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

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COVER PHOTO by SGI-USA member Tommie Shaw of Louisville, Kentucky: Dayflower (any of a genus, *Commelina*, of plants of the spiderwort family) taken in Seneca Park in the suburb of St. Matthews in Louisville, Kentucky. See story p. 46.



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FROM OUR READERS

From time to time, as space allows, we will print poetry submitted by our readers. Please mail all correspondence to: Letters, 525 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

Beyond the Visible

When Life turns on its light
Something happens to my sight.

It arises from the world within
With rays of deep perception.

The view, more than ever
Is brighter, richer and vaster.

A transient on a street corner
Draws my heart closer.

An encounter with a lone flower
Enlarges my heart's treasure.

In these brief moments of eternity
I catch a glimpse of Life, the true entity.

Happy and at peace within
I can see beyond the visible.

But seeing with my naked eye
I've missed many joyful sights.

No wonder, a lifelong illusion
Has clouded my vision.

I have much to do ahead of me
Polishing a tarnished mirror constantly.

It takes faith, learning and compassion
Yes! a human revolution.

I believe it is my birthright
To follow the path of the light —

Seeking the Buddha nature
In all things, always and everywhere.

— Tesfaye Abagaz
Santa Monica, California

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82):

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

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

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

Frequently Cited Sources

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

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

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

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

The SGI-USA applies Buddhist principles through a nationwide network of grass-roots activities centering primarily on neighborhood discussion groups. Learn more about the SGI-USA, or find a discussion group in your area by calling our national office in Santa Monica, CA 90401-1427: (310) 451-8811. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

UNTIMELY DEATH: CHALLENGING THE DOUBT

IN January I received a message that a youth was killed in Oceanside, California. He was 16, and was an SGI-USA member, as is his mother. I was shocked at the news.

The boy was attacked by three teenagers his own age who wanted his skateboard. The incident received wide coverage by the local news. In this particular community, violence is uncommon, and the tragedy has raised awareness as to the senselessness of teenage violence.

The boy's funeral and memorial, held at the local community center, was well attended. He touched the lives of many people in the community, as well as in the SGI-USA organization. Despite the circumstances of the boy's death, the atmosphere of the service was hopeful and bright, reflecting Nichiren Daishonin's spirit of encouragement regarding the oneness of life and death. Because of this atmosphere, the boy's cousin felt inspired to begin practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism.

People naturally question why this would happen. Did he do something bad to deserve this?

“Developing a strong practice and a sense of mission for kosen-rufu will determine the value of our lives. Living joyfully and contributing to the happiness of others is what really matters.”

This prompts further questions: Will our loved ones attain enlightenment no matter how or when they die? How can we view such deaths?

I thought of my own mother's death from injuries sustained in a traffic accident. I was 25 at the time; she was 53. I introduced her to Buddhism immediately after I started practicing. We both had been chanting for three years when she died. I was living in Tokyo when my brother told me of her accident, so I traveled three hours by train to my home in Fuji. I cried and chanted the whole trip home. She had died

by the time I arrived.

I was shocked. I had hoped that she would live a long and joyful life. Many doubts arose when my mother died so young and in a traffic accident. My brother, who does not practice, questioned why our mother died even though she was practicing this Buddhism.

Although my mother's life was not easy, she overcame many sufferings through faith. She struggled to raise six children after separating

from my father, all the while challenging a strained relationship with her mother-in-law. However, so much had changed in three years that my grandmother also started to practice. Ironically, my mother had just picked up medicine for my grandmother and was returning home when she had the accident.

Every day I chanted for her happiness, determined to find the answers to these questions in my life. I realized that my mother completed her mission and that how long you live is not as important as the quality of your life. We don't know what kind of karma we've accumulated from the past. We can't make the judgment that a short life is necessarily miserable and a long one is happy. I believe she created a life of enjoyment in the three years that she practiced and challenged her karma, thereby surely attaining enlightenment.

This is verified by the Daishonin in "Lessening One's Karmic Retribution":

If one's heavy karma from the past is not expiated in this lifetime, he must undergo the sufferings of hell in the future, but if he experiences extreme hardship in this life, the sufferings of hell will vanish instantly. When he dies, he will obtain the blessing of Rapture and Tranquillity, as well as those of the three vehicles and the supreme vehicle (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 17).

Although my mother died in an accident, the value of her life was in no way diminished; neither was the value of her practice. I want this point to be clear. Our practice negates past bad karma. She already has, or definitely will be born in good circumstances in her next life. In this I have absolute confidence.

Regardless of the form of death, whether due to sickness, old age or accidents, one definitely can attain enlightenment. Death is death. No matter what, we all must encounter it. It's quite natural that we would want to die a peaceful death, but we choose our karma in this respect based on the principle of "deliberately creating the appropriate karma."

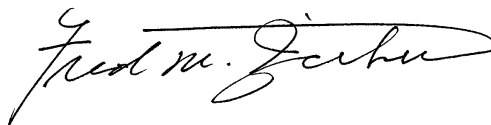
Through the death of our loved ones, we have the opportunity to think more deeply about the issues of life and death and the greatness of the Daishonin's Buddhism. While it's only natural to

grieve, we can view this suffering of death as a chance to strengthen our faith and practice, so as not to be overcome by our doubts. From the standpoint of eternity, we are certain to attain Buddhahood through the practice of sincere faith, as the following passage states:

While he [your husband] was in this world, he was a living Buddha, and now, he is a Buddha in death. His Buddhahood transcends both life and death. This is the meaning of the doctrine that is of utmost importance: attaining Buddhahood in one's present form. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 207)

President Ikeda encourages us that family and friends of the deceased will surely be reunited through faith. "People who are united by a profound spirit of faith, fellow members who are joined by powerful bonds of love and affection—[though temporarily separated by death]—the family members and kin of such people will in time definitely be reunited" (June 13, 1994, *Seikyo Times*, pp. 11–12).

Of course Buddhism recognizes the importance of living a long life. We should take care of our health and be careful not to cause accidents as much as possible. Developing a strong practice and a sense of mission for kosen-rufu will determine the value of our lives. "But it is better to live a single day with honor than to live one hundred and twenty and die in disgrace" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 238). Simply living a long life is not enough; rather, living joyfully and contributing to the happiness of others is what really matters.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

Study Material for March • April

“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. 59–72, and can also be found in The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 2, pp. 186–87.)

JUSTICE is like the sun. A society that lacks justice is as though shrouded in darkness. No one can stop the sun from rising. No cloud can hide the rays of the sun indefinitely. “Opening the eyes” means causing those whose hearts are steeped in darkness to recognize the existence of the sun of justice.

I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, father and mother to all the people of Japan. But the men of the Tendai sect [who do not refute the misleading sects] are all great enemies of the people. As Chang-an has noted,¹ “One who rids the offender of evil is acting as his parent.”

One who has not set one’s mind upon the way can never free oneself from the sufferings of birth and death. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 187)

The Buddha Illuminates the World With the Three Virtues

NICHIREN Daishonin says that he is “sovereign, teacher, father and mother to all the people of Japan.” The three virtues—sovereign, teacher and parent—indicate the state of life, brilliant as the sun, of a true person of justice.

A passage of the Goshō “Repaying Debts of Gratitude” comes immediately to mind:

If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity, for it has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan, and it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering. (MW-4, 272)

High Priest Nichikan inter-

prets this passage as referring to the Daishonin’s three virtues. “If Nichiren’s compassion is truly great and encompassing, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo will spread for ten thousand years and more, for all eternity” indicates his immense compassion, or virtue, as the parent. “It has the beneficial power to open the blind eyes of every living being in the country of Japan” indicates the power to open people’s minds or inner eyes, i.e., the teacher. And, “it blocks off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering” indicates the sovereign who struggles to ensure that the people do not slip into misery.²

“The Opening of the Eyes” begins: “There are three categories of people that all human beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher and the parent” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 59). The purpose of this writing

is to clarify the true virtues of the sovereign, the teacher and the parent. Nichiren Daishonin perfectly possesses all three.

In a general sense, the sovereign, teacher and parent might be thought of—to put it in modern terms—as the three necessary attributes of leaders. The virtue of the sovereign lies in protecting people; this corresponds to an unwavering sense of responsibility. The virtue of the teacher lies in guiding people; this is the shining wisdom to guide people along the path of happiness. And the virtue of the parent lies in lovingly raising people; this is a warm, if strict, compassion.

A sense of responsibility, wisdom and compassion—are not these the most important qualities for leaders, and for all people, to possess? If even a few more leaders possessed these three attributes, it would contribute immensely to easing tension and the general happiness of humankind. But the fact of the matter is that the tendency of all too many leaders in society is just the opposite.

THE antithesis of the virtue of the sovereign is irresponsibility. We have leaders who carry on in a self-aggrandizing and high-handed manner, but who avoid addressing difficult issues, using the rationale that “Someone else will take care of it,” or that “Things will somehow work themselves out.” They order other people around, and then try to shirk responsibility. Even though they may have the appearance of leaders, they do not qualify as such.

They lack the requisite virtue.

The “Life Span” chapter of the Lotus Sutra explains the three virtues of the essential teaching. “This, my land, remains safe and tranquil” (LS 16, 230) indicates the virtue of the sovereign who works resolutely to ensure the peace and tranquillity of the land or community for which he or she is responsible.

“Constantly I have preached the Law, teaching, converting” (LS16, 229) indicates the virtue of the teacher. As indicated by the word *constantly*, meaning “without rest or interruption,” a teacher unstintingly uses his or her voice to help others.

The virtue of the parent is indicated by the line, “I am the father of this world” (LS16, 231). The parent loves people because they are children of the Buddha who will one day become Buddhas, and takes action on their behalf.

Leaders also must have the ability to provide training, protection, guidance and instruction. When someone has a problem, they need to provide kind guidance as well as necessary instruction. By so doing, they can ensure that people do not become deadlocked.

A genuine leader protects people when they are tired, and nurtures them by providing training appropriate to their levels of development. If people are given strict training under circumstances that require protection instead, they will go under. And if they are protectively coddled when instead they need guidance, they will stop growing.

If we relate these desirable leadership attributes to the

three virtues, the ability to protect corresponds to the virtue of the sovereign, the ability to provide guidance and instruction to the virtue of the teacher, and the ability to provide training to the virtue of the parent. The determination, prayer and strength to help people become happy are the keys to outstanding leadership.

IN connection with the characterization in “Repaying Debts of Gratitude” of the virtue of the sovereign as “blocking off the road that leads to the hell of incessant suffering,” High Priest Nichikan asks, “How could the opening or closing of roads be left up to a retainer? [Matters of such importance must be attended to by the sovereign.]” The virtue of the sovereign lies in closing off paths of evil and opening up paths of good.

“I want to close off the path leading to Hell.” This was the spirit with which Josei Toda declared his opposition to the use of nuclear weapons: “Anyone who threatens the right to live is a devil, a Satan and a monster.”³ To resolutely close off the path to war and open up the path to peace—this is the virtue of the sovereign, and the responsibility of leaders.

The SGI, as the true inheritor of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, has opened a path of peace spanning the globe. Twenty years ago, when China and the Soviet Union were in conflict and the Americans and the Soviets were mired in the Cold War, who could have imagined the state of the world today? The Soka Gakkai, despite

storms of criticism, has bravely taken action to close off the path to confrontation and open the path to friendship.

"There must never be World War III!" We have prayed and taken action with a sense of responsibility to see that such a calamity never comes to pass. Toward that end, we have developed a movement of peace, culture and education based on Buddhism.

Broadly speaking, creating a land of peace and tranquillity—as in the passage, "This, my land, remains safe and tranquil"—indicates the virtue of the sovereign. Education represents the virtue of the teacher. And culture, because it fosters people's inner lives, relates to the virtue of the parent. We are extending this path of the three virtues throughout the entire world.

ONCE a path is opened, those who come after can travel along it with composure and ease. Nichiren Daishonin, as the Buddha of the Latter Day possessing the virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent, opened a path to the enlightenment of all people. For this we owe him our eternal gratitude.

To extend and expand the path that the mentor has graciously opened is the mission of disciples. And the path that the Daishonin opened now spans the entire world. Through the struggles of our fellow members — the wondrous Bodhisattvas of the Earth — the great path of happiness now runs through 128 countries. The sun of justice has begun to rise. I am absolutely

convinced that the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, accords the highest praise to those who dedicate themselves to this noble task.

In the Goshō passage we will study next, the Daishonin says that the followers of the Tendai school are great enemies of the people. While aware that the Lotus Sutra is the foremost teaching, they not only failed to combat evil but took the side of those persecuting the Daishonin.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi said, "Of all the Nichiren schools existing today, Nichiren Shoshu, it would seem, most closely resembles the Tendai school of the Daishonin's time."⁴

He was exactly right. The members of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, who have repeatedly obstructed kosen-rufu, a sacred undertaking for the people's happiness, are indeed great enemies of the people. History has now shown the concordance of their actions with the Daishonin's assertion in "The Opening of the Eyes."

Encountering Great Persecution Is the Highest Honor

Shakyamuni Buddha, the lord of teachings, was cursed by all the followers of non-Buddhist teachings and labeled as a man of great evil. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was regarded with intense enmity by the three schools of the south and seven schools of the north, and Tokuitsu of Japan criticized him for using his tongue to try to destroy the five-foot

body of the Buddha.⁵ The Great Teacher Dengyo was disparaged by the monks of Nara, who said, "Saicho⁶ has never been to the capital of T'ang China!" But all of these abuses were incurred because of the Lotus Sutra, and they are therefore no shame to the men who suffered them. To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame. Now that I have incurred the wrath of the authorities [and am now in exile], the priests of the Tendai and Shingon sects are no doubt delighted. They are strange and shameless men. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 187–8)

JUSTICE is certain to meet with persecution, just as the sun is sure to be obstructed by clouds. Difficulties are the proof of justice. Encountering great persecution is the highest honor.

Even Shakyamuni was derided as a "person of great evil." The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai was showered with abuse by the ten powerful schools of his day. And he was still being vilified 200 years later. The priest Tokuchi of Japan's Hosso school went so far as to say: "What a foolish thing you have done, Chiko (T'ien-t'ai). You have slandered Shakyamuni's lifetime teaching and brought confusion to the world."

The Great Teacher Dengyo was reviled by the schools of Nara. They said, "While Saicho says that he went to China, he quickly came back without having visited the capital after only studying a short time in the provinces."

T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo re-

ceived such criticism because they advocated the Lotus Sutra, because they issued the call to return to the spirit of the Lotus Sutra, of Shakyamuni. Those who do not take action will face neither criticism nor slander.

On the other hand, those who thought they were only criticizing T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo were in fact trampling on the spirit of Shakyamuni. The more such individuals slander the sutra's votaries, the more they are in effect slandering the Lotus Sutra. Moreover, such individuals entirely fail to realize this. No one is more foolish or pitiful.

Those who delighted when the Daishonin—a person of justice whose actions exactly matched with the Lotus Sutra—was sent into exile and the correct teaching was attacked were the true fools.

“To be praised by fools—that is the greatest shame.” President Makiguchi made this his motto. He was persecuted by the military powers and betrayed by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood. Yet he laughed this off.

Lecturing on “The Opening of the Eyes,” President Josei Toda said:

Based on these words, Mr. Makiguchi did not regard it as shameful to undergo criticism or persecution for the Lotus Sutra. He died in prison for his beliefs because he propagated Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws, the essence of the Lotus Sutra, based on the conviction that to be praised by fools is the

greatest disgrace and to be praised by the great sage [Nichiren Daishonin] is the greatest glory. I believe that he provides the foremost model for all who embrace faith in the Buddhism of Nichiren Daishonin.⁷

And he cried out to youth:

In the struggle for the Law in the polluted Latter Day, your desire should be to win the Daishonin's praise as brilliant young warriors. For a person of wisdom, to be praised by fools is the greatest disgrace. To be praised by the great sage is the greatest honor in life.⁸

THESE words, which presidents Makiguchi and Toda both made their motto are also the Soka Gakkai motto. To put this golden motto into practice is the eternal spirit of the Gakkai.

