

# living BUDDHISM

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



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**COVER ART** by Friend of the SGI-USA Alfredo Arreguin of Seattle, Washington: "The Last Salmon Run" (1990, oil on canvas, 48 x 72 in.). See story, p. 46.

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## FROM OUR READERS

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

### THANKS FOR POEM

THANK you, Eugene Bolände, for your wonderful tribute to Nichiren Daishonin, published in the February issue of *Living Buddhism*. It is such a fine piece of poetic expression that I've read it over and over, copied it and sent it to friends, and hope to someday memorize it. How did you create such power-packed lines? Where did you find all the rhyming phrases that made it flow so well? There is a beautiful energy to it that picks up speed and carries the reader on a rolling journey through time. It is complete, from the general historic beginnings to the joy of personal growth in the present. You, the poet, have a terrific grasp of the English language. This is a piece I will enjoy reading and sharing for years to come.

MOLLY MOLL  
Denver

### APPRECIATION FOR A READER'S SUGGESTION

MY sincere thanks and sincere appreciation to the many people who took the time to call and write to me to express their appreciation of my poem "The Promised Man" commemorating Nichiren Daishonin's birthday, February 16. A member made an excellent suggestion and I would like to include it in the text of the poem. Thank you, Mr. Chinberg, for taking the time to read and study my effort to honor the Daishonin and offering me your brilliant suggestion. The suggestion is so right on that it will truly finish the poem.

In the twentieth stanza (February 1998 *Living Buddhism*, p. 7), I have written:

He engraved his enlightenment  
on a paper scroll  
And left it for centuries, for  
one and for all

**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, (310) 451-8811. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

Please change “And left it for centuries, for one and for all” to “And left Nam-myoho-renge-kyo for one and for all”

EUGENE BOLÁNDE  
Los Angeles

## CORRECTION

**J**UST a note to let you know I liked the February issue, although there is an error on page 6. It states Nichiren Daishonin’s birthday as February 12, 1222, when it is really February 16. This error was brought to my attention by an 11-year-old boy who is studying for the Entrance-level Exam.

GARY REXINE  
Lewisville, Texas

## GREETINGS FROM DOWN UNDER

**A**S an SGI member in Australia and through my active participation in Melbourne and at the SGIA Community Center, I’m fortunate to gain access to overseas SGI publications. These include *Living Buddhism* and the *World Tribune*. I highly commend you and your staff for quality and unbiased journalism of the highest standard. The quality and content continue to reflect the membership, their views and

opinions, seeking reader input, etc. From March 13–15 this year, the youth of SGIA will gather in Sydney at our annual camp. This year we’ll be deepening our understanding of the mentor-disciple relationship with a view to welcoming President and Mrs. Ikeda in Australia in the not-too-distant future.

In Australia, activities vary from state to state. At district level the regular meetings are discussion, study and group meetings. These are usually held at members’ houses.

At chapter and HQ level, activities include kosen-rufu gongyo, HQ Study (run by the women’s division), Open Study Forum (run by the men’s division), Fundamentals (by our new Victorian HQ Study Committee).

At HQ level, the community involvement has increased and this year we’ll, for the second time, participate in Clean Up Australia. It is hoped that this activity will be held at district level from 1999 on.

The successful “Dialogue With Nature” exhibition was held in Melbourne last year. As a result our local council, City of Glen Eira, organized a peace forum that was run during the exhibition. SGIA has been invited to participate in their Japa-

nese Festival to be held in spring this year and we’ll be included in the city’s culture development policy.

The youth division will run a Spring Festival scheduled for August this year.

JOHN SEAL  
Australia

## MORE HIP!

**I** REALLY loved the February issue. I knew as soon as I saw it that something was special about it. Maybe it was the beautiful photograph on the cover or the larger text in the title, but the whole feeling of the magazine seems fresher, more contemporary, more hip.

I was especially encouraged by the “Travels With Aunt Jean” article and the experience by Cynthia and Gustavo Bulgach. The subtle nuances that make these people’s lives beautiful and unique really came through in the articles.

I really appreciated the honesty of the articles and I feel that anyone who read them would be encouraged and reminded that Buddhism is truly the key to realizing all their dreams—whatever they are.

SUSAN McDONOUGH  
Buffalo, New York

## 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.

# “THE LAW DOES NOT SPREAD BY ITSELF”

**I**N preparing this month’s column, I recalled the many question-and-answer sessions I’ve had with members over the last few years about the severed relationship between the SGI and Nichiren Shoshu. For some, this issue touches emotional chords. Often, people they’ve known have allied themselves with the temple because they became angry or held a grudge against something or someone in the SGI-USA. For others, it is an attachment to ritual and ceremony. For all, it is a fundamental misunderstanding of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism.

