes" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 186–237; MW-2, 59–188), written in February 1272 when the Daishonin was 51. Editor's Note: The *Gosho* text here may differ in places from what appears in the *Major Writings* or other previously published

translations. This is so that the wording of the English text will accord more smoothly with the modern Japanese translation of the original Japanese *Gosho*. (The author is using a modern Japanese rendering of the classical Japanese original as the basis of his lec-

tures in this series.)

2. "Nehangyo Sho."

3. Translated from the Japanese: *Leo Tolstoy, Torusutoi nikkisho* (Diaries of Leo Tolstoy), trans. Yoshitaro Yosemura (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1935), p. 112.

# Courage To Oppose Injustice: An Expression of Compassion for the People

**I**N “The Opening of the Eyes,” Nichiren Daishonin quotes the following passage from the Nirvana Sutra:

If even a good monk sees someone destroying the teaching and disregards him, failing to reproach him, to oust him or to bring his offense to light, then you should realize that monk is an enemy of Buddhism from within. But if he ousts the destroyer of the Law, reproaches him or exposes his offense, then he is my [the Buddha’s] disciple and a true voice-hearer” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 186).

The Daishonin quotes this passage in many other writings as well to illustrate the correct

attitude toward the corruption of the Buddhist teachings. His message is clear. We must reveal distortions by “the destroyer of the Law” and rebuke him or her to protect the integrity of Buddhism and its practitioners.

But when confronting someone who is clearly attempting to destroy the teachings of Buddhism, we may still feel uncomfortable even though we are following exactly what the Daishonin teaches. The image of a strict and even combative Buddhist conflicts with our image of a person of serene composure helping the distressed.

Through this sutra passage, however, the Daishonin shows us another aspect of being a

Buddhist—someone who is unflinching in the face of “the destroyer of the Law.” However, we shouldn’t confuse a person who is a “destroyer of the Law” with those he has deceived. As demonstrated in many of the Daishonin’s letters to the ordinary people, it is essential for those who practice Buddhism to extend their warmth and concern to the suffering and to pray for their happiness. The Daishonin, however, points out that when the integrity of Buddhism and thus the happiness of the people are endangered, Buddhist practitioners should not allow themselves to be victimized. In the short run, to be a victim is an easier path. Victims can always blame others for their misery.

The Daishonin points out that when the integrity of Buddhism and thus the happiness of the people are endangered, Buddhist practitioners should not allow themselves to be victimized.

By not asserting themselves, they need not put themselves to the test, thus assuring neither a possibility of failure nor responsibility for their lives.

When reading the Daishonin's writings, we can see that he was unyielding when it came to those who would subjugate the people and lead them to unhappiness by distorting the teachings of Buddhism. But when it came to his followers and the populace in general, his compassion was unmatched.

In "The Opening of the Eyes" he states:

When it comes to understanding the Lotus Sutra, I have only a minute fraction of the vast ability that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo possessed. But as regards my ability to endure persecution and the wealth of my compassion for others, I believe they would hold me in awe." (MW-2, 100)

The Daishonin encourages us to take an unyielding stance when it comes to the integrity of Buddhism. Both aspects of a Buddhist, being gentle and generous on one hand while strict and strong on the other,

derive from the most important Buddhist value—compassion. In this respect, SGI President Ikeda gives us a valuable insight:

To take a strict stance in good and evil and to show generosity toward others—these two things are in no way incompatible and are essentially part of the same whole.

Let's suppose, for example, that someone eats poisonous mushrooms and is rushed to a doctor. Irrespective of whom the patient may be, the doctor naturally exhausts all possible means to save the person and also offers sincere words of encouragement. This, we might say, is an example of "generosity toward others."

It is also likely, however, that the doctor will warn the patient not to eat harmful mushrooms in the future. I am sure there is no doctor who would stand by indifferently while the patient declares, "But poisonous mushrooms are delicious; I want to eat them again." This corresponds to "taking a strict stance toward the Law."

In both these instances, the doctor is motivated by his

compassion and commitment to removing the patient's suffering. This is also the behavior of a Buddhist. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 204-05)

Opposing injustice is an expression of one's compassion for the people. In fact, unless we are strong and resolute enough to stand up to injustice, no matter how much kindness we show to others, it is merely cowardice disguised as compassion.

To condemn injustice forces us to reflect on the same tendency within our own lives. It is hypocritical to condemn the wrongs in others without looking at ourselves to see if we are guilty of the same offense. It is far easier to avoid confronting injustice because then we are not forced to examine our own lives.

But, in "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin admonishes us against such cowardice. Only a person courageous enough to oppose injustice can be truly compassionate. □

*By SGI-USA Study Department*

# Maintaining a Positive Attitude in the Face of Obstacles

By Craig Tachibana  
Honolulu, Hawaii



I HAD a major turning point in my life in 1997, as I faced nine months of unemployment. This coincided with my efforts regarding the temple issue after I heard Soka Gakkai Vice President Eiichi Wada encourage us to share our understanding with others.

In his thesis on "The Opening of the Eyes," Nichiren Daishonin explains that taking courageous action against evil is a compassionate act and necessary to protect Buddhism. To help members develop a passion to fight evil themselves was my motivation as I traveled around the islands. As President Ikeda stated: "Logic and eloquence alone will not touch a person's heart ... you need compassion and sincerity in speaking to others ... words coming from your heart can move the hearts of others." (*Daily Guidance*, vol. 4, p. 151)

As I faced the reality of being laid off from one of Hawaii's largest real estate developers in October 1996, I was not afraid. Fear would come later.

At that time the economy of Hawaii was stagnating and even now still continues to decline. Jobs related to real estate development and construction industry that constituted my background were unstable and scarce. Fortunately my wife had a stable job.

In my twenty-two years of Buddhist practice, I had many experiences of getting good jobs. What I had learned from these experiences was that in essence, if one builds fortune in life through this Buddhist practice, a specific job could be found.

While chanting though, I did wonder how things were going to turn out. What came to my mind frequently was the question: "What am I going to learn from this?" I realized that it wasn't simply a job question any more, but a battle as to whether I could continue to live in Hawaii and maintain my living standards.

During this time, I qualified for a federally funded vocational training program, which allowed me to take many computer training classes. My daily

routine included attending computer classes, looking for jobs, writing resumes, chanting and doing activities.

I began to understand that because the economic situation in Hawaii had deteriorated so much, in order to get a job, I had to change dramatically both in qualifications and in attitude to compete with the multitudes at the interview table. Getting a job now required a very upbeat, positive, super optimistic, highly qualified applicant with an enthusiasm that would fill the interview room.

I chanted, went to interviews and chanted again. Even my friends prayed that I would get a job. However, days, weeks and months passed. Reality grew grim and hope hung upon hope.

I had always thought that I was an optimistic person, because of my leadership experience in the SGI-USA since my youth and my many years of practice. I was wrong.

Getting out of bed each morning with hope and joy,

chanting daimoku and being cheerful became very arduous.

Through chanting I realized that I had to learn how to be optimistic, or else I could fall into the emotional pit of depression and anxiety, if I wasn't there already. Being optimistic did not mean just being positive. Optimism required that I catch myself as soon as I start to slip or slide a bit into negativity. I needed to push and push and fight back to being positive and optimistic.

I learned that there are no degrees to being optimistic. I was either one hundred percent optimistic or I was falling down toward negativity. I learned this firsthand every morning I got up as the days wore on.

Optimism required my constant vigilance to fight the negative nature in my life in order to stay on top and not slip or fall off the cliff into any negativity.

Soon, learning to be optimistic every day became the real battle. Getting a job became secondary because there were no options on that issue—if I was not optimistic, I could project that at my interviews and I would not be selected no matter what my abilities were.

According to Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, we live in this *saha* world—the world of endurance—where we must endure all types of suffering. So I came to understand that I needed to learn now to enjoy myself as I went through this painful experience, because this is what life is and can be about. Through chanting I

began to see beauty in the world. Living in this world is a great benefit, a great stage where Buddhas can take action.