Let us in the SGI advance in a manner befitting the SGI! Let us proceed straight ahead along this path, along the glorious path of Soka! If people want to laugh, let them laugh. If people want to vilify us, let them go right ahead.

Can such individuals reveal a means for others to become happy? Can listening to what they have to say bring people relief from suffering? No, definitely not.

The Soka Gakkai is a lion—completely fearless. It is enough that we conduct ourselves in such a manner that we win the praise of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. Future generations will definitely celebrate our efforts.

Even As an Exile, the Daishonin Felt Immense Joy

Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in the *saha* world, Kumarajiva journeyed to the Ch'in dynasty in China,⁹ and Dengyo likewise went to China [all for the sake of the Lotus Sutra]. Aryadeva and Aryasimha sacrificed their bodies. Bodhisattva Yakuo burned his arms as an offering, and Prince Shotoku stripped off the skin on his hand [and copied the sutra on it].¹⁰ Shakyamuni, when he was a bodhisattva, sold his flesh to make offerings, and another time, when he was a bodhisattva named Gyobo, he used his bone as a pen [to write down the Buddha's teaching].

T'ien-t'ai has said that “the method chosen should be that which accords with the time.” The propagation of the Buddhist teachings should follow the time. For what I have done, I have been condemned to exile, but it is a small suffering to undergo in this present life and not one worth lamenting. In future lives I will enjoy immense happiness, a thought that gives me great joy. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 188)

Shakyamuni chose to be born in the *saha* world, a world fraught with suffering, to expound the Lotus Sutra. To translate the Lotus Sutra, Kumarajiva traveled from Central Asia to China, undergoing many hardships along the way. And in pursuit of the essence of the Lotus Sutra, the Great Teacher Dengyo made the journey over treacherous seas from Japan to China.

In each case, a great sense of purpose produced action. An irrepressible spirit gives rise to action.

BODHISATTVA Aryadeva and the worthy Aryasimha, who inherited Shakyamuni's teaching, admonished evil rulers and laid down their lives for the teaching. It is also related that Bodhisattva Medicine King (Yakuo) burned his elbows as an offering to the Buddha, and that Prince Shōtoku of Japan peeled the skin off his hand for use as paper on which to copy the titles of sutras.

In a previous existence when Shakyamuni, as a bodhisattva, was practicing to attain enlightenment, he once sold his own flesh to make an offering to the Buddha. Another time, as Gyōbo Bonji, he is said to have used his skin as paper, his bone as a pen and his blood as ink in order to copy down the Buddha's teaching.

The form that Buddhist practice takes differs according to the time. Buddhism "accords with the time," but the fundamental path and spirit do not change. The main point is to wholeheartedly

dedicate oneself to the Law and to people's happiness.

The True Law has been handed down thanks to the painstaking efforts of such people. It has been conveyed through a relay of individuals who have each taken action according with the time in which they have lived. This is itself a great achievement in Buddhist history.

But Nichiren Daishonin says that those who spread the Mystic Law in the Latter Day are far nobler than even these practitioners of the Former and Middle Days of the Law. All of you are courageous and noble people of mission opening a path where none has before existed, spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism amid storms of obstacles and calumny. The Daishonin cannot but praise you. Let us be confident that Shakyamuni, Many Treasures (Taho) Buddha and all Buddhas of the ten directions also greatly extol our efforts to spread the Mystic Law in a manner that accords with the Latter Day.

The Daishonin concludes "The Opening of the Eyes" on an exultant note: "For what I have done, I have been condemned to exile, but it is a

small suffering to undergo in this present life and not one worth lamenting. In future lives I will enjoy immense happiness, a thought that gives me great joy." This is his great declaration of a spiritual victory that shines in human history.

THE Daishonin was an exile, completely without freedom. He was confined to the tiny island of Sado, a kind of natural prison.

President Toda once said, "In modern terms, exile to Sado is comparable to being banished to the Sahara Desert." And yet, the Daishonin's spirit was that of a king. No one could put his heart in chains. No sword of persecution could make the slightest nick in his spirit.

From the vantage point of the sun of *kuon ganjo*, as from high above, he surveyed with perfect composure even the most violent storms of persecution. The pride and conviction to thoroughly dedicate ourselves to the Mystic Law enables us, too, to attain such greatness, to rise to the summit of such glory. We are advancing bathed in the resplendent golden sunlight of the Daishonin's immense spiritual struggle. □

1. In his annotations on the Nirvana Sutra.
2. *Hō'on Shō Mondan* (Commentary on "Repaying Debts of Gratitude"), p. 438.
3. At the Fourth Tokyo Youth Division Athletic Meet, held at Mitsuizawa Stadium in Yokohama, in 1957.
4. At the fifth general meeting of *Sōka Kyoiku Gakkai* (Value-Creating Education

Society; the forerunner of the Sōka Gakkai) in 1942.
5. His statement appears in the *Chuhen Gikyo*, which is cited in Dengyō's *Shugo Kokkai Shō*.
6. Saicho is another name for Dengyō.
7. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Works of Toda Josei), vol. 6, pp. 459-60.
8. "Precepts for Youth" in 1951.

9. Kumarajiva accepted an invitation from Yao Hsing, king of the Later Ch'in dynasty, and came to the capital, Ch'angan, in 401. There he participated in the translation of numerous Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese.
10. A similar statement is found in the *Shotoku Taishi Den Shiki*, a work by the Tendai priest Kenshin (1130-92).

Awakening People From Delusion: The Purpose and Background of “The Opening of the Eyes”

NICHIREN Daishonin wrote “The Opening of the Eyes”—one of his five most important writings¹—in February 1272 while he was in exile on Sado Island. It was addressed to Shijo Kingo, one of the Daishonin’s leading disciples in Kamakura, who received it on behalf of all believers.

On September 12, 1271, the Daishonin was nearly beheaded due to trumped-up charges by prominent priests of Kamakura—such as Priest Ryokan of Gokuraku-ji temple—and the shogunate government officials led by Hei no Saemon, deputy chief of the Office of Military and Police Affairs. After the failed execution attempt, the Daishonin was exiled to Sado Island in the northern Sea of Japan where convicted criminals were often sent. They rarely survived because of the harsh living conditions. Those responsible for the illegal execution attempt hoped that the Daishonin would also perish.

Due to intense government persecution during that time, many of the Daishonin’s followers renounced their faith. His religious movement centered in Kamakura was nearly destroyed, as he states, “When I incurred the displeasure of the government, even in Kamakura 999 out of 1,000 discarded their faith” (*The Major Writings of*

Nichiren Daishonin, vol. 3, p. 69). Many of those who still remained harbored doubts about the Daishonin’s teaching. Some even criticized him. They expressed their doubts, wondering why their teacher was suffering from one persecution after another after being told that the practitioner of the Lotus Sutra would be protected.

Reports of his disciples discarding their faith pained the Daishonin. So, although lacking adequate food, clothing, shelter and writing materials, and despite the fact that some Nembutsu zealots of Sado were trying to assassinate him, the Daishonin penned this treatise in order to resolve his followers’ doubts about their teacher while encouraging them to maintain their faith despite their hardships.

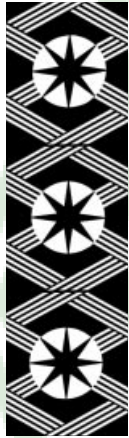
The title “The Opening of the Eyes” means to open the eyes of the people, that is, awaken them from their delusion about Buddhism and its true practitioner so that they may free themselves from suffering and misery. In “On the Buddha’s Behavior,” the Daishonin later described his motive for writing the treatise: “I wanted to record the wonder I had experienced, in case I should be beheaded. The essential message in this work, which I entrusted to Shijo Kingo’s mes-

senger, is that the destiny of Japan depends solely upon me. A house without pillars collapses and a person without a soul is dead. I am the soul of the people of Japan” (MW-1, 189).

In the treatise, the Daishonin reveals that he is the Buddha to establish the object of devotion for all people to reveal their innate Buddhahood. The Daishonin states at the beginning of the treatise: “There are three categories of people that all human beings should respect. They are the sovereign, the teacher and the parent” (MW-2, 59). These three virtues are the virtues of a Buddha. The virtue of sovereign is the power to protect people; the virtue of teacher is the wisdom to lead all to enlightenment, and the virtue of parent means compassion to nurture and support them. These three virtues are the underlying theme of the entire work, and, at the conclusion of the second volume of the treatise, the Daishonin declares: “I, Nichiren, am sovereign, teacher, father and mother to all the people of Japan” (MW-2, 187).

In this work, the Daishonin establishes himself as a true practitioner of Buddhism not through status or authority, but through his own virtues and action as a sovereign, teacher and parent to all people despite the slander and persecution befalling him. □

1. Five major writings—The five most important of all Nichiren Daishonin’s writings as selected by Nikko Shonin. They are: “The True Object of Worship,” “The Opening of the Eyes,” “On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism,” “The Selection of the Time” and “Repaying Debts of Gratitude.”



The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue

This series is based on The Dark History of the Fuji School: Revealing the Origin of the Nikken Sect (Ankoku no Fuji Shumonshi: Nikken Shu no Engen o Kiru) by Hajime Kawai, a vice senior advisor of the Soka Gakkai Study Department. To protect the fragile harmony between the priesthood and laity, the complete history of Nichiren Shoshu was not openly discussed in the past. This new series will give the whole story.

Introduction

TO most SGI members, the corruption of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood came to light at the end of 1990 with its plot to destroy the SGI. The root cause of the priesthood's present corruption and turmoil, however, dates back further in its history. The priesthood did not just suddenly become aberrant; rather, it has always had a tendency to become so. And this tendency became most evident when Nikken Abe, the high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, initiated his plan to disband the SGI and bring its members over to his temples.

The second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, once remarked: "In the seven-hundred-year tradition of this school, there are, on one hand, some who were noble, pure and worthy of respect. But, on the other hand, you may find others like cats or rats" (*Complete Works of Josei Toda* [Jp. Toda Josei Zenshu], vol. 1, p. 30). As President Toda cautioned, throughout the history of Nichiren Shoshu, many high-ranking

priests, including some high priests, distorted Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and sought personal gain by using their religious status and authority.

SGI President Ikeda, at the third SGI-USA Executive Conference, held in Boston on September 21, 1993, stated:

Corrupt priests who live off Buddhism and greedily devour the believers' offerings have been a constant in history.

The Nikken sect has become a truly corrupt and immoral school, while its priests, including Nikken, are nothing more than aberrant priests who transgress the teachings of Buddhism, as described above.

When the True Law is endangered by an avalanche of heretical Buddhist teachings, the Daishonin instructs us: "At such a time, one must set aside all other affairs and devote one's attention to rebuking slander of the Law. This is the practice of shakubuku" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 103).

In light of this writing, to thoroughly rebuke the great slander of the Law that is being perpetrated by the Nikken sect is to



A 19th-century print of Mount Fuji and the area around the head temple, Taiseki-ji.

practice Buddhism in accord with the present time. (Oct. 11, 1993, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

Until recently, only certain events in the history of Nichiren Shoshu (i.e., the Fuji School of Nichiren Buddhism) could be discussed—such as Nikko Shonin’s founding of Taiseki-ji (the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu); the selfless dedication of the third high priest, Nichimoku Shonin, to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism; the restoration of the school by the ninth high priest, Nichiu; the establishment of the school’s doctrinal foundation by the twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan; and the sect’s unprecedented development after World War II brought forth by the Soka Gakkai. In reality, however, “the pure stream of the Fuji School” was sporadic at best. The remaining history could only be described as “a muddy stream.”

The fifty-ninth high priest, Nichiko Hori, an eminent scholar of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism, once lamented the widespread corruption within the priesthood, satirically paraphrasing the Lotus Sutra: “It has fallen upon my ears that the wise priests of the Latter Day—throughout their past, present and future

existences—always keep this thought in mind: ‘How can I cause my purse to quickly acquire money?’ How could this be possibly true?” (*One-Hundred Sacred Admonitions* [Jp. Seikun Ippyaku Dai], p. 22). (The concluding part of the “Life Span” or the sixteenth chapter of the Lotus Sutra actually reads: “How can I cause living beings to...quickly acquire the body of a Buddha?” [LS16, 232]) Nichiko pointed out that within the priesthood there have always been corrupt priests living off Buddhism.

But the current situation is worse than ever. Now that the high priest himself has gone astray from the Daishonin’s Buddhism, corruption has spread throughout the entire priesthood.

When we thoroughly examine the 700-year history of the priesthood, it becomes clear that the distortion of the Daishonin’s Buddhism and corruption have cast a long shadow. The sect’s history contains numerous precedents to the current corruption. Therefore, understanding the history of the priesthood gives us an invaluable insight into the current temple issue and an excellent opportunity to deepen our understanding of the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

CHAPTER 1:

The five senior priests and their deviation from the Daishonin's teaching



(1) Nikko Shonin's departure from Mount Minobu

THE history of the Fuji school, the school founded by Nikko Shonin, began when he departed from Kuon temple at Mount Minobu. Because of his correct understanding of the Daishonin's teaching and of his courageous action to propagate it despite numerous persecutions, Nikko Shonin inherited the spiritual legacy of the Daishonin's Buddhism. In fact, the Daishonin entrusted Nikko Shonin with "the Law that Nichiren propagated throughout his lifetime" and referred to him as "the great leader of the propagation of true Buddhism" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600). The Daishonin also designated his outstanding disciple as "a chief priest of Kuon temple at Mount Minobu" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600). So why did Nikko Shonin feel compelled to leave Mount Minobu where his teacher spent his last years?

The direct cause of Nikko Shonin's departure from Mount Minobu lies in the four slanderous acts of Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of Minobu. Contrary to the Daishonin's teachings, he had a statue of Shakyamuni made and regarded it as an object of worship; he visited a Shinto shrine; he made an

offering to a stupa¹ of the Nembutsu sect; and he built a place of religious practice for the Nembutsu sect. Although Nikko Shonin strongly admonished Hakiri for his errors, he would not listen.

Regarding the steward's errors, the fifty-ninth high priest, Nichiko Hori, points out: "Of the four slanderous acts [of Hakiri Sanenaga] the gravest is his restoration of the Buddha's statue" (*Detailed Accounts of Nikko Shonin of the Fuji School*, p. 218). Viewing Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion completely contradicts the Daishonin's essential teaching that the Gohonzon is the basis of our faith and the fundamental object of devotion. Because of the gravity of Hakiri Sanenaga's behavior, Nikko Shonin refused to compromise.

In his writing "Reply to Mimasakabo," Nikko Shonin recounts the Daishonin's last will and testament: "When the steward [of Minobu] goes against the Law, I shall not reside here" (*Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Gosho*,² p. 1729). Following the Daishonin's last instruction, and to protect the integrity of Buddhism, Nikko Shonin left the Minobu area and moved to the Fuji area.

Behind Hakiri Sanenaga's slanderous acts was the influence of Niko, a chief

priest of the seminary at Minobu. He prompted the steward to go astray. Niko's strong influence on Hakiri Sanenaga is demonstrated in the steward's defiance toward Nikko Shonin. Sanenaga had been converted to the Daishonin's Buddhism by Nikko Shonin, so he regarded him as a teacher in the beginning. But when Nikko Shonin admonished the steward's behavior, he replied, "I have taken Minbu Ajari [Niko] as my teacher" (Ibid., p. 1733).

Aware of the circumstances under which Sanenaga committed these slanderous acts, Nikko Shonin states in "Reply to Lord Hara": "These things are not the fault of Lay Priest [Hakiri]. They are solely the errors of the twisted priest" (Ibid., p. 1733).

Niko propounded that "When those upholding the Lotus Sutra visit [a Shinto shrine], the Buddhist gods as well will come to that shrine" (Ibid., p. 1732). In the Daishonin's treatise, "On the Pacification of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism" (Jp. Rissho Ankoku Ron), however, it states that when people ignore the Law, all the Buddhist gods (i.e., the protective forces in the universe that protect life) will abandon the land so that people's misery and suffering will increase. Based on the Daishonin's teaching, Nikko Shonin discouraged believers from visiting a Shinto shrine that would confuse them about which is the correct practice. But Niko allowed believers to visit Shinto shrines and criticized Nikko Shonin, stating that "Byakuren Ajari [Nikko] reads only non-Buddhist scriptures and is ignorant of the ultimate teaching of Buddhism" (Ibid., p. 1732).

Niko became deviant both in his understanding of Buddhism and in his behavior. In "Reply to Lord Hara," Nikko Shonin describes Niko's aberrant behavior: Niko invited a painter to the estate of lay priest Moro'oka and had him paint a mandala. To consecrate the painted mandala, he gave a sermon for one day and

one night and then got drunk on sake while holding fast to the offering he received for performing the consecration. Furthermore, heavily drunk, he sang vulgar songs and made a laughingstock of himself (Ibid., p. 1734). Regarding Niko's disgraceful behavior, Nikko Shonin writes: "What could possibly bring more shame upon Nichiren than this?" (Ibid., p. 1734).

Commenting on Nikko Shonin's "Reply to Lord Hara," Nichiko Hori states: "Nikko Shonin states: 'What could possibly bring more shame upon Nichiren than this?' We priests and lay believers of the modern day must deeply understand his statement and regard it as golden words with which to admonish ourselves. We must not take these words lightly, thinking of them as empty words from six-hundred-some years ago" (February 1956, *Daibyakurenge*, p. 3).

(2) The betrayal of the five senior priests



OF the six senior disciples designated by the Daishonin, all except for Nikko Shonin betrayed their teacher's will and intent and attempted to destroy his teaching. On October 8, 1282, five days before his passing, at Ikegami in Musashi Province (present-day Ikegami in Ota Ward, Tokyo), the Daishonin designated Nissho, Nichiro, Nikko, Niko, Nitcho and Nichiji as "main disciples" but noted that "the order of listing is irrelevant" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 8, pp. 2–3). The order of the Daishonin's designation indicates the order of conversion, not the order of seniority after his passing. So it does not contradict Nikko Shonin's inheritance of the Daishonin's teaching. It also demonstrates that the Daishonin did not entrust his teaching to Nissho and

Nichiro. Otherwise, he would not have had to add “the order of listing is irrelevant.” These “main disciples” would later be called “the six senior priests.”

The Daishonin designated the six senior priests under the leadership of Nikko Shonin to protect and spread his teachings after his death. While designating Nikko Shonin as chief priest of Kuon temple at Minobu, the Daishonin also intended the other five senior priests to continue to take leadership in their assigned areas for the further propagation of the Law.

Nissho and Nichiro stayed in Kamakura; Niko in Mobaru of Kazusa Province (present-day Mobaru City, Chiba Prefecture); Nitcho in Mama of Shimousa Province (present-day Ichikawa City, Chiba Prefecture); and Nichiji in Fuji County of Suruga Province (present-day Fuji City and its vicinity, Shizuoka Prefecture).

Regarding the Daishonin’s designation of the six senior priests, Nichiko Hori states that the Daishonin “asked them to become leaders for believers scattered in various areas and exert themselves in propagation, thus accomplishing the great desire of kosen-rufu.”

On October 13, 1282, the Daishonin passed away peacefully at the estate of Ikegami Munenaka. His body was cremated, and Nikko Shonin brought the ashes back to Minobu for burial. At the end of January 1283, after having conducted a memorial service for the hundred-day anniversary of the Daishonin’s passing, Nikko Shonin consulted other disciples and instituted a vigil for their teacher’s grave at Minobu. Eighteen leading disciples were selected to take turns attending the grave by making offerings and prayers.

Each of the six senior priests and two of the rest were to stay at Mount Minobu for one month at a time and

protect the Daishonin’s gravesite. Of the eighteen priests, nine (Nichii, Nippo, Echizen-ko, Nitchi, Nichiji, Nichimoku, Nisshu, Nichiben and Nikke) had entered the priesthood under the direct or indirect guardianship and guidance of Nikko Shonin, demonstrating his outstanding leadership.

When the disciples eventually returned to their respective areas, Nissho took an annotated copy of the Lotus Sutra, which the Daishonin instructed to keep by his tomb. And Nichiro took a statue of Shakyamuni, which the Daishonin had received as a gift from the steward of Ito when he was exiled to Izu and had since kept by his side. The Daishonin also willed this statue to be kept by his tomb. Nissho and Nichiro never returned to Minobu as long as Nikko Shonin remained there, completely neglecting the vigil over their teacher’s grave.

In his “Reply to Mimasaka-bo,” Nikko Shonin explains his circumstances: “[The five senior priests] seem to have abandoned the grave [of the Daishonin]. Though they propounded a teaching not to discard one’s teacher, they have already abandoned their own. It cannot be helped that they may be subjected to criticism in the secular world” (*Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Goshō*, p. 1729).

When Nikko Shonin became chief priest of Kuon temple, Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of Minobu, rejoiced: “I am pleased as if the late sage had come back once again” (*Detailed Accounts of Nikko Shonin of the Fuji School*, p. 164). But after Niko was designated as a chief of the seminary at Minobu in 1285, Sanenaga gradually came under his influence. Niko would not hesitate to bend the Daishonin’s Buddhism to curry favor with the steward of the area; this eventually led to the various treacherous acts against the Daishonin’s Buddhism.



(3) The five senior priests' jealousy toward Nikko Shonin

THE reason why the five senior priests could not support Nikko Shonin and betrayed the Daishonin's teaching lies in their jealousy toward Nikko Shonin. Their ill feelings toward the Daishonin's foremost disciple eventually clouded their vision and led them astray.

Of the five senior priests, Nissho and Nichiro became disciples of the Daishonin before Nikko Shonin did. To them, Nikko Shonin was a junior priest. Niko and Nitcho joined the Daishonin's order after Nikko Shonin, but they considered themselves his equals in status and seniority. Nichiji entered the priesthood under the guidance of Nikko Shonin, but he disliked obeying his senior. Their jealousy and base emotionalism influenced their judgment—they eventually stopped visiting Minobu and started to propound teachings contradictory to the teachings of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

Regarding the five senior priests' betrayal of Nikko Shonin, SGI President Ikeda commented:

Nichiko Shonin points out that the five senior priests disliked Nikko Shonin because he was strict in observing the Daishonin's teachings, as stated in the "Rissho Ankoku Ron," which forbade visiting Shinto shrines. Furthermore, at the base of their opposition to Nikko Shonin lay their intense jealousy toward him....

President Toda once said: "The epitome of men's jealousy is that of Devadatta." Jealousy distorts one's thinking. Once under the sway of jealousy, our minds become susceptible to life's devilish workings and give rise to a wicked desire for destruction. Devadatta, for example, grew intensely jealous of Shakyamuni and made an

attempt on his life and created a schism in his order.

The five senior priests, because of their jealousy toward Nikko Shonin, opposed true Buddhism and caused dissension among the Daishonin's followers. The mind racked by ugly jealousy obstructs the spread of Buddhism; this principle is still applicable today. (From an April 26, 1992, speech)

Besides jealousy toward Nikko Shonin, the five senior priests' cowardice and ignorance of the Daishonin's Buddhism played a role in their betrayal. After the Daishonin's passing, Nissho and Nichiro—who lived in Kamakura, the seat of the shogunate government—were oppressed by the government, which threatened to destroy their temples. They managed to escape from this predicament by submitting an offer to pray for the government based on the Tendai practice. Fearing persecution and eager to preserve their security and social status, they curried favor with the government while compromising their teacher's will and intent.

The five senior priests' shallow understanding of Buddhism and weak faith led them to believe that the Daishonin was spreading the Lotus Sutra based on the Tendai doctrine. In this regard, Nikko Shonin explains: "The five senior priests proclaimed that Sage Nichiren's teaching is that of the Tendai school, so they called themselves in their letters submitted to the government 'the followers of the Tendai school'" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1601). They also nonchalantly allowed their junior priests to receive the precepts at the Tendai school's head temple at Mount Hiei (*Ibid.*, p. 1602).

The five senior priests' betrayal of the Daishonin's teaching was detailed in Nikko Shonin's writings such as "On the Matters That the Believers of the Fuji School Must Know" (*Fuji Isseki Monto*

Zonchi no Koto) (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1601–09) and “Refuting the Five Senior Priests” (*Gonin Shoha Sho*) (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1610–16). According to Nikko Shonin’s account, the five senior priests’ errors can be summarized as follows: 1) The five senior priests asserted that the Daishonin’s teachings belong to the Tendai school and that he spread the teaching of the Lotus Sutra, following the teaching of Dengyo. 2) They visited Shinto shrines in various places such as Ise, Mount Izu, Hakone and Kumano. 3) They regarded copying of the Lotus Sutra as a legitimate practice and encouraged it. 4) They allowed their disciples to enter the priesthood and receive the precepts at the Tendai sect’s head temple at Mount Hiei. 5) They called the Daishonin’s letters written in the common language of the time (Japanese phonetic characters) as their teacher’s shame and destroyed them. 6) They made a statue of Shakyamuni and regarded it as an object of devotion. 7) They disrespected Gohonzon inscribed by the Daishonin, hanging them behind Shakyamuni’s statues, mistreating them by leaving them in a corridor or burying them with bodies or selling them off for profit.

Not only did the five senior priests go against the Daishonin’s teaching, but they also slandered Nikko Shonin for admonishing their errors. As Minobu school scholars acknowledge in *The Doctrinal History of the Nichiren Sect*, there was nothing remarkable in the five senior priests’ Buddhist study. They grew weak in faith, became fearful of persecutions, became oblivious to the Daishonin’s desire to spread the Law and eventually went completely astray from the Daishonin’s teaching. These characteristics shared by the five senior priests are applicable to those who betrayed Buddhism throughout its history.

In “Document for Entrusting Kuon Temple at Mount Minobu,” dated October 13, 1282, the Daishonin states: “The teachings expounded by

Shakyamuni for fifty years I have transferred to Byakuren Ajari Nikko. He shall be a chief priest of Kuon temple at Mount Minobu. Those who betray him, be they lay believers or priests, shall be known as slanderers of the Law” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600). When the five senior priests started opposing and denouncing Nikko Shonin, they further proved themselves to be “slanderers of the Law.”

In “Letter from Sado,” the Daishonin also warns his followers of the treachery of priests against Buddhism: “Neither non-Buddhists nor the enemies of Buddhism can destroy the Buddha’s True Law, but the Buddha’s disciples definitely can. As the sutra says, a parasite in the lion’s bowels will devour the lion” (MW-1, 35). The Daishonin’s premonition came true soon after his passing. The five senior priests, as “the Buddha’s disciples,” that is, ecclesiastics, attempted to destroy their teacher’s work from within. As the Daishonin points out, throughout the history of Buddhism, its decline and corruption have been caused by priests, especially those of high status. The history of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood is not an exception to this historical pattern. In this regard, President Ikeda comments: “The Daishonin clearly states that it is not enemies from outside but rather ‘Worms within the lion’s body’—meaning high-ranking priests within Buddhism and, more particularly, their feelings of jealousy [toward those who practice Buddhism correctly]—that will destroy Buddhism” (May 25, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 4).

4) The five senior priests and the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood



THE five senior priests’ betrayal of the Daishonin is instructive for those of us practicing today. And Nikko

Shonin's resolute and uncompromising action to refute the five senior priests' erroneous teachings and clarify believers' confusion may be regarded as an example of how a Buddhist must act.

Regarding the danger of priests becoming an obstacle to the spread of Buddhism, President Ikeda quotes Nichiko Hori and comments:

The 59th high priest, Nichiko Shonin, was convinced that it was obstacles from within, rather than from without, that would obstruct the flow of kosen-rufu, causing it to stagnate and dry up.

Nichiko Shonin said: "The flow of the Law of Nichiren Daishonin is frequently obstructed. Obstacles arise from both within and without, but those from within inflict the most serious wounds... With external obstacles, even if they interrupt the flow [of kosen-rufu], it will revive again after a period of time. With internal obstacles, however, the flow is interrupted as a result of a complete drying up [of the flow itself], thus it is not as easy to revive. Unless we all profoundly recognize this point, the prospects of seeing the dawn of kosen-rufu even in 1,000 or 10,000 years will be extremely dim."

As an example of "obstacles from within," Nichiko Shonin lists the five senior priests, who turned their backs on Nikko Shonin and caused rifts among the believers, and the slander of Temmoku [a priest who, despite having met the Daishonin during his lifetime, put forward his own doctrines; his heretical views were later refuted by Nikko Shonin].

Nichiko Shonin keenly perceives that it is the activities of evil priests within the sect itself that present the greatest obstacles and impediments to the flow of kosen-rufu. He makes this statement by way of warning to future generations. And just as he asserted, evil priests who are bent on destroying the Buddhist Law have now appeared just

like Devadatta [in the time of Shakyamuni Buddha] and the five renegade senior priests [in the time of Nikko Shonin]. We must on no terms allow the flow of kosen-rufu to be blocked by them. Evil must be destroyed. (March 23, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

The treacherous nature of the five senior priests is essentially consistent with the basic tendency of the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in that it has gone completely astray from the Daishonin's teaching. The priesthood's denial of the equality of lay believers and priests; its attempt to insert itself as an intermediary between believers and their enlightenment by claiming control and authority over the Gohonzon and its view of the high priest as the sole embodiment of the Daishonin's teaching—none of these has a basis in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Furthermore, the priesthood conforms to the behavior of the five senior priests in its jealousy and slander toward the SGI, especially its president, for pointing out its errors.

A parallel can also be drawn between Nichiren Shoshu's head temple, Taiseki-ji, degenerating into a slanderous place and Mount Minobu as a slanderous place due to the slander of Buddhism committed by Hakiri Sanenaga. The SGI discourages its members from visiting Taiseki-ji for the similar reason Nikko Shonin had to leave Mount Minobu where his teacher had spent his last years. In this regard, President Ikeda states:

Moreover, by excommunicating the Soka Gakkai, an organization that has appeared in accord with the Buddha's will and decree, Nikken tried to "cut off" the flow of kosen-rufu. Just as Mount Minobu had turned into a place where the Daishonin's spirit could no longer dwell, Taiseki-ji, under the control of Nikken, has turned into a "place of slander."

Those visiting Taiseki-ji now, far from gaining benefit as a result, would surely incur the Daishonin's censure; they stand to receive only punishment.

The fact that the Dai-Gohonzon bestowed upon the entire world is the basis of our faith remains unchanged. However, to donate money to Nikken in order to see the Dai-Gohonzon would amount to condoning his slander of the Law. One who supports slanderous priests in effect are guilty of the same offenses as they are. Those who commit acts implicating themselves in the offenses of others become, in a word, "accomplices."

Those who join slanderers of the Law in worshipping the Dai-Gohonzon are sure to be sternly rebuked by the Daishonin: "Far from struggling against the Buddha's enemies, you made offerings to them. How can you account for your action?" (December 20, 1993, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

In the same speech, President Ikeda uses the metaphor of "a clear cool pond" from the Lotus Sutra to illustrate why a visit to Taiseki-ji would amount to a betrayal of the Daishonin's intent and teaching:

The "Medicine King" chapter of the Lotus Sutra likens the sutra to "a clear cool pond [that] can satisfy all those who are thirsty."