I chanted, and asked, "What should I learn to fear in this world?" The answer that came to me was, "To fear being negative." So whenever I caught myself being negative, I learned to respond to that fear and start chanting, as if I were running away from a monster in a bad dream. This slide or fall into negativity had to be feared like the plague.

I challenged myself to be cheerful and optimistic, even if I had to act the part like an actor on a stage until it became second nature. In my unemployed state, I had no choice because I could fall into the chasm of hopelessness. It was either or—a no brainer. I could not afford to fall into the chasm because doing so would drag my wife down, too.

After nine months of unemployment, several qualifying tests and a seven-member panel interview, in July 1997, I received a job offer from the Hawaiian Electric Company, the largest electric utility company in Hawaii. The position offers opportunities for advancement and much more security for the future. My experience with the telephone company, my many computer courses, and my positive and confident responses during the panel interview were plus factors for my employment.

To me, Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism signifies total jubilation or simply the "celebration of life." SGI President Ikeda

talked about Ananda, a disciple of Shakyamuni Buddha, whose name means "jubilation." He says:

Ananda stands for the great joy of life, which wells up from within through chanting the daimoku of the Mystic Law. Joy of faith overflowing in our lives or a rushing stream of energy and vibrancy emerging from the depths of our being—this is the kind of invigoration in life which we can enjoy by practicing the Mystic Law.

Only when you challenge obstacles burning with strong and unflinching faith can you establish a life of indestructible joy. That is, only thus can you develop the life of Ananda of the Mystic Law.

A true leader of Buddhism is one who wraps himself and fills others with the brilliance of joy. His heart full of joy at being able to expound the teachings of Buddhism, he causes those around him to feel joy in the depths of their lives. Just as sunlight burns away dark clouds, such a person gives hope and sense of security to all those he meets and leads them to rejoice in faith.

This is what it means to be a Buddhist leader. This is all the true spirit of the Soka Gakkai. (September 1988, *SGI Graphic*, p. 8)

I believe that through my own suffering, I have become more compassionate and gained the confidence to carry out an optimistic and joyful Buddhist practice. □

# Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra

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



*This is the twenty-fifth installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra between SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and Vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the February 1997 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.*

*The grand flow of kosen-rufu in the postwar era developed from second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda's realization while in prison: "I am a Bodhisattva of the Earth." In this discussion, their third on the "Emerging from the Earth" (fifteenth) chapter, they discuss the identity of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, what it means to be "of the same mind as Nichiren," and the truly revolutionary view of the human being found in the Lotus Sutra.*

## 25 "I Am a Bodhisattva of the Earth"—the Discovery of the Eternal Self

**Haruo Suda:** This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of your taking faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism, President Ikeda. It seems to me that over the course of these fifty years, you have actualized the principle of how the human revolution of one person can generate a current that can effect a change in society, the country, and the entire world.

**Takanori Endo:** It's as though you yourself have enacted the core principles of the Lotus Sutra's essential teaching. You've accomplished the "drama of the transformation of life" on the plain of reality.

**Katsuji Saito:** As a disciple, I cannot help but feel boundless appreciation for all that you've done, and for your determination to carry on without fail.

**Daisaku Ikeda:** It has been fifty years of fierce struggle amid gale-force winds. It has been fifty years during which I have run tirelessly ahead together with President Toda.



SEIKYO PRESS

SGI's Maya Chorus from the Yucatan Peninsula. In this month's dialogue, SGI President Ikeda states: "By struggling against difficulties, we polish our own clouded hearts and fuse with eternal life. We might think of it as gaining self-mastery; it's a matter of harmonizing one's life, as though tuning a musical instrument, with the eternal rhythm of the Mystic Law."

In everything, President Toda has been my prime point. And through this unity with him, I have won. President Toda once said: "We have to bring about a great revolution. It's not a revolution that will be accomplished through force of arms or power. We have to bring about the human revolution, which is a bloodless, peaceful revolution. This is the true revolution."

We, a group of people who were scorned as a "gathering of the poor and the sick," have accomplished a revolution of the people, by the people and for the people. And we have done this without relying on power or wealth. We have embraced each person, and provided each the encouragement and the means to become prosperous and healthy. Today, more than 10 million friends around the world are advancing along this golden path of human revolution.

**Endo:** The fact that the Soka Gakkai was scorned as a "gathering of the poor and the sick" is proof that the light of the Soka Gakkai has indeed reached those suffering the most. Dr. Dong-Hoon Kim, director of Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center in Osaka, commented that for

a religious body that is working to help people, to be called a "gathering of the poor and the sick" is the highest honor.

**Saito:** He commented that this proves the merit of the Soka movement.

**Suda:** This seems to perfectly match the image of bodhisattvas dynamically emerging from below the earth. Of course, "below" doesn't mean the underside of society; rather, it indicates the well-spring of life itself, the Mystic Law.

**Saito:** I'm not sure that these two concepts can be entirely separated. So many of the members in the early days of our movement were people who had nothing on which to rely. Literally starting from zero, they were people who had no recourse other than to tap their own inherent strength and ability. Also, it seems likely that for precisely this reason they were quick to realize the greatness of faith in the Lotus Sutra, which enabled them to transform the state of their lives.

**Ikeda:** They had neither the "armor" of authority,

the “shield” of learning, nor the “sword” of wealth or status. No avenue was available to them other than that of struggling to summon forth their inherent inner strength. They had no alternative but to stand on their own two feet and forge a solidarity of humanism.

### The SGI Is a “Gathering of Bodhisattvas”

**Endo:** I recall an address that Professor Su Dongtian of Shenzhen University in China gave at a lecture sponsored by the SGI of Hong Kong.

[Titled, “The Twenty-first Century and Buddhism—SGI President Ikeda’s Buddhist Thought and the Civilization of the Twenty-first Century,” it was held at the Hong Kong Culture Centre in September 1996.]

Characterizing the present as a time when most people are controlled by cravings and desires, Professor Su asserted that the “conscientious wisdom” of people such as yourself, Mr. Ikeda, was a bright light guiding humankind toward the future. He credited you with having created many “gatherings of bodhisattvas,” mentioning the members of the Soka Gakkai in Japan and of the SGI of Hong Kong.

Professor Su further noted that the SGI is quite a unique organization in that its members are neither motivated in their activities by concern for profit or by ideology, nor bound by a set of rules or a contract. Instead, ties of the heart and friendship, entirely free of any coercion or external pressure, form the basis of members’ association.

**Ikeda:** He really sees things very clearly.

Everything comes from the self-directed power of the people themselves. We have succeeded in helping people cultivate their own “inner power.” This is a remarkable achievement. And therein lies the SGI’s underlying strength. It simply could never happen that so many people would carry on such vigorous activities over such a long time merely on the directive of some authority figure. The SGI’s success in facilitating the empowerment of the people is truly the actualization of the Lotus Sutra’s teaching of “emerging from the earth.”

**Suda:** The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are not god-like beings who descend from the sky. Rather, they leap forth from the earth. This gives us a sense of the importance that the Lotus Sutra places on human beings.

### A Gathering of Bodhisattvas Who “Leap Forth”

I beg the most honored of two-legged beings to  
explain  
where they have come from,  
what causes and conditions bring them together!  
Huge in body, with great transcendental powers,  
unfathomable in wisdom,  
firm in their intent and thought,  
with the power of great perseverance,  
the kind living beings delight to see—  
where have they come from?” (LS15, 216)<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \*

These great bodhisattvas  
for countless kalpas  
have practiced the Buddha wisdom.  
All have been converted by me;  
I caused them to set their minds on the great way.  
These are my sons,  
they dwell in this world....” (LS15, 219–20)

**Endo:** Speaking of leaping forth from the earth, Nichiren Daishonin says, “When Bodhisattva Jogyo [Superior Practices] emerged from the earth, he leapt forth joyfully....” (MW-5, 161).