In other words, just as the water of a pond can quench people's parched throats, the Lotus Sutra "irrigates" people's lives, dousing the flames of sufferings of earthly desires.

Interpreting this passage for the present age, we can say that the Dai-Gohonzon is being compared to a "clear cool pond." However, the area surrounding this "clear cool pond" has now become a swamp of slander. To reach the pond, one must travel through the swamp. The pond is still every bit as clear as before, but because of the sur-

rounding swamp, one's life will be defiled when he or she tries to approach it. This is how some people metaphorically describe the current situation.

Continuing with the same analogy, even if one does not go directly to the pond, clear water flowing from the pond wells up from the spring that is in our home. There is no difference at all between the water of the pond and that of the spring.

Nittatsu Shonin gave clear guidance (on September 7, 1962) on this point, saying, "The Gohonzon enshrined in your altar is, itself, the life of Nichiren Daishonin." (December 20, 1993, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, what connects us with our innate Buddhahood is our faith. In this sense, whether or not we directly pray to the Gohonzon may be considered secondary to our faith. President Ikeda points out that our faith—not our physical proximity to the object of devotion—leads us to our enlightenment as follows:

For example, the Daishonin wrote to his follower Lord Matsuno, whom he had never met: "How is it that you can have faith in Nichiren, though you have never met him? It is, no doubt, the result of good causes you have planted in your life in the past. Since the time has come when you are certain to attain Buddhahood in your next life, you now have aroused faith." (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1379)

Today, we could say that "not to have met the Daishonin" is equivalent to "not having physically chanted before the Gohonzon" and also, naturally, "not having physically chanted before the Dai-Gohonzon."

The Daishonin exclaimed how wonderful it was that Lord Matsuno had taken faith in spite of the fact that he had never met the Daishonin or not personally, assuring him that he would certainly attain Buddhahood.

Our heart, our faith is extremely important. The Daishonin states: "Faith alone is what really matters" (MW-1, 246).

Attaining Buddhahood is not decided by such externals as to whether we have met the Daishonin or not, or whether we have physically chanted before the Dai-Gohonzon.

It also goes without saying that to assert that a person does not have faith unless he or she visits the head temple Taiseki-ji is a complete contradiction of the Daishonin's words. Those who make this assertion are betraying the Dai-Gohonzon, the embodiment of the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin. How can the enemies of the Dai-Gohonzon possibly expect to receive benefit even if they chant before the Dai-Gohonzon? As it states in the Goshō, if you have faith, everything you do is communicated to the original Buddha. It is communicated to the Dai-Gohonzon. The Daishonin will definitely praise your faith as wondrous. (February 1994 *Seikyo Times*, p. 14)

In the same regard, President Ikeda also remarks:

We should look upon the Gohonzon enshrined in each of our homes as the life of the Daishonin, the entity of the original Buddha. When chanting daimoku with that conviction, it is the same as if we are worshipping the Dai-Gohonzon itself right where we are.

Nittatsu Shonin also said (on November 23, 1977): "Wherever the Gohonzon is enshrined, that place, in a broad sense, takes on the significance of the high sanctuary. The sincere daimoku you chant to that Gohonzon with a concentrated mind free of all extraneous thoughts is instantly received by the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of true Buddhism. The place where you chant Nam-myōhō-enge-kyō is instantly transformed into Eagle Peak. And this is where you attain Buddhahood in your present form."

Wherever you may be in the world, if you believe in the Gohonzon and chant daimoku with sincere faith, you are in contact with the Dai-Gohonzon at that moment and in that place. The claim that unless you visit the head temple you will not acquire true benefit is a great falsehood in violation of the teachings of Nittatsu Shonin. (November 1993 *Seikyo Times*, pp. 28–29)

Nikko Shonin left Mount Minobu, a place dear to him, as an expression of his resolve never to compromise his teacher's will and intent. His departure from Mount Minobu actually prevented the Daishonin's Buddhism from being polluted by the five senior priests' corruption. In the spirit of Nikko Shonin, the SGI is now discouraging its members from visiting Taiseki-ji because doing so would condone the Nichiren Shōshū priesthood's erroneous claims.

No matter where we may be, whether we are physically in front of the Gohonzon or not, as long as we pray with sincere faith, we can manifest the Buddha's life from within. The fact that SGI members throughout the world are receiving benefit from their practice is eloquent testimony to the importance of faith as taught by the Daishonin. □

To be continued

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1. stupa: A kind of shrine in India where the relics of Shakyamuni or other saints are housed. They originated from burial mounds and are usually dome-shaped or mound-shaped.
 2. *Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Goshō*—compilation of Nichiren Daishonin's writings published by the Soka Gakkai in 1973. The writings in *Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Goshō* are arranged chronologically; and it also includes two letters by Nikko Shonin ("Reply to Mimasaka-bo" and "Reply to Lord Hara"), which are not in *Goshō Zenshu*. *Goshō Zenshu* is the first compilation of Nichiren Daishonin's writings published by the Soka Gakkai in 1952.

Shijo Kingo— "My Story"

By Fay Hovey, Maui, Hawaii

What follows is part two of a story based on what is known about Shijo Kingo, a samurai who was one of the Daishonin's chief disciples; he was converted in 1256. His full name and title are Shijo Nakatsukasa Saburo Zaemon-no-jo Yorimoto. Kingo is an

equivalent of the title Saemon-no-jo.

Imagine how it must have been for him, responsible for his lands, serving Lord Ema. He was a physician, a warrior, a family man and a person who commanded respect in his region.

DID I say something before about my first wife? Fine details are often lost across the centuries, folding one onto another like the creases of a fan. We were both so young. Children, really, for that was the custom. The betrothal was arranged by our families so that favorable conditions would prevail within the clan. As a youth, I was preoccupied with the world of men. Immersed in the military

arts, I lived with the smell of horses, the clang of steel on steel, testing myself against others, hardening myself for the battle sure to come, avidly listening to the war tales of my grandfather and father. In all of the dreams I had for myself, I never saw this shy young girl, soft as flowers that scatter on stones in the spring.

We were in the custom of the times married and that is how I learned about love and the loss of

it. We had our brief time and she gave me sons. Death visited every house that year. It seemed the very birds ceased to sing out of respect for the dead. Pressing my wet face to the tatami mat next to her body, wrung lifeless by the plague, I felt the hard stone of helpless grief settle over my heart. I found out what it was to be a husband. Later, warring would teach me what it was to be a man.



Perhaps it was for the best for a woman's greatest wish then, aside from the health of her children, was to die before her husband. And, of course, we had no idea how the scroll of life would be written and what was to come.

My mother took charge of the children. And my father went to war, throwing himself into every fight he could find. It was, after all, a time of great impermanence, and we believed that the world was on a steady, horrible decline with incessant warfare the obvious result. And if you were to die, better to die on your horse, galloping at full speed, with an enemy in sight. No wonder we samurai loved swords so much we honored them with names. They were our great deliverers. One great arc over the head and all sorrow, doubt and desire would roll away, leaving whatever was left for the looters and crows.

Yes, I could ride, and shoot with my bow and drink with the best of them. And I did. I enjoyed a bit of a reputation, was known to swagger and was quick to venture my opinion even when it wasn't asked for. I liked my sake and the company of friends.

Eventually I married again. A woman whose husband had died in combat. Recalling my own dead wife, I knew what it was to face this world without someone to stand by me. No longer a girl, she was a woman who could make me come home at night. Each time the plague swept across the land, I pulled her closer to me as she slept and I lay awake, determined that death would not take this one. Not without a fight.

I learned medicine. I learned how to make poultices of herbs. Later, I studied the Chinese methods: moxibustion and the art of prescription-making and diagnosis. How to tell the condition of a person's liver or kidneys by the tiny pulses in the wrist. The lines of the face, the shape and color of the tongue. I can't say I saved as many as I've lost. But one does what one can in the face of such calamity. And, as in any age, another skill can prove handy and might further one's career. I could be summoned to the humblest dwelling or to the hushed and gilded apartments of government officials. I was a man who could be relied upon. I had a lot to lose and nothing to be gained by being foolish. But, as is often the

case, a woman can stand on the far shore before a man even knows the tide has changed.

My mother's face had taken on a new bloom. The deeply grooved sadness at the corners of her mouth lightened and we saw her smile more. Heard her humming again while cooking or sweeping the kitchen. Her back, bent by years of unyielding adversity, began to straighten. Perhaps it was her renewed interest in religion. Whatever it was, my heart was happy to see it.

Meanwhile, the world outside the walls of our residence could not have been worse. Palaces and government buildings burned to the ground; floods and the food shortages that followed them. The plagues carted off thousands. Earthquakes. We seemed to live on the chattering lid of a pot full of boiling water. To say nothing of vice and every sort of beggar, bandit and ill-meaning folk. It wasn't safe to go out at night without one's escort or sword. It made me yearn for the old times of hard fighting and simple living.

So when I first saw the priest Nichiren, I joked with my companions on the road home that someone so outspoken wouldn't live to the end of the year and



offered to wager my best saddle on it. For some reason I had no takers.

Reaching my residence, I stabled the horse, joined my family and pretended to listen to their talk. But it was his voice I was hearing. My wife, with a worried frown, left me sitting over a cup of tea staring into the garden. I felt he had read my entire life in one glance and yet we had never met. I felt the walls of my life falling in and falling outward at the same time. I must have paced up and down the veranda a hundred times before

falling onto my futon in restless slumber.

Hours before dawn, I arose to pace again, my tea still cold from the night before. By the time my family woke up, I was already on the road, questions crowding out all thoughts of caution, a high excitement in my blood.

Walking slowly up the steps of his hermitage outside Kamakura, I was not surprised to see he was calmly sitting at a small table as if he had been waiting for me. I bowed deeply and sat down. He offered me rice and tea. For one so familiar with

death, I was finally ready for life.

You have to understand the time I lived in. When I was 16 years old, avid for battle and glory, 500 warriors committed suicide at Hokkedo Monastery rather than submit to the Hojo family. Life meant nothing, really. Death was always at my shoulder. The code of my class was severely laid out, honor, bravery, loyalty, pride in our birth, the protection of my lord. "If you think of saving your own life, you better not go to war at all," it was said.

As I climbed the steps of the



hermitage at Matsubagayatsu, my life at 26 lay heavily on my shoulders as my battle armor. If this man offered hope, I was ready to drink his tea.

At first, I sat stiffly. I had so many questions and yet it would appear rude to blurt them out. We drank tea quietly while the first birds began to stir, the mist rising from the tops of the hillsides around the small valley. He sent someone to take care of my horse, and I waited. It's humorous now, but at the same time, I was deeply puzzled and embarrassed. I was a brash person, you see. Speaking my mind had never been a problem before. In my haste, I'd even forgotten the customary offerings one would bring when visiting a priest. So there I was empty-handed without words to match my feelings. I must have looked like a village fool!

"I noticed you yesterday in the square. I knew I would see you again. You have the look of someone with a hot temper, I better not make you angry, eh?" He looked at me seriously, yet in his eyes I could see a glimmer of humor.

"I myself have quite a reputation for hot words. Some would say I am a radical and a troublemaker and there are numerous people who would like to see me dead and my bones thrown to the crows...so," he smiled, as he poured more tea for me. "You and I may have some thoughts in common. What brings a man to my door before the cold dawn?"

I admit it, I was rattled. His informality threw me off. Priests were not always this direct. And most of them lived fairly well. The hut where we sat was of the

humblest style, his robes plain. "I haven't slept at all..." I ventured. I...I don't know why..."

"And you still don't know why," he said. "That's good. Very good. I have a lot of people who come here thinking they know everything—more than I do—so it's a pleasure to meet someone who has the good sense to admit they don't know. We're off to a good start already, my new friend."

He questioned me at length about my family, my life. He seemed so genuinely interested, I felt myself warming up to him. He didn't preach to me and it was a good thing he didn't for I had little patience with the ravings of priests. He listened deeply, nodding with understanding, and as I spoke, I felt a familiarity. He seemed more like a father or friend or trusted uncle and something more I couldn't grasp.

"You've had a vigorous and worthy life as a samurai. And yet, there is a deep inner sorrow. You suffer in ways that others don't see. Why is this so?" He looked me in the eyes and I felt the walls of my life quaking again. So I spoke to him of my first wife, my first love and how she died. Death by plague is a long and drawn-out process. One can barely speak of such suffering without weeping.

"From that time until now, I have felt myself become so caloused over and cynical. I understand that death can come at any moment. For myself, I don't care. I am trained and ready for it. But what of my family, for my innocent wife and children? Why are we born anyway, if only to suffer and die as if we never existed at all?" This ques-

tion came from the very bottom of my innermost thoughts.

Straightening his body and placing his palms on his knees, he said, "Do you think you would have come here to me if there was no suffering in your life whatsoever?"

He pressed on. "You are a physician. Do people come to you when they are well?"

"No, of course not. They come when they are sick or injured... I don't understand, I..."

"Out of illness arises the mind that seeks the Way. Without suffering, most likely you would not have ever made the ride to this hermitage to ask such a question, would you? Surely idle curiosity did not keep you awake last night!"

Do not think I was an easy convert. I had more questions that day and in days to come. Many times I would visit. I continued to feel drawn to go and I brought my friends. Five years later that simple hut in the valley at Matsubagayatsu would be destroyed by hundreds of warriors and my mentor, Nichiren, banished to Izu. Regardless of the landslides, floods, earthquakes and famine that ensued, those were happy times when he lived close by. He taught us how to chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo. I began to feel a joy I'd never experienced before.

It is interesting how one sentence of truth can change the direction of a life. The right medicine at the right time. In the profoundest of ways, my life was begun again as my questions flowed from me like a river with no beginning and no end. □

Illustrations by Ed Lee

Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra

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

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

Shakyamuni did not attain Buddhahood for the first time during the time he lived in India. Rather, he has been enlightened since the remote past; and though appearing to enter nirvana, he has in fact been constantly in this world expounding the Law. This revelation by Shakyamuni of his true identity is termed “casting off the transient and revealing the true.” In this discussion, the participants explore the profound meaning of this principle, the relationship of the Person and the Law, the effort to restore the original humanism of Buddhism and other topics relating to Shakyamuni’s true identity.

27 Shakyamuni’s Declaration of the Supreme Dignity of the Human Being

Katsuji Saito: I understand that the first part of this series of dialogues has been published in Hong Kong. Ming Pao Publications has reportedly chosen our discussion as the first volume of a new multi-volume series under the general theme “Buddhism and Life.” This seems yet more evidence of the rising tide of interest worldwide in the profound philosophy of life that the Lotus Sutra expounds.

Haruo Suda: The general foreword to the series, written by Chengsi Wei, senior editor of the Ming Pao Newspapers, reads in part:

What is the value and significance of life? What is life’s origin? What is its purpose? What is the significance of human existence in the boundless expanse of the universe? Such inexhaustible questions constantly weigh on our minds; and there is not a person alive who has not sought some kind of answer...

Among the many religions and philosophical systems in the world, Buddhism, with its profound insight into the nature of human existence, is like a



A painting of the life of Buddha in the Temple of Yongju, Suwon, South Korea.

great tree that towers alone high above the forest canopy, guiding people toward profound insight.

Takanori Endo: His perspective in comparing Buddhism to a tree towering above the forest is most perceptive. He also says:

Buddhism is not limited by the concept of a “savior.” It teaches self-respect and self-trust, and that through our own power we can gain release from the sufferings of birth and death.

In consequence, Buddhism has a unique ability to put people’s minds at ease and to help people change their lives. Herein lies the fundamental cause for the rising popularity of Buddhism today in both East and West, indeed throughout the entire world.