There are transcriptions of the Lotus Sutra, even of Kumarajiva’s Chinese translation, in which the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter is titled “Leaping Forth from the Earth.” This variation is found even in copies of the Lotus Sutra included in the *Taisho Shinshu Daizo Kyo* (New Compilation of the Buddhist Canon in the Taisho Era [1912–26]), a collection of virtually all the sutras that have been translated into Chinese. A copy of the Lotus Sutra that was unearthed at Dunhuang in China also reads “leap forth” instead of “emerge.”

**Ikeda:** I see. It seems that “leaping forth” is a fitting image for the appearance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. After all, they do appear on the scene fully aware of their mission to spread the Mystic Law. They don’t come forth reluctantly because Shakyamuni told them to; rather, the Bodhisattvas

of the Earth leap forth dancing exuberantly with the sense: "Our time has come at last!"

**Saito:** There are several places in the Goshō, too, where the Daishōnin uses the phonetically identical "leap forth" in place of "emerge."

**Ikeda:** It is by practicing with the self-motivated faith to "leap forth" that we can attain eternal happiness.

President Toda explained the supreme benefit of faith as follows:

Attaining Buddhahood means achieving the state in which we are always reborn overflowing with abundant and powerful life force; we can take action to our heart's content based on a profound sense of mission; we can achieve all our goals; and we possess good fortune that no one can destroy. Because we can lead tens, hundreds, thousands, tens of millions of lives in this way, our happiness truly knows no bounds. Someone who does not aspire for such a life of happiness, and who instead greedily seeks out miniscule joys, is truly pitiful.<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of faith is to realize a state of eternal happiness. This existence is as fleeting as a dream. We practice faith in order to awaken from this dream and firmly establish a state of eternal happiness in the depths of our lives during this lifetime. That is what it means to "attain Buddhahood in this lifetime." And that's why, as I always say, we must exert ourselves to the utmost in faith.

What, then, is necessary to achieve Buddhahood? Nichiren Daishōnin says, "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (MW-1, 93). Those who struggle for *kosen-rufu* with the same spirit as the Daishōnin are the true Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Everything in the cosmos moves along its own path in exquisite harmony. Just as the earth naturally follows its own orbit, so too is *kosen-rufu* like the revolution of a planet around the sun. In the same manner, our individual human revolution is like the rotation of a planet on its axis. These two motions are inseparable.

The SGI represents the "forces of the Buddha." It is only natural, therefore, that we are attacked by "devils." For, as the Daishōnin says,

"The Buddha and Devadatta are like a form and its shadow—in lifetime after lifetime, they are never separated" (MW-2, 170 [195]).<sup>3</sup> We have to hunt out, beat down and defeat negative forces. This is the spirit of *shakubuku*.<sup>4</sup>

When we are "of the same mind as Nichiren," what can we possibly have to fear? Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, never retreated a single step, even when they were under attack by the militarist authorities during the war. They continued advancing straight ahead with the "spirit of the lion king," which is the spirit of Nichiren Daishōnin.

Just as the earth naturally follows its own orbit, so, too, is *kosen-rufu* like the revolution of a planet around the sun. In the same manner, our individual human revolution is like the rotation of a planet on its axis. These two motions are inseparable.

**Endo:** That was where the Soka Gakkai and the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood decisively parted ways. The members of the priesthood, far from being "of the same mind as Nichiren," trampled the Daishōnin's spirit underfoot out of fear of persecution.

#### Enduring Hardship on Account of Faith Equals Attaining Buddhahood

**Ikeda:** It was in prison that President Toda attained his enlightenment, which has become the prime point of our movement. This is a key point.



A string of prayer beads, which Josei Toda made of paper caps from milk bottles while in prison; and the portion of the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings he had been contemplating. Toda attained his revelation that the Buddha is life in early March 1944. He had his revelation as to his own identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth in November of that same year.

He was imprisoned on account of his faith in the Lotus Sutra. In light of the Gosho, "The Four Debts of Gratitude,"<sup>5</sup> this is comparable to reading the Lotus Sutra with one's life constantly throughout each day without a moment's rest.

It was during the course of his imprisonment that President Toda had the instantaneous realization: "I am a Bodhisattva of the Earth!" He carried out his human revolution while undergoing great persecution. Enduring difficulties on account of faith equals attaining enlightenment.

In truth, he proved with his life the golden words, "If you are of the same mind as Nichiren, you must be a Bodhisattva of the Earth." Strictly speaking, unless we encounter difficulties we cannot be said to be genuinely "of the same mind as Nichiren."

President Toda's enlightenment in prison is our eternal prime point. At that moment, the Lotus Sutra was revived and the sun of "human revolution" dawned on the modern age. Although in the deep darkness of the time no one realized it, dawn had already broken in President Toda's life.

**Saito:** President Toda left behind statements of various kinds about the enlightenment he experienced while imprisoned. It was during the early winter of 1944. At the time, he was continually pondering the Lotus Sutra while chanting earnest daimoku in an effort to grasp the sutra's essential principles.

**Endo:** He would walk about in his solitary cell saying to himself, "I have to know! I simply must understand!" Whether asleep or awake, he continued to seriously grapple with the sutra's text. That is how President Toda describes the process leading to his enlightenment in his novel *The Human Revolution*.

He goes on to relate how one morning, as he was on the verge of reaching 1,800,000 daimoku since the start of the year, he had a mystic experience while chanting daimoku in quiet concentration that seemed to refresh him in both body and mind. As he describes it in the novel [in the third person]:

It was neither a dream nor an illusion.... In terms of time, it may have lasted for several seconds or for several minutes, or even for several hours....

He [Toda] really had no way of knowing. He discovered himself at the Ceremony in the Air among a great multitude of beings incalculable in number, reverently bowing to the Dai-Gohonzon that shone before him with a brilliant golden hue....

When he tried to cry out, "This isn't a lie! I am here right now!" he found himself seated in a chair in his solitary cell. The morning sun shone fresh and bright.<sup>6</sup>

In other words, he perceived himself present in the realm of the Ceremony in the Air described in the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter.

**Ikeda:** President Toda's enlightenment at that moment has become the prime point of world kosen-rufu. President Toda's great conviction, "I am a Bodhisattva of the Earth!" is the spring at the source of the great river of kosen-rufu.

**Suda:** He also wrote:

The Lotus Sutra that I see now is the same Lotus Sutra that until recently I found impenetrable to my understanding no matter how I exerted myself. However, now I can read it and draw forth its meaning as easily and accurately as if I were looking at something in the palm of my hand. Sensing the wonder of this, I am filled with a sense of immense gratitude; it is as though I have recollected a teaching that I learned in the distant past.<sup>7</sup>

And he made this determination: "My future has been decided. I will devote the remainder of my existence to spreading this most exalted of teachings—the Lotus Sutra!"

**Ikeda:** It was a truly mystic revelation. Yet, for President Toda, it was an unmistakable experience. He read with his life the passage, "The assembly at Eagle Peak which continues in solemn state and has not yet dispersed."<sup>8</sup>

**Saito:** Nichijun Shonin (1898–1959) praised President Toda as the "vanguard of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth," and credited him with having called into appearance in the world the Bodhisattvas of the Earth making up the Soka

Gakkai's membership of 750,000 households. He also recognized the number 750,000 as significant because of its association with the phrase "the seven characters or five characters" of Nam-myoho-rence-kyo.<sup>9</sup>

The "Emerging from the Earth" chapter could therefore truly be called the lifeline of the SGI.

### We Can "Enter the Treasure Tower" Through Faith

**Suda:** What is the relationship of President Toda's awakening to the fact that he is a Bodhisattva of the Earth to his earlier revelation that "the Buddha is life"?

**Saito:** President Toda attained his revelation that the Buddha is life in early March 1944, at a time when he had been contemplating passages from the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings (*Muryogi Sutra*). Specifically, he was pondering the matter of the actual nature of the Buddha that transcends the so-called thirty-four negations: "His body neither existing nor not existing, neither caused nor conditioned, neither self nor other...."<sup>10</sup>

He had his revelation as to his own identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth in November of that same year, or about eight months later. During that interval, President Toda continued chanting daimoku and pondering the sutras.

**Endo:** It seems to me his realization that the Buddha is life has something of an intellectual flavor to it. His awakening to his identity as a Bodhisattva of the Earth seems to represent a deepening of this earlier revelation—such that he experienced it, not intellectually, but at the very core of his being. In that sense, I think we can see a link between his revelation that the Buddha is life and his revelation eight months later that he is a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

**Ikeda:** While the total content of President Toda's enlightenment is beyond words, it is a fact that he was thrown into prison on account of his belief in the Lotus Sutra, and that he maintained his belief while enduring persecution. This in itself amounts to reading the Lotus Sutra with one's life—with the totality of one's being.

Enduring hardships on account of faith

equals attaining Buddhahood. Because he struggled against extreme difficulties based on faith in the Mystic Law, a great transformation occurred in his life. This is just as the Daishonin indicates where he says, "Although I and my disciples may encounter various difficulties, if we do not harbor doubts in our hearts, we will as a matter of course attain Buddhahood" (MW-2, 180 [205]).

Enlightenment is not simply a matter of recognition or awareness of eternal life. This is very important. The eternity of life is not something to be recognized intellectually; it is something that we have to experience with our own lives. And only if we practice a correct teaching can we do so.

The difficulty is that even if one consciously makes an effort to become aware of the eternity of life, ultimately it is life that supports the self that is trying to achieve this awareness. One cannot comprehend what is large with what is small; by analogy, a wave cannot comprehend the ocean over whose surface it passes. What, then, are we to do?

The only way to awaken to life's eternity is to cause the greater, eternal self to "emerge" in the small self. And to do this, we need to undertake the task of self-purification wholeheartedly, with our entire being. This is the purpose of Buddhist practice.

Originally our lives are in harmony with the Mystic Law. However, because we live in a strife-ridden world, we tend to base ourselves on egoism. As a result, our hearts become clouded by illusion and karma, and we grow befuddled and confused. This prevents the brilliant light of the eternal world of Buddhahood from illuminating our lives.

**Endo:** The "Life Span" (sixteenth) chapter states that befuddled living beings cannot see the Buddha even when he is nearby. It also describes befuddled people as drowning in a sea of suffering.

[Shakyamuni says: "I make it so that living beings in their befuddlement / do not see me even when close by" (LS16, 229); and "When I look at living beings / I see them drowned in a sea of suffering" (LS16, 230).]

**Ikeda:** That's right. I'd like to go into this in more detail later when we discuss the "Life Span" chapter, but for now suffice it to say that the Buddha to which this refers is Shakyamuni as the original

Buddha enlightened since the remote past. The Buddha is called the "Thus Come One," indicating the state of life of one in whom the Mystic Law manifests at each moment without effort or affection.

This eternal pulsing dynamism of the Mystic Law is itself eternal life. It is the true identity of the Buddha; it is the original Buddha. Furthermore, it is the wellspring of the benefit that all Buddhas enjoy. Just as President Toda realized, the Buddha is life itself. In addition, this original Buddha is in fact the very wellspring of our lives. It is in this sense that the sutra speaks of the original Buddha as being nearby. In their befuddlement, however, people fail to perceive this Buddha.

By struggling against difficulties, we polish our own clouded hearts and fuse with eternal life. We might think of it as gaining self-mastery; it's a matter of harmonizing one's life, as though tuning a musical instrument, with the eternal rhythm of the Mystic Law. It is a matter of fusing one's entire being with the eternal life of the cosmos. This is what it means to be a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

Nichiren Daishonin says, "These great bodhisattvas benefit the living beings of the Latter Day of the Law as naturally as fish swim in water and as freely as birds fly through the sky" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1033). The Bodhisattvas of the Earth have earnestly practiced the Mystic Law since the distant past. They have tempered their lives based on the Mystic Law and based on faith. That's why the Daishonin says, "These Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the ones who had thoroughly forged their faith" (MW-1, 227).

Because the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have such strong faith—that is, because in the depths of their lives they dwell in the world of Buddhahood—they can spread the Mystic Law in this strife-ridden *saha* world even while undergoing great persecution.

**Suda:** This is how they differ from the bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching.

**Ikeda:** That's right. The bodhisattvas of the theoretical teaching and bodhisattvas from other lands are all bodhisattvas who aspire to become Buddhas. For this reason, they cannot endure the difficulties of spreading the teaching in the *saha* world. It is the Bodhisattvas of the Earth of the essential teaching who are thoroughly versed in

and have mastered the eternal Mystic Law, who can endure the hardships incumbent upon those undertaking this great task.

President Makiguchi said:

Although it is said that particles of dust collect to form mountains, there are in fact no mountains that are made of accumulated particles of dust. At the most all they can form is a small hill. Real mountains are formed by great shifts in the earth's crust. By the same token, no matter how much minor good you accumulate, it will never amount to major good.<sup>11</sup>

The bodhisattvas of the provisional teachings are like those who are trying to attain Buddhahood by accumulating minor good. By contrast, the bodhisattvas of the essential teaching cause the great vitality of Buddhahood to issue forth from the depths of their lives—from the fundamental nature of the Law, which is to say the very wellspring of their being—with explosive force like that of a volcanic eruption.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are bodhisattvas who constantly practice the Mystic Law and who at each moment live in harmony with eternal life. While bodhisattvas in their appearance as practitioners, in terms of their state of life they are Buddhas.

President Toda's experience of having attended the Ceremony in the Air as a Bodhisattva of the Earth signifies his entry into the realm of eternal life, the world of truth of the original Buddha.

**Endo:** His realization that “the Buddha is life itself” thus closely relates to his awareness that he was a Bodhisattva of the Earth.

**Ikeda:** That's right. President Toda wrote:

Awakening  
to the life of the Buddha,  
I take pride  
in having been a Bodhisattva of the Earth  
since the remote past.<sup>12</sup>

He composed this verse in 1951, the year he became second Soka Gakkai president.

**Saito:** The Ceremony in the Air is a cosmic scene

that crystallizes the eternity of life. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are bodhisattvas who manifest in themselves the eternity of life. And the Gohonzon, set within the eternal realm of the Ceremony in the Air, embodies the life of Nichiren Daishonin, which is one with the eternal Mystic Law.

In that sense, President Toda's experience could be said to signify his having “entered” the

**I**n a famous passage, the Daishonin says: “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.” President Toda vividly felt the truth of these lines.

realm of the Gohonzon. When he returned to his home in 1945 after his release, President Toda immediately sat upright before the Gohonzon and carefully scrutinized the writing on the Gohonzon, thereby confirming the truth of the enlightenment that he had attained.

**Endo:** In your novel, President Ikeda, *The Human Revolution*, you describe this moment as follows:

He removed his glasses and scrutinized each character, bending so close it seemed his face would touch the scroll.

“It was just like this. No mistake. Exactly, just as I saw it...”

Murmuring silently, he satisfied himself that the solemn and mysterious ceremony in the air which he had witnessed in his cell was indeed inscribed on the Gohonzon. Profound delight surged through him and tears streamed down his face.... He cried out from the depths of his being:

“Gohonzon! Daishonin! I, Toda, will accomplish kosen-rufu!”<sup>13</sup>

**Ikeda:** In a famous passage, the Daishonin says, “Never seek this Gohonzon outside yourself. The Gohonzon exists only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 213). President Toda vividly felt the truth of these lines. And just as the Daishonin teaches when he says that through faith one can “enter the Treasure Tower of the Gohonzon” (MW-1, 214), he indeed entered the Gohonzon and took his place at the Ceremony in the Air.