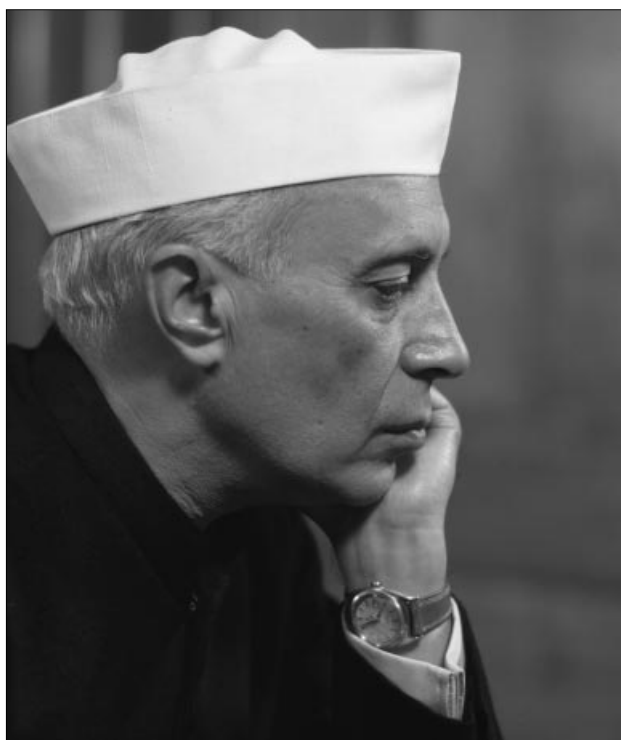
Daisaku Ikeda: He puts his finger on the key point. The essence of Buddhism lies in developing oneself through one’s own determination and tenacious effort—not by depending on anyone or anything else. We need to have the spirit to stand on our own initiative without relying on anyone. We don’t need others’ sympathy or sen-

timentiality. We have to stand up and advance, even if there is no one to encourage us.

We resolutely and cheerfully take responsibility to change ourselves, our surroundings, society and the land where we live. That is the principle of *ichinen sanzen*, or three thousand realms in a single moment of life. What Buddhism teaches is not abstract theory; it is not a weak-kneed way of life of constantly clinging to something for support. At the same time, neither is it to be confused with the egoism to arrogantly suppose, “I alone am correct and respectable.”

To believe in the great life force within oneself is at once to believe in the great life force existing within all people. Buddhism teaches that we should treasure the lives of others just as highly as we treasure our own.

Saito: The SGI has spread throughout the world because we have put this essential Buddhist teaching into practice. The fact that there are people in 128 countries practicing the essence of the Lotus Sutra, it seems to me, surely stands out in the history of Buddhism as a stupendous achievement.



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Ikeda: Nichiren Daishonin, along with Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents, surely rejoices at what we have achieved.

Endo: Friends from seventy countries gathered recently in Hong Kong for the SGI General Meeting [February 19, 1997]. And the 16th SGI World Youth Peace Culture Festival held there was put on by young people representing a hundred different countries. It seems to me that we have truly entered a brilliant new age thanks to you and all members around the world.

What is the wellspring of energy behind this unprecedented flourishing of Buddhism? As your remarks suggest just now, Mr. Ikeda, regarding President Makiguchi and President Toda, I am convinced it is because of the existence in the SGI of the “spirit of oneness of mentor and disciple” directed toward the realization of kosen-rufu.

Saito: My feelings are the same. Conversely, I think that we can trace any decline in Buddhism to the absence of this all-important spirit.

Why Did Buddhism Die Out in India?

Ikeda: That’s an important point. The oneness of mentor and disciple is in fact the essence of both the Lotus Sutra and the “Life Span” chapter. My approach continues to be to explain the Sutra from a variety of angles in different contexts depending upon the occasion. This is a good time, I think, to introduce the view of Buddhism that was held by Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), India’s first prime minister. He once discussed the question of why Buddhism died out in India with the French author André Malraux (1901–76).

I, too, once held a dialogue with Mr. Malraux.¹ I will never forget how his eyes shone. He had a certain aura about him; a great spirit of inquiry that seemed to radiate from his entire being. He was an incredibly curious man always seeking a deeper understanding of life. Mr. Malraux had a keen interest in Buddhism, and he suggested the possibility that a new civilization might some day be born that had its roots in Buddhism.

I once talked about the discussion between Nehru and Malraux in a speech I gave in



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Germany.² At one point in their conversation, Nehru remarked: “The genius of the Buddha has to do with the fact that he is a man. The originator of one of the most profound systems of thought in the history of humanity, an inflexible spirit and the most noble compassion. An accuser, vis-à-vis the teeming multitude of the gods.”³

Suda: Mention of his stance vis-à-vis the gods calls to mind how Nichiren Daishonin severely rebuked and remonstrated with Bodhisattva Hachiman.⁴

Ikeda: It was the wonderful character of the Buddha that won over people’s hearts. After Shakyamuni’s death, however, as Nehru deftly observed, “He became deified, he merged with that multitude, which closed round him,”⁵ in effect, eclipsing his human side.

Saito: It is certainly true that at present there are very few adherents of Buddhism in India. Of course, Shakyamuni generally is revered—but as one of many gods within the Hindu pantheon. The problem is that as soon as Shakyamuni was deified, the path he had revealed for human

(Far left) Jawaharlal Nehru (1889–1964), the first prime minister of India after the country gained independence from Britain in 1947, pondered the question of the deification of Shakyamuni Buddha.

(Left) André Malraux (1901–76), French writer, and Daisaku Ikeda discuss the importance of Buddhist philosophy in the twenty-first century at Malraux’s residence in the suburbs of Paris, May 1975.

beings to attain enlightenment disappeared.

Ikeda: Yes. Fundamentally, Buddhism is a teaching about how to live that is transmitted from mentor to disciple. The relationship of mentor and disciple is formed when there are people who desire to follow the correct path in life and who seek a mentor, and when the mentor responds to their spirit. But if the Buddha as the mentor ceases to be a human being and becomes a “god,” then, practically speaking, the path of mentor and disciple cannot exist.

Suda: By following the same path as the mentor one can attain the same state of life as the mentor. That is the premise on which the path of mentor and disciple is based. If the mentor is thought to be a “god,” then the followers, put off by the seemingly insurmountable gap between themselves and the mentor, will not be able to muster the aspiration that would otherwise drive them to advance along the same path.

Saito: In Hinayana Buddhism, which emerged relatively early after Shakyamuni’s death, the people gradually came to view Shakyamuni as a deity. Consequently they came to feel that it was enough if they could just strive to attain the enlightenment of persons of learning, or voice-hearers (i.e., the stage of arhat⁶).

In Mahayana Buddhism, other than the Lotus Sutra, which was systematized at a later time as a countermovement to Hinayana, a large number of Buddhas are introduced besides Shakyamuni Buddha. These include, for example, Amida,⁷ Dainichi⁸ and Vairochana.⁹ But there is an unbridgeable gap between these Buddhas and actual people. They are presented largely as beings to whom people can entrust their hopes for salvation; not as potential mentors.

Thus, the path of mentor and disciple exists

neither in the Hinayana nor in the provisional Mahayana teachings.

Ikeda: When “Shakyamuni the human being” was forgotten, Buddhism ceased to be a teaching about how to live the best possible life. The path of mentor and disciple disappeared. Consequently, Buddhism declined and became authoritarian.

Endo: Nichiren Shoshu, under the leadership of Nikken, which represents the latest and, possibly, the most egregious case of authoritarianism and abuses by a Buddhist clergy, certainly gives no indication of presenting a teaching that is concerned with how people should live. They are merely using Buddhism as a shield of authority to hide their own decadence. Such a situation surely represents the “destruction of the Law.”

Saito: Nichiren Daishonin and Shakyamuni went out among the people to propagate the Law widely while struggling to overcome all kinds of difficulties and attacks—collectively termed the “three obstacles and four devils.” When followers fail to continue along the same path as the mentor, the very life of Buddhism is extinguished. One cannot fail to be impressed by Nehru’s wisdom in discerning that Buddhism died out in India when Shakyamuni ceased to be viewed as a human being.

Shakyamuni Completely Reverses His Earlier Teaching

Ikeda: Let’s get back to the “Life Span” chapter. The Lotus Sutra’s message of “return to Shakyamuni the human being!” is nowhere expressed more clearly than in the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” found in the “Life Span” chapter. I propose that we consider this in some detail.

Suda: How does “casting off the transient and revealing the true” imply returning to Shakyamuni the human being? I should think that Shakyamuni’s revelation that he has been enlightened since the remote past, rather than making him more human and accessible, would on the surface seem to suggest that he is a great Buddha



far removed from ordinary people.

Endo: Since ancient times, there has in fact been a tendency to interpret the “Buddha of the remote past” of the Lotus Sutra as some kind of supreme deity. But such an interpretation certainly does not represent the essence of the Lotus Sutra.

Ikeda: Let’s begin by confirming the meaning of casting off the transient and revealing the true. I think a review will be valuable even for those who are well versed in Buddhist study.

Endo: Okay. In the “Life Span” chapter, Shakyamuni says:



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(Above) Tours of the Buddha's historical sites in Bodhgaya.

(Left) Bodhgaya stupa at the Bodhi tree where it is said that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment.

In all the worlds the heavenly and human beings and asuras all believe that the present Shakyamuni Buddha, after leaving the palace of the Shakyas, seated himself in the place of practice not far from the city of Gaya and there attained anuttarasamyak-sambodhi. But good men, it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood. (LS16, 225)¹⁰

Suda: People thought Shakyamuni had renounced the world at 19 and attained Buddhahood at the age of 30 while seated beneath a tree near the city of Gaya. While there is some variation among different accounts as to Shakyamuni's age when the main events in his life occurred,

they all share in common the view that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time during the lifetime he lived in India. That is the standard view.

This same view on when Shakyamuni attained enlightenment can also be found in the provisional teachings expounded prior to the Lotus Sutra, and in the theoretical teaching (or first half) of the Lotus Sutra.

Endo: In the "Life Span" chapter this view is completely overturned. Here, Shakyamuni reveals that, on the contrary, he has been enlightened since the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*.¹¹ In contrast to the view that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time during his existence in India, he in

fact attained Buddhahood long before. This original enlightenment is called “actual attainment in the remote past.” Shakyamuni, who attained enlightenment in the remote past, is called the “true Buddha of the remote past,” in the sense that he reveals his true identity in the remote past. “True,” here, includes the meanings of true identity, true origin or true entity.

By contrast, Shakyamuni who attained enlightenment for the first time in India is a “transient Buddha” that the true Buddha of the remote past manifested in response to people’s capacity and aspirations in order to lead them to happiness. A transient Buddha is to a true Buddha what a shadow is to a body; it is a provisional aspect.

Saito: A transient Buddha is also termed a “provisional Buddha.” The relation between the true Buddha and a transient or provisional Buddha is often likened to the relation between the “moon in the sky” and the “moon in a pond”; that is, the difference between the actual moon and its reflection.

Suda: The designation of the first fourteen chapters of the Lotus Sutra as the theoretical (literally, “provisional”) teaching and of the latter fourteen chapters as the essential (literally, “true”) teaching is also based on this distinction between the provisional Buddha and the true Buddha.

Ikeda: Regarding the difference between the essential and the theoretical teachings, Nichiren Daishonin says, “One is as different from the other as fire is from water or heaven from earth” (MW-3, 275). He also stresses that the difference between the essential and theoretical teachings is far greater even than that between the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. That’s because the essential teaching contains this doctrine of casting off the transient and revealing the true.

Shakyamuni’s Last Words to His Disciples— Base Yourself on the Law

Saito: This raises the question of just how Shakyamuni’s casting off of his transient status and the consequent revelation of his true identity as the Buddha enlightened since the remote past

translates into a message to “return to Shakyamuni the human being.”

Ikeda: Why don’t we try to pursue this methodically? In the first place, Shakyamuni’s purpose in expounding his teachings lay in opening the eyes of all people to the “eternal Law” to which he himself had awakened. And Shakyamuni further taught that even after his death people should make this Law their mentor.

Suda: Yes. Ananda, who had constantly waited in service upon the Buddha, at one point asks Shakyamuni, “On what should we rely in our practice after you have passed away?” Shakyamuni replies: “Ananda, you should make yourself an island and depend on yourself. Without depending on others, you should make the Law an island and your foundation.”¹²

Endo: This dictum is variously phrased as “Depend on yourself, depend on the Law,” or “Illuminate the torch of the self, illuminate the torch of the Law.”

Ikeda: Yes. The important thing here is the relation of the Law and the Buddha. “Law” has a variety of meanings, including that of “teaching.” But, in conclusion, what Shakyamuni refers to as the Law, or Dharma, is in fact no different from the life of the eternal Buddha. We can think of the Law as the property of the Law, or Dharma body, of the eternal Buddha.

This may seem like a bit of a leap, but Shakyamuni’s awakening to the eternal Law can be seen as equivalent to his perceiving the “eternal Buddha” within himself. From the standpoint of the Lotus Sutra, the teaching to “make the Law your foundation” is essentially a directive to make the eternal Buddha one’s mentor. More important, Shakyamuni himself attained enlightenment with that eternal Buddha as his mentor.

Endo: “Depend on yourself,” here, of course, does not mean to simply rely on the self. One knows best of all just how undependable the self is.

Ikeda: In effect he is saying, “Become the master of your mind” (MW-2, 205 [236–37]).¹³ For us, this means thoroughly devoting ourselves to faith. The point is to make this self—the self of faith—our foundation.

Josei Toda at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters, April 1956.

Saito: There are certainly various ways of looking at the relationship of the Person and the Law. In the writing, “On Attaining Buddhahood,” Nichiren Daishonin says, “If you think the Law is outside yourself, you are embracing not the Mystic Law but some inferior teaching” (MW-1, 3). While the “Law” might seem to imply something separate from our everyday lives, it in fact exists nowhere apart from our own hearts.

Shakyamuni’s Mentor Is the Nam-myoho- renge-kyo Thus Come One

Since I attained Buddhahood
the number of kalpas that have passed
is an immeasurable hundreds, thousands, ten
thousands,
millions, trillions, asamkhyas.
Constantly I have preached the Law, teaching,
converting
countless millions of living beings,
causing them to enter the Buddha way,
all this for immeasurable kalpas.
In order to save living beings,
as an expedient means I appear to enter nirvana
but in truth I do not pass into extinction.
I am always here, preaching the Law. (LS16, 229)

Ikeda: Fundamentally, the Law and the Person (i.e., the Buddha) are inseparable.

Thus Come One, another name for Buddha, literally means “one who has come from the world of truth.” In other words, Thus Come One means the actual Law that manifests in our day-to-day reality. The universal life has the aspects of the Person and the Law; and these two aspects are inseparable.

This may get a little complicated, but since it is a key concept I would like to pursue this point a little further. In one place in his preaching Shakyamuni says, “Those who see the Law see me, those who see me see the Law.” This means that to perceive the Law with one’s life is to encounter Shakyamuni, and that to encounter



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Shakyamuni is to perceive the Law. “Me,” in the phrase “those who see me,” fundamentally indicates the eternal Buddha who is at one with the eternal Law.

In the “Life Span” chapter Shakyamuni reveals the eternal Buddha body when he says, “I am always here, preaching the Law” (LS16, 229). While in terms of the literal meaning of the Lotus Sutra, this is referring to Shakyamuni who has been enlightened since the remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*, ultimately it points to the Buddha of *kuon ganjo*, or the Buddha who has been enlightened since time without beginning.

The eternal Law at one with the eternal Buddha to which Shakyamuni became enlightened is the eternal life to which all Buddhas are enlightened. Just as did Shakyamuni, all Buddhas of past, present and future have become enlightened to, and have taken as their mentor, the Buddha of *kuon ganjo*. This is the Buddha of Limitless Joy, the Buddha of absolute freedom of *kuon ganjo*, or the Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Thus Come One. President Toda said, “The Life of Nichiren Daishonin and our own lives have neither beginning nor end. This is what is termed *kuon ganjo*. There is neither beginning nor end. The universe itself is a great entity of life.” It has existed since time without beginning as the ultimate entity of compassion.

Embracing this great entity of life as his “mentor,” Shakyamuni the human being became enlightened just as he was—as a human being.

And the moment he became enlightened, he realized that all Buddhas throughout time and space became Buddhas with this “eternal Buddha” embodying the principle of the oneness of the Person and the Law as their mentor.

Suda: In the “Expedient Means” (second) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, we also find the concept of “five kinds of Buddhas who preach the one Buddha vehicle.” “Five kinds of Buddhas” specifically means: all Buddhas, the Buddhas of the past, the Buddhas of the future, the Buddhas of the present, and Shakyamuni Buddha.

Ikeda: In other words, this means that by earnestly seeking and practicing the Law, we can certainly encounter the Buddha who is “always here, preaching the Law” (LS16, 229).

Saito: “You should earnestly seek out the Law that I have left behind,” is what Shakyamuni is in effect telling us. “When you do so, you will encounter the Buddha enlightened since the remote past.” This is in fact the motif of the parable of the excellent physician and his sick children that is expounded in the “Life Span” chapter.

Suda: I see. I never made that connection before.

The gist of the parable of the excellent physician and his sick children is as follows. In order to save his children (the people) who have by mistake consumed poison and lost their minds, the excellent physician (the Buddha) goes away and has someone report that he died in a distant land. Grieving over their father’s death, the children come to their senses and drink the good medicine (the Law) that their father had left for them, and thereby recover their sanity. The father then returns and is reunited with his children who have been restored to health.

Endo: The Buddha is always in the world and never passes away. In order to arouse in people a seeking mind for the Law, he uses as an expedient means his apparent entry into extinction. But once the people come to believe in and embrace the Law, the Buddha again appears before them. This is the meaning of the parable.

Ikeda: That’s right. Through practicing the eter-

nal Mystic Law, absolutely anyone can perceive in his or her heart the eternal Buddha who is “always here, preaching the Law.” We can perhaps say that this is the true significance of the Buddha’s decree—“return to Shakyamuni the human being!” And it is the “Life Span” chapter’s parable of the excellent physician and his sick children that faithfully expresses this spirit.

Suda: As you pointed out last time, the “Life Span” chapter is a message for the people in the world after Shakyamuni’s death, and in particular for the people of the Latter Day of the Law. Shakyamuni is saying, in other words, “After I have passed away, you must take my mentor as your own, and advance along the same path as I have.” This is in a sense Shakyamuni’s will.

Endo: So Shakyamuni’s not being in the world is really not an obstacle to one’s attaining enlightenment.

Suda: Those in the world during Shakyamuni’s lifetime could sense the eternal Law through direct personal contact with the Buddha, and could advance along the path of enlightenment. But that is not possible for those of us living in the world after his passing. I think that in this we find an important reason for why the “Life Span” chapter is said to be for those in the world after the Buddha’s passing.

Those Alive in Shakyamuni’s Day Had Personal Contact With the Buddha

Endo: To give one example from Shakyamuni’s time, after attaining enlightenment beneath the Bodhi tree, he delivered his first sermon to five monks with whom he had formerly practiced austerities. Traditionally, this is called “the first turning of the wheel of the law.”

The five ascetics had previously derided Shakyamuni, on the grounds that he had “regressed from the path of difficult practices.” But it is said that when they laid eyes on Shakyamuni, they were struck by the undeniable brilliance of his character and immediately became his followers.

Ikeda: Shakyamuni’s first words on that occasion

were, "I have attained immortality."¹⁴ With these words Shakyamuni was expressing how he felt having attained enlightenment. He must have perceived the great and eternal life of the universe pulsing in his heart. He must have sensed the eternal life force of the Thus Come One welling forth at each moment from the very depths of his being.

So moved were they by the great state of life they sensed flowing from Shakyamuni the human being that the five monks entered the path of Buddhism. Through the person Shakyamuni, they were able to connect to the eternal Law. It was only during Shakyamuni's lifetime that it was possible for people to have such a personal exchange between mentor and disciple.

Suda: To illustrate the kind of exchange that Shakyamuni had with his disciples, there was someone who was so impressed by Shakyamuni that it changed his entire life. I am referring to the notorious thief called Angulimala. He was apparently given the name Angulimala on account of his supreme villainy. *Anguli* means finger and *mala* means necklace in Sanskrit. He was said to have killed a great many people and to have made a kind of ornament with his victims' fingers that he hung around his neck. It is said that a single phrase from Shakyamuni, "Come along,"¹⁵ caused him to have a change of heart, and that as a result he became the Buddha's follower.

He thereafter began collecting alms as part of his practice. But people who bore a grudge against him because of his past actions pelted him with dirt and rocks, and tore his robe to shreds. He returned to Shakyamuni covered with blood.

Shakyamuni encouraged Angulimala, saying: "You must persevere. You have to tenaciously endure this hardship. You are now receiving the effects of negative karma that ordinarily you would have to undergo in hell for years, for hundreds of years, for thousands of years."¹⁶

Endo: That calls to mind the principle of lessening karmic retribution.

Ikeda: One's negative karma from past misdeeds doesn't just disappear immediately once the person begins practicing Buddhism. Still, it must have been very painful for Shakyamuni to see

someone who had had a genuine change of heart and become a disciple receive such treatment, even if it were due to evil karma the person himself had created. Doubtless it was as painful for Shakyamuni as if he had received a wound to his own flesh.

Shakyamuni wanted above all to enable his followers to carry through with their practice without regression and advance along the path leading to the attainment of Buddhahood. For precisely that reason, he gave them encouragement of profound compassion. The suffering of the disciple is also the suffering of the mentor. This is the heart of a true mentor.

Angulimala keenly felt the Buddha's compassion. As a result he was able to endure this hardship.

Saito: There is another well-known episode that concerns Aniruddha,¹⁷ a disciple who had lost his sight. Aniruddha was trying to thread a needle to mend his robe. But he was having difficulty because of his poor eyesight. He muttered in exasperation, "Isn't there anyone who wants to accumulate further benefit by threading this needle for me?" Someone replied, "Let me accumulate more benefit." He was taken aback when he realized that he was hearing the warm voice of Shakyamuni.

Aniruddha felt ashamed and tried to refuse the offer. "Surely there's no need for you to accumulate any more benefit," he told Shakyamuni. But Shakyamuni told him that this was not the case, and that the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of happiness were never-ending. And with that he threaded the needle.¹⁸

Ikeda: That's a marvelous vignette. It conveys a sense of the actual person Shakyamuni, who, if he saw a disciple who was having difficulties, would by no means simply ignore the person; on the contrary, he would do everything he could to warmly help them.

In any event, Shakyamuni's teachings differed considerably depending on whom he was addressing. All the same, through personal exchange with Shakyamuni, his disciples were able to advance along the correct path. Those alive during Shakyamuni's lifetime pursued the Law—the Buddha's mentor—inspired by the fresh and profound sense of the Buddha

they gained through their direct contact with Shakyamuni.

After Shakyamuni's Death, the Law Becomes the Mentor

Saito: By contrast, after Shakyamuni's death the Law necessarily becomes fundamental. That is inevitable. The only way to attain Buddhahood is to have a direct connection with the Law and, in effect, make the Law one's mentor.

Ikeda: Yes. After Shakyamuni's passing, therefore, the practice of the Buddha's disciples came to center around the issue of how to perceive the eternal Law that is at one with the eternal Buddha.

The so-called Hinayana Buddhist Order, which came into existence after Shakyamuni's death, was composed primarily of Shakyamuni's direct disciples and of those monks who carried on after them. It may be that at first they earnestly observed the practice of strictly regulating the self based on teachings that Shakyamuni left behind. But that spirit was gradually lost with the passage of time. They departed from the original teaching to look within the self to perceive the Law at one with the Buddha to which Shakyamuni had awakened; and it may be that as a result there arose a tendency to see Shakyamuni as somehow a different kind of being than they were.

In any event, at some point they forgot about struggling to embody the eternal Law that is one with the eternal Buddha to which Shakyamuni the human being had awakened. This is a generalization, but it seems likely that this is more or less the essence of what took place.

Shakyamuni's Deification Resulted in Buddhism's Dehumanization

Saito: Because direct contact with the Buddha was impossible, in time the concept of the "great Buddha" took on a kind of life of its own. People

The challenge of religion is to resist deification, which creates dependent believers and ultimately dehumanizes the religion itself. (Top) An eighth-century Kara Khoto laughing Buddha in stucco. (Middle) Greek deities. (Bottom) A statue of Garuda, a sun deity from Hindu mythology.



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thought that Shakyamuni alone had attained the Buddha's enlightenment, and that it was far beyond them to ever become Buddhas themselves.

Endo: The enlightenment toward which they strove was the highest enlightenment of voice-hearers—the stage of *arhat*. The state of the Buddha was seen as utterly unattainable.

Suda: In the meantime, the precepts gradually became more and more complex. Also, it is pointed out that, to maintain the order, the monks created an air of mystery around their temples, and went so far as to expound teachings arrogating authority to themselves. At the same time, they placed the Buddha on a pedestal rending him inaccessible to ordinary people.

Ikeda: Still, things weren't quite as bad as they could have been as long as Shakyamuni's direct disciples were around. The first compilation of sutras is said to have taken place about a century after Shakyamuni's death. By then Shakyamuni's deification may have already been fairly well advanced. Also, it might be that the project had been prompted by a sense of crisis that memory of Shakyamuni the human being, which had grown increasingly dim, was fading away entirely.

Saito: The Sanskrit term that, in the Chinese Buddhist canon, is translated as "World-Honored One" is *bhagavat*, an ancient Indian literary term. This was apparently an appellation that disciples used in addressing a teacher. But as Shakyamuni's deification became solidified, people came to refer to him instead as the "supreme deity" or as the "god of gods."

Suda: When we come to Mahayana Buddhism, we find an emphasis on a personal Buddha as a "savior" figure who leads people to enlightenment.

Endo: However, as was pointed out earlier, these Buddhas are not the same as Shakyamuni. They include Amida, Vairochana and Dainichi. They are personal Buddhas of deep compassion; moreover, they are described as supreme beings who continually save people over the span of eternity.

Ikeda: They may have arrived at these Buddhas in

attempting to approximate the "eternal Law at one with the eternal Buddha" that Shakyamuni made his own mentor. In that sense, we can see them each as a partial expression of the life of the original Buddha enlightened since the remote past.

Suda: In terms of the doctrine of the Buddha's three bodies or enlightened properties,¹⁹ according to one interpretation Dainichi represents the Dharma body, or the property of the Law; and Amida represents the bliss body, or property of wisdom. By contrast, Shakyamuni of the "Life Span" chapter who has been enlightened since the remote past is the Buddha inherently possessing all three enlightened properties. From the standpoint of the "Life Span" chapter, therefore, all other Buddhas represent partial views of enlightenment.

Saito: Regarding these pre-Lotus Sutra teachings, the Daishonin says, "All teach no more than fragments of the Law inherent in one's life" (MW-5, 181). The same can perhaps be said of the Buddha's bodies or enlightened properties taken individually. Why don't we review this concept of the three bodies another time?

Endo: These teachings explain nothing but idealized Buddhas—Buddhas exhibiting special appearances and characteristics. This becomes a common concept in Buddhism.

Ikeda: From one standpoint, these Buddhas are expressions of people's ardent spirit of yearning for the Buddha; or perhaps they were formulated in response to that longing. Nichikan Shonin says that these Buddhas are "adorned with distinguishing features and characteristics in accord with the sentiments of the people of the time."

Suda: The problem is that as a result of this Mahayana Buddhist movement, people came to make light of Shakyamuni, the originator of Buddhism. Instead, they revered imaginary Buddhas as "gods." Ultimately, this closed off the path whereby people could discover the "Law at one with the Buddha" within their own lives.

Endo: Moreover, the teaching of such Buddhas, rather than encouraging people to place impor-

tance on their own inherent strength, only reinforced the tendency to depend on the Buddha's compassion for salvation. The Pure Land or Nembutsu school of Buddhism, in which people seek salvation through the benevolence of Amida Buddha, is a case in point.

Ikeda: In short, both the Hinayana and Mahayana teachings completely deviate from the spirit of the teaching that Shakyamuni left behind to make the Law and the self our foundation.

If I may venture to generalize, while the Hinayana teachings emphasize the side of seeking the Law, they needlessly alienate the Buddha from human beings. The Mahayana teachings, on the other hand, while they seek to revive the relationship between the Buddha and human beings, fail to extend people's understanding to the extent that they themselves can embody the Law. Neither approach is adequate. This underlines the significance of the "Life Span" chapter's teaching of casting off the transient and revealing the true.

Endo: Buddhism is not the only place we find such tendencies as you have just described. Any religion may succumb to the flawed notion of trying to subordinate people through dogma or authority.

Ikeda: That's right. The spirit of the Lotus Sutra is to resist the dehumanization of religion and religion's tendency to become divorced from reality; but rather to steadfastly redirect religion to the prime point of the human being.

Suda: I recall the Daishonin's declaration in "On Practicing the Buddha's Teachings" that he has "[launched] the battle of the provisional and true teachings" and "the battle goes on even today" (MW-1, 101). The true legacy of Buddhism can be found only within unceasing spiritual struggle.

Saito: The Daishonin constantly proclaimed: "Return to Shakyamuni!" He refutes adherents of the Shingon sect who revered Dainichi Buddha, saying, "Who were the parents of Dainichi Buddha, and in what country did he appear when he expounded the Dainichi Sutra?" (MW-7, 53).

Endo: He condemns as utterly confused those

who try to do away with the actual person Shakyamuni while making much of imaginary Buddhas of uncertain origins. "Return to Shakyamuni!" means "Return to the human being!"

Suda: The Daishonin waged a desperate struggle to revive the humanistic spirit of Buddhism.

Ikeda: That suggests just how strong the tendency of religion is to depart from the human being. And when that happens, religion becomes little more than a means for controlling people.

Suda: That's a truly frightful prospect.

Saito: While various arguments can be made about the principal cause for this phenomenon, the following can certainly be cited as contributing factors: corruption of members of the clergy, increasing rigidity in the organization of the religious body, and a stagnant spirit of faith. When these coincide, a religion becomes alienated from the people and grows authoritarian.

Suda: The Nikken sect is a classic example of a school in which these factors are all in evidence. They have a dissolute high priest making wild claims; for example, that he is equal to Nichiren Daishonin. This alone sends a clear message that they are not the least concerned with fundamental issues of human life and existence.

President Toda: "I Am Merely an Upstanding Common Mortal"

Endo: President Toda said:

It would be pretty peculiar if by practicing Nam-myoho-renge-kyo we could attain the rank of "bodhisattva" or "great bodhisattva." Now, in the Latter Day of the Law, there couldn't be another of the status of Nichiren or of a great bodhisattva. Such a being could only be a phantom.²⁰

Ikeda: I recall how a newspaper reporter once sarcastically asked President Toda, "Since you're the president of the Soka Gakkai, that must make you a living Buddha. Doesn't it?"

"Hah!" he retorted with a hearty laugh. "If a

Blaise Pascal (1623–62), French mathematician and theologian, said, “Man is neither angel nor beast, and it is a misfortune that whoever tries to play the angel ends by playing the beast.”

living Buddha were to eat raw fish or drink whiskey, that would be terrible. There isn’t any such being.”

“I am merely an upstanding common mortal,” he would often say. “Religious leaders who claim to be gods and the like are frauds.”²¹

Saito: There isn’t anyone who is superhuman—that was his firm conviction. I am impressed with a sense of how important a condition Buddhist humanism will be for religion in the twenty-first century. This is indeed just as you are always telling us.