The Gohonzon is itself the Treasure Tower, and the Treasure Tower is none other than one’s own life. President Toda grasped this truth with his entire being.

### **The Lotus Sutra Portrays the Drama in All People’s Lives**

**Saito:** President Toda attained that enlightenment in his heart. Had someone been there watching Mr. Toda while he had this experience in prison, the person would not have been able to see the Ceremony in the Air.

**Ikeda:** It’s something that he perceived within his own life. President Toda explained that the Lotus Sutra itself is a teaching that came out of Shakyamuni’s very own life. What was foreshadowed in the “Introduction” (first) and “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (twenty-first) chapters, as well as Shakyamuni’s exchanges with the voice-hearers and bodhisattvas, the astonishing appearance of the Treasure Tower, the emergence of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth—we can interpret all of these as dramas taking place in Shakyamuni’s own life.

**Suda:** When I visited Eagle Peak, the place where Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra, in India,

there was someone in our party who went around purportedly trying to find a chasm of some kind in the earth from which the Bodhisattvas of the Earth might have emerged. But these are all dramas taking place within Shakyamuni’s life; they are not to be interpreted literally.

**Ikeda:** While not historically factual, the events described in the sutra do express truths about life and the nature of existence.

**Saito:** In the course of these discussions, for purposes of convenience, we have at times discussed the events of the Lotus Sutra as though they really happened. That is because they can be thought of as expressing the truth of life.

**Endo:** If we say that the Lotus Sutra is a teaching out of Shakyamuni’s own life, then the issue of Shakyamuni’s identity becomes problematic. That is to say, the Shakyamuni appearing in the Lotus Sutra becomes the “Shakyamuni in Shakyamuni’s own life.”

**Ikeda:** It represents Shakyamuni’s true self. In a sense, the reason for the development from the theoretical teaching (or first half) of the Lotus Sutra to the essential teaching (or second half) is to enable Shakyamuni to reveal his “true self.” And the other personages who appear and the various events that occur all function to assist in this revelation.

**Saito:** The original Buddha of the “Life Span” chapter who has been enlightened since the remote past corresponds to Shakyamuni’s true self.

**Ikeda:** That’s right. The original Buddha enlightened since the remote past is the “eternal self” that is one with the eternal Mystic Law.

**Suda:** The Bodhisattvas of the Earth must also exist in Shakyamuni’s life.

**Ikeda:** They are “eternal bodhisattvas” representing an aspect of Shakyamuni’s “eternal self.” The “Ongi Kuden” (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) says, “Because they are Bodhisattvas contained in Shakyamuni’s own life, Shakyamuni sum-



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Mt. Saint Helens erupting in June 1980. First president of the Soka Gakkai, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, stated: "Although it is said that particles of dust collect to form mountains, there are in fact no mountains that are made of accumulated particles of dust. At the most all they can form is a small hill. Real mountains are formed by great shifts in the earth's crust. By the same token, no matter how much minor good you accumulate, it will never amount to major good."

mons forth these true disciples who were nurtured by the original Buddha" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 798).

But this is not only true for Shakyamuni. The Daishonin says, "The example of one person represents the impartial truth inherent in all living beings" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 564). Shakyamuni's "eternal self" is the "eternal self" of all living beings. In a broad sense, all beings are original Buddhas. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are therefore "eternal bodhisattvas" existing in the lives of all people. The Daishonin explains this, saying: "The enlightened life of Shakyamuni Buddha is our own flesh and

blood. His practices and resulting virtues are our bones and marrow" (MW-1, 64); "Present within our lives is the Lord Shakyamuni ... the original Buddha since time without beginning" (MW-1, 65); and, "Bodhisattvas Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jyogyo and Anryugyo<sup>14</sup> represent the world of Bodhisattva within our lives" (MW-1, 65).

**Endo:** The drama of the Lotus Sutra is a drama taking place in the lives of all people. The same can be said of the Gohonzon, which is the Lotus Sutra of Nichiren Daishonin.

**Ikeda:** Based on the Ceremony in the Air described in the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Daishonin manifested his “eternal self” in the form of the Gohonzon. The Daishonin’s “eternal self,” needless to say, is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo; accordingly, down the middle of the Gohonzon are inscribed the characters “Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Nichiren.”

**Saito:** In a Gosho he says, “I, Nichiren, have inscribed my life in *sumi*<sup>15</sup>... the soul of Nichiren is nothing other than Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 120).

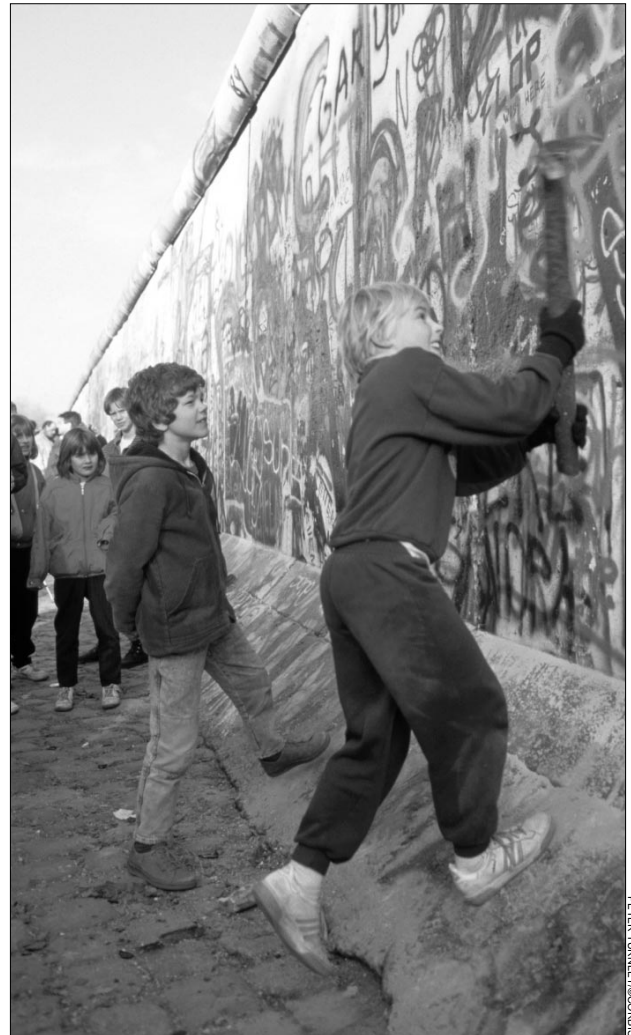
**Ikeda:** We can think of President Toda’s enlightenment in prison as the moment in which he connected with his “eternal self” as the leader of the movement to propagate the Mystic Law. That was the meaning of his experience of being present at the Ceremony in the Air. What he awakened to in that instant was the unmistakable truth of life, the fundamental transcendent reality. Therefore, President Toda talked about the Ceremony in the Air as a fact. And he said that the members of the Soka Gakkai were also all present there.

**Endo:** He once humorously remarked that those who have difficulty grasping Buddhist concepts are the ones who, during the Ceremony in the Air, were dozing off in spite of themselves at the back of the crowd.<sup>16</sup>

**Saito:** Again, President Toda once said, “The Gohonzon exists within our own lives. The quintessence of faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism is to believe that our own lives and the Gohonzon enshrined in the altar are one and the same.”<sup>17</sup> I think this was his way of expressing what he had realized while in prison.

**Suda:** President Toda stated that the vision of the Ceremony in the Air he had while in prison did not differ in the least from the appearance of the Gohonzon that the Daishonin inscribed. This seems to me evidence that President Toda truly entered the Gohonzon.