Ikeda: Likewise, it is not at all uncommon to find instances of powerful people using religion as a sign of authority to make themselves appear somehow superior to others. When clergy or leaders of society try to pass themselves off as better than others or as special, the people are invariably plunged into misery. This is a lesson of history, as the witch hunts and the oppressive regimes of dictators such as Hitler and Stalin make abundantly clear.

Blaise Pascal (1623–62) puts his finger on the essence of this tragedy, saying, “Man is neither angel nor beast, and it is a misfortune that whoever tries to play the angel ends by playing the beast.”²²

Endo: Those who try to pass themselves off as somehow superhuman or as “angels” are in fact beasts; they come to behave in a way that is sub-human. From this standpoint, we find that the principle of casting off the transient and revealing the true signifies Shakyamuni displaying the great and eternal life that is at one with the universe while never for a moment departing from his status as a human being.

Ikeda: In philosophical terms, it urges us: “Direct your gaze on the eternal without departing from



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the present reality!” “Seek out the supreme that is at one with life’s inherent truth!” “Discover the universal right where you are!” That is the spirit of casting off the transient and revealing the true.

The “Life Span” Chapter Unifies the Hinayana and the Mahayana

Saito: Although both the Hinayana teachings and the provisional Mahayana teachings make repeated attempts to get at the truth, and have produced significant philosophical results, in the last analysis they are distorted by biases. It is through the “Life Span” chapter’s teaching of casting off the transient and revealing the true that these two bodies of teaching are for the first time largely unified.

Ikeda: That's right. The "Life Span" chapter beckons us to return to Shakyamuni the human being. And yet, through the concept of the eternal Buddha, it develops a religious world more profound than that afforded through the Buddha's deification. Without departing in the least from the human being, it opens up a path whereby people can limitlessly expand or transcend the narrow limitations of their humanity.

Saito: Thinking in these terms, it occurs to me that while we tend to place importance on the aspect of Shakyamuni's revealing his true identity as the eternal Buddha, the aspect of his "casting off the transient" is equally important. In "casting off the transient," we can sense Shakyamuni's determination to discover the truth without departing from the actual person; that is, to always base himself on "Shakyamuni the human being."

Ikeda: To "cast off" means to open. Opening up the transient could be compared to removing the clouds blocking the sun. When the clouds are dispelled, the "true identity," like the brilliant light of the sun, appears. Just because there are clouds in the sky, it doesn't mean that you look for the sun somewhere else. You don't stop looking for the sun in the sky; for that is where its true identity resides.

Suda: I understand the meaning of "return to the human being," but I imagine that many people may be a little unclear as to what precisely is meant by the expression "eternal Buddha" or by the "Buddha who is always here, preaching the Law." Some may associate these terms with a kind of superhuman being.

Endo: Actually, general Buddhist scholarship treats Shakyamuni of the "Life Span" chapter as a kind of deity.

Ikeda: It was for precisely this reason that Nichiren Daishonin inscribed the Gohonzon. Nothing could be more actual or concrete. The Daishonin made it possible for us ordinary people of the Latter Day, by chanting the Mystic Law to the Gohonzon, to become one with the "Buddha who is always here, preaching the Law."

The Gohonzon embodies the oneness of the Person and the Law. In terms of the Person, it is the manifestation of the Buddha of absolute freedom since time without beginning; in terms of the Law, it is the manifestation of actual *ichinen sanzen*. Therefore, President Toda referred to the eternal Buddha of time without beginning as "Lord Ichinen Sanzen."

When we embrace the Gohonzon and exert ourselves for *kosen-rufu*, the "eternal Buddha who is always here, preaching the Law" comes forth in our lives.

President Toda commented on the passage of the "Life Span" chapter, "Ever since then [*gohyaku-jintengo*] I have been constantly in this *saha* world, preaching the Law, teaching and converting" (LS16, 225), as follows: "This is the 'universe that is at one with the Gohonzon.' The life of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo has since the remote past been at one with the universe."²³

He also said: "When we pray to the Gohonzon and receive the life of the Gohonzon in ourselves, then, because our life itself is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the power of the Gohonzon wells forth within us. Then we can observe the affairs of the world without any serious error in judgment."²⁴

Revealing Our True Identity Every Morning and Every Evening

Endo: The "Ongi Kuden" (Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings) cites a quotation of Fu Tashih,²⁵ "We awaken with the Buddha every morning, dream with the Buddha every night; at every moment we enter the Way, and at every moment we reveal our true identity" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 737). We who are dedicating our lives to faith in the Gohonzon are able to sense the truth of these words more profoundly and immediately than any Buddhist scholar can.

Ikeda: It's a matter of "revealing the true" at each moment. Every morning and evening we actualize the principle of casting off the transient and revealing the true. We cause the life of the eternal Buddha of *kuon ganjo* to manifest in our hearts and we continuously advance toward *kosen-rufu*. From a broad perspective, this means that we are in fact reading the "Life Span" chapter with our lives each day.

Saito: Over the course of two millennia, the spiritual channel that Shakyamuni opened gradually drifted away from humanity and dried up. It is the humanism of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that has caused it to be revitalized as a great river that will endure for eternity.

Ikeda: Yes. The Daishonin's teaching refutes all philosophies and religions that force people to kneel down before "religious authority," and enables people instead to open up the "sacred great life" within themselves. It was for this reason that the Daishonin encountered great persecution. His was a great struggle for human rights, undertaken with indomitable courage.

In "The True Entity of Life," he says: "The common mortal is the entity of the three properties, or

the true Buddha. The Buddha is the function of the three properties, or a provisional Buddha" (MW-1, 90). I think we will have the chance to discuss this profound doctrine in detail later on; but in essence what he is saying is that the common mortal is the true Buddha. I would like to interpret this as the ultimate declaration of the "humanization of Buddhism."

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is a humanistic religion that will illuminate the third millennium, beginning with the twenty-first century, and the entire 10,000 years and more of the Latter Day of the Law.

To be continued

1. Their dialogue was published under the title *Ningen Kakumei to Ningen no Joken* (The Human Revolution and the Human Condition) by Ushio Publishing Company, Tokyo, in 1976.
2. At the Third SGI of Germany Executive Conference, held in Frankfurt am Main on May 24, 1994.
3. André Malraux, *Anti-memoirs*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 228.
4. Bodhisattva Hachiman: Originally, a Japanese deity of the harvest. He is often called Great Bodhisattva Hachiman. In Buddhism, Hachiman is regarded as a deity who protects the votaries of the Lotus Sutra.
5. André Malraux, p. 228.
6. *Arhat*: Defined variously as "one worthy of respect," "one who has nothing more to learn," "destroyer of the bandits of the illusions of thought and desire," "no rebirth" (because an *arhat* has freed himself from transmigration in the six paths), and "worthy to receive offerings."
7. Amida: Skt. *Amitayus*, "Infinite Life," or *Amitabha*, "Infinite Light." The Buddha of the Pure Land of Perfect Bliss in the western region of the universe.
8. Dainichi: Skt. *Mahavairochana*. A Buddha mentioned in the Dainichi and Kongochō sutras, worshipped by adherents of esoteric Buddhism.
9. Vairochana: A Buddha who appears in the Kegon, Bommo and Dainichi sutras. The Shingon sect equates this Buddha with its central deity, Mahavairochana.
10. 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.
11. *Gohyaku-jintengo*: Please refer to the previous installment of this series.
12. *Nanden Daizokyo*, ed. Junjiro Takakusu (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanko-kai, 1935), vol. 7, pp. 68–69.
13. Editor's note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the revised edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
14. *Nanden Daizokyo*, (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanko-kai, 1938), vol. 3, pp. 16–17.
15. *Ibid.*, vol. 11, Part 1, p. 134.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 139–40.
17. Aniruddha: Also Anaritsu. One of the ten great disciples of the Buddha. Having once fallen asleep in the presence of the Buddha, he vowed that he would never sleep again. He eventually lost his eyesight, but acquired the ability to see intuitively.
18. *Kokuyaku Issaikyo Indo Senjutsubu Agonbu* Vols. 9–10, ed. Shinyu Iwano (Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1969), p. 152.
19. According to Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China, the benefit of the Buddha specifically consists of the Buddha's three bodies or enlightened properties: the Dharma body or property of the Law (the truth to which the Buddha is enlightened), the bliss body or property of wisdom (the wisdom the Buddha has attained), and the manifested body or property of action (the physical form in which the Buddha appears in this world and his compassionate actions).
20. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1987), vol. 7, p. 372.
21. *Ibid.*, pp. 372–73.
22. *Pascal's Pensées*, trans. Martin Turnell (London: Harvill Press, 1962), p. 173.
23. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1985), vol. 5, p. 431.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 373–74.
25. Fu Ta-shih (497–569): A Chinese priest of the Northern and Southern Dynasties period. His true name is Fu His, but he was also called Fu Ta-shih, which can be construed to mean a bodhisattva who will succeed the Buddha.

Recollections of Leading World Figures

By Daisaku Ikeda

The island of Calaut, Philippines.

ALBRECHT G. SCHAEFER/CORBIS

José Abueva — Former President of the University of the Philippines

WHY is it that the Japanese do not have respect for their fellow Asians? Why don't they realize that their very arrogance has made them the objects of scorn?

Fifty years ago, a young boy was rowing a sailboat in search of his parents. He was 16 years old. His parents had been taken prisoner by the Japanese armed forces occupying the Philippines. The boy's father, Teodoro Abueva, refused to cooperate with the invaders of his homeland and became a member of the Bohol Guerrillas, the anti-Japanese resistance government. He worked together with Senator Carlos P. Garcia, who would become president of the Philippines in 1957. The boy's mother, Nena Veloso Abueva, was head of the Bohol Women's Auxiliary Service in the resis-

tance. Together Teodoro and Nena had three daughters and four sons. The boy in the boat was their second son, José.

The Japanese military had been hunting the Abuevas for a long time. In the meantime, they had captured Teodoro's mother, Lola Cadia. José and his younger brother Billy were also taken captive. But they let José go and told him to tell his father, Teodoro, that if he wanted his mother and son back, he had better surrender to the Japanese.

Several days later, Billy came staggering back home, groaning in pain. He was almost unrecognizable. His face was swollen, his front teeth had been knocked out, and his body was bruised and battered. This was the message of the Japanese military to Teodoro Abueva, with the implied threat: "If you continue to resist, we will

also torture and kill your mother." But Billy carried a message from his grandmother for his father: "Do not surrender, no matter what happens to me. I am old. You have a wife and seven children to live for."

Hiding in the mountains with the rest of the guerrilla forces, the Abueva family—except for José and Billy who were living apart from the family—were eventually captured a year later. The Japanese military separated the husband and wife and tortured them. The children could hear their parents' agonizing screams as they were tortured by the Japanese. Then the soldiers took the parents away somewhere and let the children free. Billy looked after his siblings while José, together with a cousin, set out in a sailboat in search of his parents.

It was to be a sad journey. They landed on the island where the family had been taken. News of the American



President José Abueva of the University of the Philippines and the SGI president unveil a plaque engraved with the name of Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Hall at the university's Diliman campus, May 1993.

recapture of the Philippines was spreading, and there was not a Japanese soldier to be seen. Praying that by a miracle his parents were still alive, José searched for a clue to their whereabouts. Someone told him there had been rumors of people being killed and hurled down a cliff, and suggested he start looking there. When Jose reached that area, he heard several people had been killed on a nearby hillside.

He climbed the hill. There was not a cloud in the sky. The sun shone down fiercely. He walked into a clearing with some bushes lying beyond it. Suddenly, an acrid smell assaulted his nostrils. He looked around. He saw a soiled white shirt with blue stripes and immediately recognized it as his father's. Then he saw a piece of brown dress. It was his mother's. He also found fragments of rosaries and belts he recognized as being theirs. Still, he couldn't believe they were dead. Human bones were scattered about. He gathered them together. He found a skull. And then another. From their teeth, he knew they be-

longed to his parents.

What a horrible experience! But José didn't cry. He was so drained and depressed that tears would not come. When he gazed around him, the shining sea stretched out toward Mindanao. Thoughts of what had happened to his parents flooded his mind. His parents fought for their love of freedom and country, and for that they had been tortured and killed. They were martyrs, and this was the hill where they had ended their lives in such cruel sacrifice. Someone told him the corpses had been left there for a week or longer, exposed to the elements and the wild beasts.

No Hatred

JOSÉ gathered his parents' remains and got back on the boat. The sea of his homeland was almost blindingly beautiful. This was in the autumn of 1944, and the liberation forces of General Douglas MacArthur (1880–1964), commander of the Allied forces in the Southwest Pacific, had already landed on

the island of Leyte on October 20.

José's parents had been killed on October 23. For them, the liberation of the Philippines had literally come just moments too late.

These are some of the recollections that Dr. Abueva, former president of the University of the Philippines, kindly put down in writing for me under the title "Our Family Story of War and Peace, Love and Remembrance."

"Although this story happened half a century ago," he writes, "much of it is indelibly etched in my mind. I cannot forget."¹ What abominable cruelty he and many others have experienced, all due to the insanity of war, the demonic nature of power, the savagery of human beings, the march of inhumanity.

But when Dr. Abueva spoke at Soka University [in April 1990], though expressing concern about any moves that might be made toward Japan's rearmament, he said: "My parents were killed by Japanese soldiers. But none of us seven children bears any hatred toward

Japan. I like the Japanese. And it is my belief that the people of both Japan and the Philippines share the same love for peace.”

What a greathearted person is Dr. Abueva, and how noble is his belief! And what a contrast he presents as a human being to those who murdered innocent, decent people. When judged from this perspective, how poor and ignoble Japan is today!

In sharing his recollections of the past, Dr. Abueva also made the observation:

Japanese leaders still stubbornly refused to admit, and apologize for, the grievous wrongs they committed in the countries they had invaded in World War II. Japanese history textbooks purposely concealed the truth or justified the wrongs. Fellow Asians were outraged by the insensitivity and dishonesty of the Japanese.

How could they gloss over the sordid truth that so many had witnessed and endured, recorded and remembered?²

And this didn't happen only in the past. Dr. Abueva testifies that the depredation, violence and exploitation inflicted by the Japanese on the people of the Philippines continue to this day, though in a different form.

A Loss of Empathy for the Sufferings of Others

THERE are many Filipinos who don't have enough to eat. Supported by the subsistence wages of such people, foreign companies, many of them Japanese, and a class of selfish local

exploiters are flourishing. Most of the large amounts of aid directed to the Philippines never reach the needy; because of the way the aid is structured, much of it ends up being recirculated back to the Japanese companies. The people of the Philippines find themselves in a situation in which, in spite of working as hard as they can, they cannot escape poverty, while at the same time they are losing their valuable forests and natural resources to the industrialized nations.

It is difficult for oppressors to see the suffering they are causing others, but it is very apparent to the oppressed. Japan's economic success is built on the sacrifice of the people of the Third World, but this fact is cleverly concealed.

Given this situation, how can we expect the people of Asia to trust us? Alienated from Asia and estranged from the West—where in human society does Japan expect to find a friend? The mindless pursuit of a high standard of living, even at the sacrifice of others, has a price: in addition to alienation from others, Japanese society itself will be dehumanized. The problem is the “big people” who have lost all sense of empathy for the sufferings of their fellow human beings, whether they be the citizens of developing nations or the less fortunate in Japanese society. A tendency to attack the less fortunate and the powerless is deeply ingrained in Japan's leaders and Japanese society.

Children are a mirror of society. The source of the bullying that plagues our schools can be traced right back to the way

adults live their lives in our society.

Nurturing Leaders of Peace

THE orphaned Abueva children pulled together to take care of one another, growing into fine people. Dr. Abueva studied at the University of the Philippines and then the University of Michigan in the United States, before eventually becoming a professor at his alma mater in the Philippines. During his distinguished career, he has served in posts around the world, including Nepal, Thailand, Malaysia and Lebanon. Wherever he has gone, his fond memories of his loving parents have protected him. Whatever he has achieved in his life, it started with his climb up that hill on that fateful day. He has been utterly devoted to peace, so that no one else might experience the kind of tragedy that he did.