**Ikeda:** President Toda fought the devilish nature of power head on. And through his faith to wage such a struggle, he attained an immense state of



PETER TURNLEY/COORBIS

(Above and top right) The fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany, 1989. Mr. Ikeda explains that “What is needed today is a transformation in how society views the human being. When people’s view of the human being changes, everything will change. You must not yoke yourself to nationality or to ethnicity. You must not think of yourself as powerless, or as no more than a collection of matter. You must not regard yourself as a slave to your genes.”

life. This is the principle of “attaining enlightenment through faith.” He then became able to readily read the Lotus Sutra and comprehend its meaning. That’s because he grasped with his life that what the Lotus Sutra is trying to explain is the eternal Mystic Law, or Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. That’s why he often said, “It’s simply impossible to read the Lotus Sutra without faith in the Gohonzon.”



PETER TURNLEY/ICORBIS

**“Dig Down Right Where You Are,  
For There Lies the Source!”**

**Suda:** President Toda’s struggle to chant daimoku and ponder the meaning of the sutra while in prison was a confrontation with the Lotus Sutra. But at the same time, it was a struggle to dig into the depths of his life.

**Ikeda:** Through thoroughly pursuing the question “What is the Buddha?” he came to realize that the Buddha is none other than the self, and the great life of the universe; that these two—the self and the universe—are in fact one.

Just as the words “Start digging right where you are, for there lies the source!” imply, when we dig into the inner reaches of our own being, the common foundation of life that all people share comes into view. This foundation is none other than the eternal life of the universe. President Toda not only became enlightened to the wellspring at the core of his own being, he also awakened to the foundation of life that all people share. He realized that, as he put it, “In essence, all people are in fact Bodhisattvas of the Earth.”

With that conviction President Toda racked his brain to somehow find a way to enable all

members to share that same profound level of confidence in their lives. Sometimes in urging the members to work together toward accomplishing the goal of kosen-rufu, he would address them as “fellow Bodhisattvas of the Earth.” President Toda wholeheartedly sought to teach us the nobility and strength we can attain by basing ourselves on an awareness of the truth as the wellspring of our being. He showed actual proof of this truth through his own life. Because of his conviction, it is the members of the SGI who now share this awareness of the common “homeland of life.”

The power of one person is truly immense. Such power and strength cannot fail to become manifest in those who awaken to their mission as Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Such confidence is the point of departure for everything. At the very wellspring of our lives, we possess a life free of all impurity that stretches out as vast as the universe. Accomplishing our human revolution means realizing and showing actual proof of the existence of this life.

**“The Universe Is Itself Compassion”**

**Saito:** Regarding these Bodhisattvas of the Earth, the “Ongi Kuden” [Record of the Orally

Transmitted Teachings] says, "Among the thousand plants and ten thousand trees, there is none that is not a Bodhisattva of the Earth" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751). This is a little difficult to understand, because we tend to have an image of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as people.

**Endo:** The Bodhisattvas of the Earth can perhaps be thought of more in terms of a "function" that brings living beings benefit. That passage in the "Ongi Kuden" continues, "Thus we may say that the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who emerge from the earth represent the essential teaching. The word 'essential' represents the eternal merits handed down from the infinite past of *gohyaku-jintengo*"<sup>18</sup> (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 751).

**Ikeda:** I think we might find a guideline for interpreting these passages in President Toda's essay "On Compassion."<sup>19</sup> In conclusion, he says, "The universe is itself an entity of compassion." The universe gives life to all things, causing them to come into being, to change, and to repeatedly undergo the cycle of birth and death. The great life that is this universe is itself the entity of the Buddha. It is the entity of the Buddha inherently possessing the three enlightened properties of the Law, wisdom and action.

The compassion of the universe is the function inherently possessed by the Buddha. It is also the function of the inherent world of Bodhisattva, the power of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. Therefore, in a general sense, all living things in the universe are sacred Bodhisattvas of the Earth; whereas in a specific sense, Bodhisattvas of the Earth refer to those who have awakened to this law of life.

The path of the bodhisattva lies in supremely humane action. And such action, fundamentally, is at one with the function of compassion of the universe. When we pray, speak out and take action for the happiness of a friend, the eternal life of the universe manifests through our thoughts, words and deeds.

**Endo:** I feel as though I have gained a clear sense of the humanism of Buddhism, which is as vast as the universe. Moreover, [in contrast to secular humanism] this humanism is respectful of the sanctity of all things, including even mountains

and rivers, plants and trees.

**Saito:** The Bodhisattvas of the Earth appearing in the Lotus Sutra are described as "filling the sky over immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, and millions of lands" (LS15, 214). This is truly universal in scale; they completely occupy all space.

**Suda:** This is a depiction of a gathering of countless beings who manifest the principle that "the universe is itself compassion." How solemn! What a grand drama! When we open our eyes to the teaching of the "Emerging from the Earth" chapter, it becomes only too obvious how truly petty and insignificant are the discrimination and egoism that are rampant in society.

**Saito:** I recall the poem, "The Sun of 'Jiyu' over a New Land," that you presented to friends in Los Angeles, President Ikeda. In that poem, you describe the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as "roots" that cut through all differences. You write:

As each group seeks their separate  
roots and origins,  
society fractures along a thousand fissure lines.  
When neighbors distance themselves  
from neighbors, continue your  
uncompromising quest  
for your truer roots  
in the deepest regions of your lives.  
Seek out the primordial "roots" of humankind.  
Then you will without fail discover the stately  
    expanse of *Jiyu*  
unfolding in the depths of your life.

Here is the home, the dwelling place  
to which humankind traces  
its original existence—  
beyond all borders,  
beyond all differences of gender and race.  
Here is a world offering true proof  
of our humanity.

If one reaches back to these fundamental roots,  
all become friends and comrades.  
To realize this is to "emerge from the earth."<sup>20</sup>

**Suda:** Everyone is sacred. Everyone is an irreplace-

able and unique existence. Moreover, everyone is a child of the “great earth of life.” This is what the “Emerging from the Earth” chapter teaches.

**Endo:** Only one year before you composed this poem, Los Angeles had been engulfed in tragedy. A group of white police officers were on trial for brutally beating an African American male whom they had apprehended for a traffic violation, and who was not offering any resistance. When an all white jury handed down a verdict of “not guilty” racial tensions exploded, resulting in widespread rioting [in 1992].

**Ikeda:** Discrimination is absolutely an evil. Those whose minds are so “befuddled” injure the lives of others as well as themselves. To try to locate the “roots” of one’s identity in a particular racial or ethnic group is an illusion. It is like a mirage in the desert. Such a sense of identity, far from serving as a common “homeland of life” that can be shared by all, only heightens distinctions between oneself and others, and becomes an underlying cause of conflict and strife.

What is needed today is a transformation in how society views the human being. When people’s view of the human being changes, everything will change. “You must not yoke yourself to nationality or to ethnicity. You must not think of yourself as powerless, or as ‘no more than a collection of matter.’ You must not regard yourself as a slave to your genes. Fundamentally, you have limitless and immense potential. Fundamentally, the human being is one with the universe! Such is the immense power of one person!” This is the message of the Lotus Sutra.

**Endo:** That is why it is called the “sutra of hope.”

### The Mind Is Not Merely a “Function of the Brain”

**Suda:** The tendency to view people as a type of machine made up of living matter, and to see the spiritual as no more than a function of the brain, is emblematic of the modern age. The assumption seems to be that advances in neurosciences will eventually fully elucidate all phenomena of the spirit.

**Saito:** There is no time to go into a detailed dis-

cussion here, but contrary to such an idea it is also pointed out that “the more we discover about the brain, the more clearly do we distinguish between the brain events and the mental phenomena, and the more wonderful do both the brain events and the mental phenomena become.”<sup>21</sup>

**Ikeda:** There is also a view of the brain as a “tool” of the mind, and as a “venue” through which spiritual phenomena are worked out. It may be true that without the functioning of the brain, the mind would have no means to express itself. Still, I believe, as current research about the brain and the mind seems to indicate, that the two are in no sense identical.