“The great irony of my life,” he remarks, “was my recruitment to serve as university secretary of the United Nations University at its headquarters in Tokyo.”³ He lived for a total of some eight years (from 1977 to 1984 and from 1986 to 1987) with his wife and family in the country that had murdered his parents. All that while, he was an ambassador of friendship, with a heart as boundless as the sea. After the 1986 “People Power” explosion in the Philippines that led to the end of the Marcos dictatorship, he supported President Corazon Aquino, and in 1987, he was elected president of the University of the Philippines.

When I first met Dr. Abueva

[in April 1990], he declared with great passion that though throughout history there have been many leaders of war, there have been few leaders of peace. For that reason, he said, he wanted to nurture leaders of peace. The graduates of the University of the Philippines are destined to become leaders in all fields of Philippine society. The school is the equivalent of the University of Tokyo, Japan's top university, Dr. Abueva told me. But he was concerned that the university's graduates should be aware of their duty to society, and have the willingness and enthusiasm to lead the way in finding solutions to the problems that confront the Philippines. It is his firm belief that a university must above all deepen students' quality as leaders.

Dr. Abueva himself is a warm and loving man of peace. He has invited exchange students from Soka University to his home, and been very kind to them. When I visited his home [in May 1993], he told me that on becoming university president, what saddened him most was the decline in enrollment of students from poorer families. To rectify the situation, he instituted a policy by which students of wealthy families paid higher tuition to subsidize that of poor students.

As president, he put special emphasis on a "House of Peace" for international exchange, a crystallization, no doubt, of his youthful vow to work for peace. He believes that building deeper and broader relations between peoples is more important than relations between governments.

In particular, youth and cultural exchanges are important for creating a great flowing river of peace, he says, and he is determined to achieve this.

DR. Abueva invited me to the official opening of the House of Peace, called Balay Kalinaw in Filipino, on the University of the Philippines' Diliman campus in May 1993. In my honor, he also named the building the Dr. Daisaku Ikeda Hall. He hopes it will be a symbol of friendship between the Philippines and Japan. In my remarks on that occasion, I said: "President Toda, who fought against Japanese militarism, was particularly determined to see that the light of peace, the light of hope and happiness, would shine on the people of Asia. For he was deeply convinced that Japan could only be considered a nation of peace to the extent that it is truly trusted by its Asian neighbors."

I also declared my determination to devote my life, as an individual Japanese citizen, to the people of Asia. Without mutual understanding, we cannot achieve anything.

The great Filipino poet and freedom fighter José Rizal (1861–96) was executed before he saw his dream of independence for his homeland realized. He composed the following lines of poetry:

I die without seeing the dawn
Brighten over my native land!
You, who have it to see,
welcome it —
And forget not those
Who have fallen during the
night!

Dr. Abueva's parents were among those who fell in the night, without seeing the dawn of peace.

I quoted these lines from Rizal in a poem that I had written for Dr. Abueva, followed by these words, which I directed to all those present:

I can only believe that,
In a different time,
This must have been the cry
that issued
From your parents' lives,
Entrusting you with your
mission!

I saw Dr. Abueva remove his glasses. As he dabbed at the tears he could not stop from filling his eyes, I caught a glimpse of a half century of his family's life.

Searching for his parents—Dr. Abueva is still on that fateful journey. It is a search for peace.

President Abueva rose from his seat and declared:

We want an end to killing and
maiming
Because of greed or creed,
class or tribe
Because the poor are weak
and the strong aren't just.

His voice rang through the House of Peace, seeming to reach all the way to that hill he climbed so many years ago. □

1. José Abueva, "Our Family Story of War and Peace, Love and Remembrance."

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

Tommie Shaw: Keeping an Eye on Nature

By Bill Hamilton
Louisville, Kentucky

TOMMIE Shaw, born into a family practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in Kentucky, is now enjoying tremendous benefit beyond any expectation. Tommie is currently winning national recognition for his abstract and nature photography, but more important, he has made a major connection to his mother's thirty-year devotion to her practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in a way that brought tears to his eyes as he spoke of it.

"For the first time in my life, I understand why Mom and other people are so devoted to the kosen-rufu movement and to SGI President Ikeda," said Tommie. "All he wants is for everyone to be happy. He has such compassion."

Tommie's photographic talent—his gifted vision and his intense study of photographic masters—paid off when he won grand prize in a contest sponsored by Petersen's *Photographic* magazine. The contest theme was "Reflections," and Tommie submitted his own image reflected in a small puddle of oil

droplets on the pavement in front of his apartment (see inside back cover). The photo shows many tiny human images reflected beautifully in the swirling colors of the oil drops.

The same photograph, which the editors of *Popular Photography* called "Asphalt Artistry," was runner-up in one of that magazine's international contests. To capture such shots, Tommie said he has to constantly observe the world around him, keep his equipment in hand, and wait for just the right moment. His other photographs now attracting attention in local exhibits and other publications illustrate his love of nature, and the things others miss by not being as attentive to their environment.

Tommie is currently achieving his dream of giving more and more of his time, effort, and money to his dream of a life in professional photography. He has found a mentor in Art Wolfe, whose work in nature photography he has studied for many years, rating him the "best wildlife photographer." A big thrill came when

Tommie wrote to Wolfe, and received an answer from the master photographer. Wolfe praised Tommie's eye-grabbing photograph and wrote: "What a wonderful photo. I wish I had taken it. Keep up the fine work."

However, Tommie's victory comes after many years of suffering and detachment from the SGI. "I went to all the conventions and I went to meetings, but I kept silent because I never really felt anything. I used to read experiences in the publications and see all those happy faces and wonder if I would ever feel like that."

For the persistence it took to pursue his dreams, Tommie gives credit to his family, especially to his mother, Koko Shaw. He only saw his father once after the family broke up when Tommie was very young. He remembers many times when they went hungry, but his mother refused to bend. She was a single mother who struggled to learn a new language and promote the SGI. Tommie credits his success to his mother's faith,



Tioga Falls State Park in Louisville, Kentucky.

her encouragement never to give up and to her confidence in President Ikeda's leadership.

"Mom is the best. She is a winner," Tommie said.

Mrs. Shaw glows with pride not only about Tommie, but all her children and grandchildren who were reunited last summer for the first time in many years. She said it is wonderful that "my Tommie" has achieved such a great benefit, but more important that he has developed appreciation for the SGI.

"My dream is to see kosen-rufu in Kentucky," Mrs. Shaw said.

During high school, Tommie was bright but shy. He joined the Air Force and later married

twice, both marriages ending in divorce. A third broken relationship also brought on a deep depression. When he recovered, his major consolation was his fascination with photography.

"I always knew I could succeed, I always knew I could do it."

His sense of capability came to him after chanting many hours late into the night to understand what deep karma had made him suffer for so many years. He had an insight at one point during this extended time in front of the Gohonzon a few years ago that he was being told that "all would be well."

"I cried like a baby. The tears

just came and came, and I knew that my life would change."

His job as a chef in the Benihana chain for nearly twenty years keeps him from participating in many activities. But now rather than sitting quietly, Tommie shares his struggles and victories with the members whenever he can.

"I was born into the practice—I had no choice. Now I want to show what things are possible if you stick with it. I owe so much to Mom and to President Ikeda's guidance."

Tommie is absorbing as much as he can about his art and wants to make it his full-time career. In fact, *absorbing* is a good word for his approach to photography. He



(Above) Tommie Shaw.
(Right) Maple tree in winter.



says nature is full of peace and purpose, and that people can learn a lot from animals. With a practiced eye, he sees details shift in certain light from day to day. The challenge, he said, is to capture what he sees on film as he masters the technology required. The key for him is to acquire the patience to observe carefully, waiting for the right moment to take the photograph.

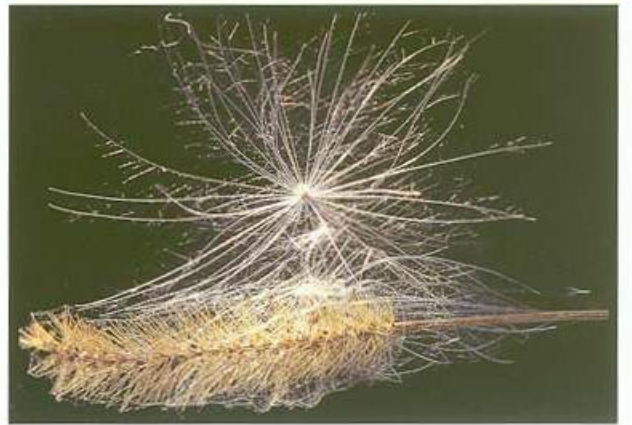
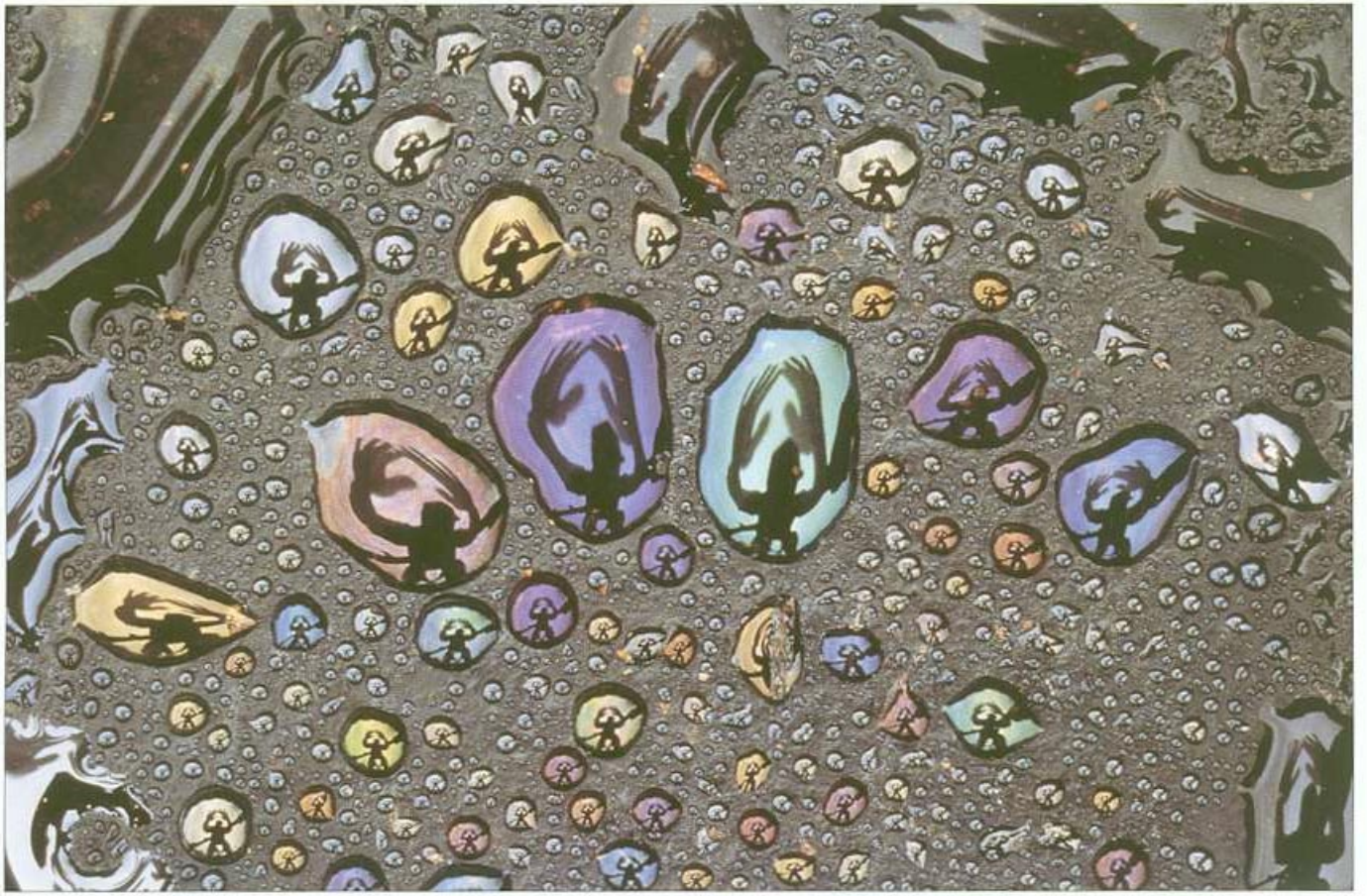
Tommie said one of the great photographers is President Ikeda himself. He was particularly struck by a photograph the SGI president took of a simple dragonfly years ago. Like his devotion to the members, Tommie thinks President Ikeda's photographs are "truly wonderful, truly amazing." □

(Next page, top) The grand prize winner in *Photographic* magazine's December 1996 contest—Tommie Shaw created "Reflections," an image of himself reflected in oil drops on pavement after a rainstorm; he used his Nikon F3T with a 105mm f/4 macro lens on Fujichrome Velvia. The broad spectrum of colors was created naturally by the water and oil's refractive properties. Tommie received a special award from IPC, the International Photographic Council, a non-governmental organization of the United Nations. IPC's slogan is "Photography—the Universal Language."

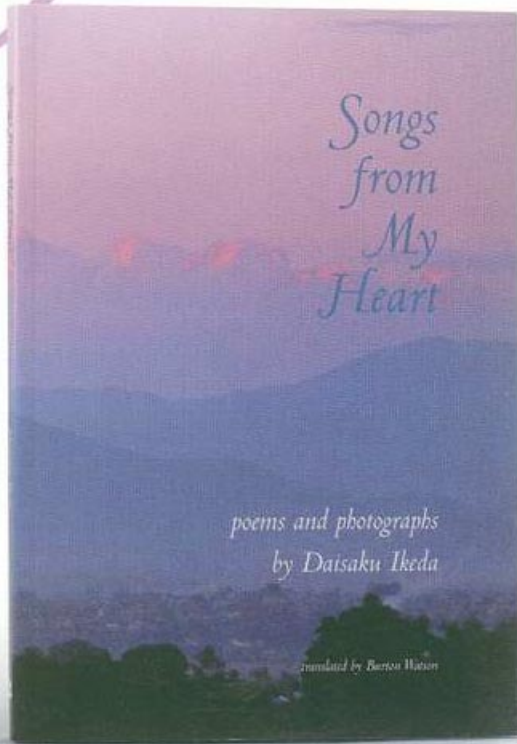
(Middle) "Grasshopper Stare"

(Left) "Milkweed Seed"

(Bottom) "Heron Rising"



Just ARRIVED



*These poems are
a celebration of youth
and change and progress.
They are a call to
everyone to work and
strive for a better world,
one of peace and love.*

*Combining his poems with
his own photographs,
which reflect and deepen
the message of his words,
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BUDDHISM

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STUDY MATERIAL FOR MARCH • APRIL
THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF TOMMIE SHAW

Philippines Culture Center

LOCATED in Manila, the Philippines Culture Center was established in 1988 and functions as the country's main center for the promotion of SGI activities as well as other cultural exchanges. A training center was also built in January 1997 in Manila. Community centers are also located on the islands of Mindanao and Cebu.

Since his first visit on May 12, 1964, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda has returned to the Philippines several times to meet with members and to promote peace, culture and education.

In April 1991, he met with former president Corazon Aquino and was awarded an honorary doctorate in law from the University of Philippines, the university's highest honor. At this time, President Ikeda celebrated with many Philippine members the twenty-seventh anniversary of the start of kosen-rufu in their country. He dedicated to them the poem "The Sky of Democracy, the Sun of Hope," urging them to advance with hope in their hearts toward the realization of peace in the Philippines.



Youth gather at Cagayan de Oro Community Center on the island of Mindanao, the second largest island of the Philippines.