In modern terms, we may say that the brain is like a wonderful computer; yet, it is ultimately nothing but a tool. We may be able to locate the subjective entity that uses this tool, the mind. The mind cannot be a locally defined entity that is “contained” within the body or the brain, although many people today seem to suppose so. Scientific research is making this increasingly clear. The mind is more vast and expansive; it has a breadth that transcends material restrictions.

For instance, the American clinical physician Larry Dossey says:

... there is good evidence that the mind cannot be localized. It displays its nonlocal character in a million ways, showing us that it is free in space and time, that it bridges consciousness between persons, and that it does not die with the body.<sup>22</sup>

The mind that transcends time and space is an entity whose dimensions are not locally circumscribed; the mind possesses the potential to transcend the small self. Dr. Dossey also writes:

If nonlocal mind is a reality, the world becomes a place of interaction and connection, not one of isolation and disjunction. And if humanity really believed that nonlocal mind were real, an entirely new foundation for ethical and moral behavior would enter, which would hold at least the possibility of a radical departure from the insane ways human beings and nation-states have chronically behaved toward each other.<sup>23</sup>

**Endo:** The infinite expanse of the mind—this is

what the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, or *ichinen sanzen*, explains.

**Saito:** In the Goshō, “On Attaining Buddhahood,” there is the famous passage, “Life at each moment permeates the universe and is revealed in all phenomena” (MW-1, 3). One senses from passages like this that science is approaching the view of life of Buddhism.

### The Lotus Sutra Teaches the True Way of Humanity

**Ikeda:** Dr. Dossey further states:

If we continue in the ways in which we have conceptualized ourselves for hundred of years, it is no longer certain that we will have a future on this Earth. If we are to survive, a sacred regard for the Earth and all things in it must arise once more.<sup>24</sup>

It is Buddhism that greatly transforms “the ways in which we have conceptualized ourselves.” This is not merely an intellectual transformation; it manifests in the practice of compassion; that is, in altered patterns of behavior. It could be termed a transformation of people’s fundamental state of life. And the appearance on the scene of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth could be thought of as its grand prelude. Simply put, to have faith in the Lotus Sutra is to have faith in humanity. This is what President Toda said.

**Saito:** In other words, it is the human being that is truly great. Ralph Waldo Emerson, the flag-bearer of the American renaissance, makes a very interesting comment to the same effect. He says, “The Belief in Christianity that now prevails is the Unbelief of men. They will have Christ for a lord and not for a brother. Christ preached the greatness of Man but we hear only the greatness of Christ.”<sup>25</sup>

**Ikeda:** Such insight is typical of Emerson. He’s right of course. Neither the state nor ideology is “sacred,” nor is any superhuman deity or Buddha.

The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are in fact Buddhas. But the term Buddha is inevitably taken

to mean a being who is somehow transcendental or superior to ordinary human beings. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth thoroughly devote themselves to the way of bodhisattvas as “people who carry out Buddhist practice.” They thoroughly devote themselves to the way of human beings. This is a point of tremendous significance.

The restoration of trust and belief in humanity will be the key to “religion in the twenty-first century,” which is the theme of this series of discussions.

**Suda:** The teaching of the Lotus Sutra does indeed stand on the forefront of the age.

**Ikeda:** For instance, one could argue that the collapse of the Soviet Union—one of the major changes of the latter half of this century—fundamentally arose from an inner thirst in human beings.

**Endo:** Shimon Peres, the former prime minister of Israel [and recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace], remarked:

The Communist Party was not beaten by another party opposing it. The Communist Party was beaten by its own children and not by its rivals. The Soviet Union did not come apart under the impact of American pressure, European intervention, or a Chinese threat. The pressure did not come from without, it sprang from within. This gigantic change in human organization occurred without the army’s guns, without political parties’ banners, and without superpower threats.<sup>26</sup>

**Suda:** In other words, it was not destruction resulting from external force, but collapse caused by an innate cry of the people from within.

**Endo:** Peres, looking back on the circumstances of the time, recalled a particularly poignant scene:

One of the most captivating images during the attempted coup against Mikhail Gorbachev was that of a battalion of Red Army soldiers in front of the Russian Parliament, Moscow’s “White House.” The soldiers were indifferent, with a “who cares” attitude, when suddenly an old Russian woman, a *babouchka*, went up to them

and said, "Children, what are you doing here? Go home!" It was almost as if the *babouchka* were the sole commander of the Red Army.<sup>27</sup>

**Saito:** Given the tenseness of the situation, this was a really courageous grandmother. His description reminds me of the women of the Many Treasures Group (Jp. *Taho-kai*) who have steadfastly fought for *kosen-rufu* since the early days of the Soka Gakkai.

**Ikeda:** At the crucial moment, it is the ordinary people who are the strongest. It is the thoroughly polished core humanity of the ordinary people that shines most brightly. It is faith in the Mystic Law that enables us to bring out the full brilliance of this essential human core.

Nichiren Daishonin cries, "Nichiren alone began to carry out the task of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth" (MW-1, 92). Reading this line fills me with a profound emotion. The great struggle of

the human revolution is the dawn of life that humankind has eagerly awaited. It marks the dawn of a new history. The human revolution is a liberation of the human being on the most fundamental level of life. It is the liberation of the human being on a dimension ranging over eternity. And it was to enable all people to accomplish this liberation that Nichiren Daishonin alone stood up.

We who have gathered together beneath the "banner of the Law" of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth share a mystic connection from the distant past as is sung in the song "Doshi no Uta" (Song of Comrades): "I now receive the Buddha's decree...."

When we realize this, we can see the marvelous mission we have. It is as though the "gears" of our life mesh with a million-horsepower engine. Tremendous energy wells forth, and we can develop a self of awesome vitality and strength.

*To be continued*

1. Editor's note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
2. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1983), vol. 3, p. 171.
3. Editor's note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the second edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
4. *Shakubuku*: Sharing and teaching others about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.
5. The Daishonin states in this writing, "In this latter age, there cannot be anyone else who upholds the Lotus Sutra twenty-four hours of the day and night without making a conscious effort to do so" (MW-5, p. 8).
6. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1988), vol. 8, p. 517-18.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 519.
8. Words by Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China.
9. *Nichijun Shonin Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichijun Shonin) (Fuji-nomiya: Nichiren Shoshu Fukyokai, 1960), p. 357. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo consists of seven Chinese characters; Myoho-renge-kyo consists of five.
10. The "thirty-four negations" describing the entity of the Buddha appear in the "Virtuous Practices" (Jp. Tokugyo, or the first) chapter of the Sutra of Immeasurable Meanings. President Toda read the sutra with his whole body and finally perceived that the Buddha is life itself.
11. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Shingenshu* (Collection of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi's Sayings), ed. Takehisa Tsuji (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1979), p. 23.
12. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1981), vol. 1, p. 416.
13. Daisaku Ikeda, *Ningen Kakumei* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1965), vol. 1, p. 38.
14. The four bodhisattvas: Jogyo (Superior Practices), Muhengyo (Boundless Practices), Jyogyo (Pure Practices) and Anryugyo (Firmly Established Practices).
15. *Sumi*: Black Chinese ink.
16. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1982), vol. 2, p. 39.
17. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1985), vol. 5, p. 283.
18. *Gohyaku-jintengo*: An incredibly long period of time described in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra which indicates how much time has elapsed since Shakyamuni's original enlightenment.
19. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 3, pp. 44-45.
20. Commemorating the second SGI-USA General Meeting, at the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium in Santa Monica, Los Angeles, on January 27, 1993.
21. John Eccles and Daniel N. Robinson, *The Wonder of Being Human: Our Brain and Our Mind* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1984), p. 36.
22. Larry Dossey, *Recovering the Soul—A Scientific and Spiritual Search* (New York: Bantam Books, 1989), p. 2.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 7.
24. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
25. *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, vol. 5, ed. Merton M. Sealts, Jr. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1965), p. 459.
26. *At Century's End*, ed. Nathan P. Gardels (La Jolla, CA: Alti Publishers, 1995), p. 301.
27. *Ibid.*

# GLOBAL FRIENDSHIPS FOR PEACE

## SGI ACTIVITIES REPORT

FORMER Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev was hailed by SGI President Ikeda in Osaka, Japan, for launching “the twentieth century’s greatest reform movement, which brought an end to the Cold War and dramatically changed the destiny of the world.” At this special ceremony at the Kansai Soka High School, held November 20, 1997, the Soka Schools bestowed an honorary professorship upon Mr. Gorbachev, while his wife, Raisa, received the Soka Gakuen Award of Highest Honor.

In a short speech, Mrs. Gorbachev emphasized how precious the period of youth is, describing it as “a time to take action, to cherish great hopes and to believe in yourself and your future.” Comparing life to a fast-flowing river with many unexpected twists and turns, she called on the young students in the audience not to be discouraged if they should stumble and fall, but to get back up each time and keep striving for victory.

In his acceptance speech, Mr. Gorbachev said that his wife’s talk about falling down and

picking oneself up again reminded him of the humorous episode that marked the start of his political career. He had just graduated from high school and was running as a candidate in a local election. At a gathering, he rose to introduce himself. About to sit back down, someone pulled his chair out from under him and he fell. Although everyone had a good laugh at his expense, he was still elected to the position. Mr. Gorbachev further said that he has encountered many challenges and trials throughout his life, but he has always faced them with the determination to win.

If one were to choose two central messages that are conveyed by Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev’s lives, President Ikeda said, they would be an unflagging belief in human potential and a commitment to achieve something of lasting value—irrespective of whether one’s efforts are met with praise or censure.

The SGI leader then shared one of Tolstoy’s fables about a young czar who is spoken to by three voices. The first declares

that the czar’s sole responsibility is to maintain the power that he now enjoys; the second tells him to cleverly evade his royal responsibilities; the third reminds him that he is a human being before he is a czar.

This last voice, President Ikeda explained, emphasizes taking action and alleviating people’s suffering because it is one’s duty as a human being. President Ikeda declared that Mr. Gorbachev is a leader who has indeed followed the third voice.

After the ceremony, Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev enjoyed a leisurely walk around the school grounds with Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda, during which they discussed their mutual concern for the environment.

The former Soviet president is currently the head of the International Green Cross, an organization that seeks to find global solutions to environmental problems. Established by Mr. Gorbachev in 1993, the organization today has expanded its network to sixteen countries on five continents.

*Courtesy of SGI Newsletter*



Mikhail Gorbachev, former U.S.S.R. president, and his wife, Raisa, are greeted by SGI President Ikeda at Kansai Soka High School, November 20, 1997 (above).

Mr. Gorbachev received an honorary professorship from the Soka Schools, while his wife received the Soka Gakuen Award of Highest Honor. The first meeting between Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Ikeda took place in Moscow on July 27, 1990, at the Kremlin. It was the fifth visit to Moscow made by Mr. Ikeda, who, on his personal campaign of "human diplomacy," has stressed the urgency of heartfelt interpersonal exchange.

*Photos courtesy of Seikyo Press*





SGI President Ikeda admires chrysanthemums at Osaka's Kansai Culture Center, November 17, 1997, the day he received a certificate of commendation from the Brazilian city of Niterói. He was there to attend the 23rd SGI General Meeting and the 20th Kansai Ever-Victorious General Meeting. The event celebrated the Day of the Soka Gakkai's founding (November 18). Niterói City Assembly First Deputy Chairperson Fernando Nery de Sá and his wife, Suzana Maria Ramos de Sá, personally presented the SGI leader with the tribute that applauds his half-century struggle for world peace. Niterói is the former capital of Rio de Janeiro state in southeastern Brazil. Situated along the shores of Guanabara Bay opposite the present state capital, Rio de Janeiro, it is renowned as a pioneer of democracy in South America and is today a bustling residential and industrial center

Seoul's Kyung Hee University founder and chancellor Dr. Choue Young Seek is welcomed by the SGI president to the Tokyo campus of Soka University, November 1, 1997. Coinciding with its students' annual three-day festival, Soka University founder Mr. Ikeda conferred an honorary doctorate on Dr. Choue in recognition of his far-reaching endeavors for peace. Dr. Choue established Kyung Hee University as an institute committed to humanistic education and culture. It formally signed an academic exchange agreement with Soka University in September 1997, making it the first South Korean university to form such ties. Dr. Choue also founded the Graduate Institute of Peace Studies—awarded the UNESCO Award for Peace Education in 1993—at the Seoul university with the aim of fostering global citizens. The university is part of the comprehensive Kyung Hee School, which provides education from kindergarten to university level.

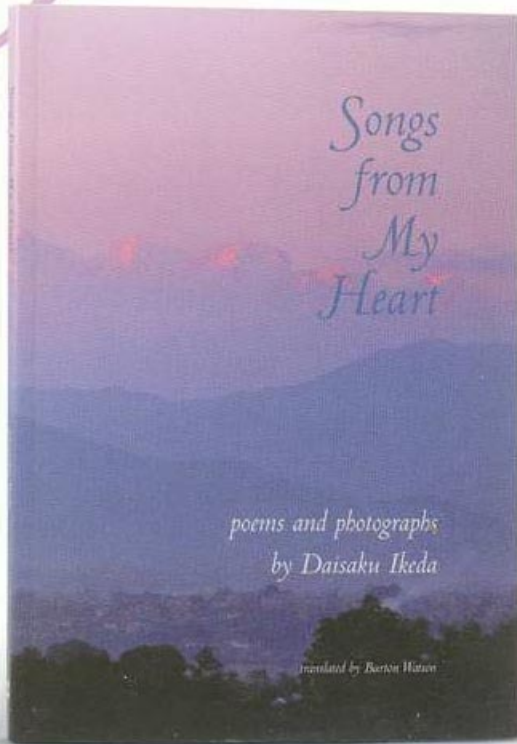




The photo exhibition "Rajiv Gandhi: An Intimate Vision," shown for the first time in India, was opened on October 19, 1997, at the Lalit Kala Akademi Gallery in New Delhi. Rajiv Gandhi Foundation Chairperson Sonia Gandhi opened the event (above). Organized jointly by the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and the Tokyo Fuji Art Museum, the opening was also attended by SGI President and Mrs. Ikeda, Mrs. Gandhi's daughter and son-in-law Priyanka and Robert Vadra, and distinguished guests from Indian society.

On October 22, 1997, the SGI president paid a courtesy visit to Indian President Kocheril Narayanan at his office in New Delhi (left). Indian First Lady Usha Narayanan was also present. President Narayanan and the SGI leader exchanged views on topics including India fifty years after independence. Mr. Ikeda stressed the importance of India as a main player in the international community in the twenty-first century. Mr. Narayanan indicated that Japan's contribution should originate from its diligence and sense of beauty. Their meeting was covered by the national TV station and other Indian media.

# Just ARRIVED



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# Living

## BUDDHISM

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SGI PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS AT RAJIV GANDHI FOUNDATION  
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## Min-On Culture Center



**T**HE Min-On Concert Association was founded in 1963 in Tokyo by SGI President Ikeda to develop and deepen mutual understanding and international friendship through musical and cultural exchanges. It has invited outstanding performers and groups from seventy-seven countries and regions, including the Vienna State Opera and La Scala Theater of Milan. It actively promotes the Tokyo International Music Competition, which rotates annually between conductors, choral groups and chamber music, representing the best

young talent in the world. It also commissions original works and organizes free concerts for schools.

Min-On's new head office, with seven stories above and two underground, was opened at Shinanomachi, Tokyo, September 1, 1997. The center exhibits antique pianos, folk musical instruments, music scores and letters written by prominent musicians and other treasures from among Min-On's property. The Min-On Music Library, the largest of its kind in Japan, will be opened this month (January 1998).