The more I listen to the members, the more I realize how the lack of a cultural and historical context keeps some from seeing just how serious a matter is the religion one embraces.

Nichiren Daishonin spent his entire life warning people about the dangers of false teachings. It is the underlying theme of nearly all of his writings, and the reason he suffered persecution during his lifetime. Priests in thirteenth-century Kamakura depended upon the ignorance of the people to go about making their living.

From the Daishonin’s perspective, belief in misleading teachings is the root cause of people’s suffering. Nonetheless, only a relative handful of the people embraced the Daishonin’s teachings while he was alive. Most remained firmly attached to the very sects he warned them about. What he didn’t live to see were the additional sects that would flourish in Japan based on distortions of *his* teachings—which means that the Japanese have lived under the influence of misleading sects for the last seven centuries. America, on the other hand, which is basically a Judeo-Christian nation, has suffered little of the ill effects of these various sects. For this reason, I will share my personal experience growing up in Japan.

I was born in the Atsuhara region. My family were strong supporters of the Minobu sect.

Atsuhara, a small town in the Mount Fuji area, is rich in the history of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. It is the site where three farmers were beheaded for refusing to forsake their faith (see “The Untold History of the Fuji School,” p. 6). It is where the Daishonin wrote a draft of his thesis “On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism”—at Jisso-ji temple. My friends and I used to play at that temple when we were kids. It is also where Nikko Shonin and Nanjo Tokimitsu lived and carried out their propagation activities.

It has been said that family discord often afflicts followers of the Minobu sect. In my family, there were always domestic problems. My mother and mother-in-law quarreled constantly; even my aunt joined in. One of the most vivid memories of my childhood is the total chaos at home. Of course, we didn’t know anything about the Daishonin’s teachings. We only practiced our religion when praying at the funeral or memorial service of one of our friends or relatives.

**I** LEFT home after high school and moved to Yokohama, where I attended college. In those days, sports clubs were very popular. I joined one and took up boxing. I also rented an apartment from a couple who happened to be district leaders in the Soka Gakkai. This is where I ended up after moving twice.

My landlady and her friends in the Soka Gakkai would often speak to me about Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism and about joining. I would always turn her down. Because of my background with the Minobu sect, I didn’t understand a thing she was talking about. I certainly didn’t believe one religion could be any different

from any other; to me they were all the same. I was not all that interested in religion anyway.

ONE day while boxing, I injured my back; the pain was excruciating. I learned that I had a herniated disk. I could hardly sleep, much less walk. I barely ate, so I got skinnier and skinnier. I couldn't concentrate in school; my grades plummeted. I was totally without hope. I even thought of suicide, but I didn't have the courage to do it.

One doctor told me that my only hope was to undergo a high-risk operation; but I could still end up paralyzed. I was terrified. I decided to have the surgery, but first I wanted to go home and see my mother for what might be the last time. I looked so bad that my mother cried when she saw me.

On the train ride back to Yokohama, I thought about the discussions I'd had with my landlady and others for the past year. I started chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo under my breath in an effort to calm myself because I was frightened of my condition. I remember my landlady telling me that chanting would give me a sense of security. When the train arrived in Yokohama, it was quite late, but I burst into my landlady's living room anyway; I told her I wanted to become a member of the Soka Gakkai and start chanting.

I received the Gohonzon and enshrined it in my apartment. That afternoon, when I went to the hospital, the doctor examined me and said, much to my surprise, that there was no herniated disk; that I wouldn't need the operation. Instead he prescribed Vitamin B. That was it. I had mixed feelings. I was still in pain. The doctor seemed not to know what to do. I determined that from that moment I would take charge of my own life. I was 21 years old. From that day on, I practiced in earnest. My leaders gave me many books to read. And I attended every study meeting I could. I began to learn how great Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is.

As I studied Buddhism and about the Daishonin's life, there were so many people who helped me to practice. They encouraged me as if I were their very own son, and the young men's division members helped me to attend meetings. They were sincerely concerned about me. For this reason, Buddhism became very alive for me.

This is the kind of philosophy I had been looking for all along. The more I chanted, the more

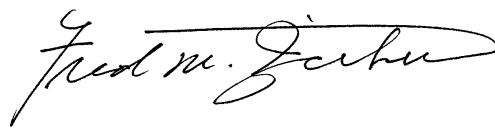
hope and confidence I felt. I changed my attitude toward life.

Three months later, I went home to Atsuhara. My mother couldn't believe her eyes when she saw me. I had completely changed my attitude. The last time she had seen me, I seemed on the verge of death. Now I had strong conviction to overcome my problems. Seeing such a radical change, my mother decided to join the Soka Gakkai immediately. My mother-in-law and my sister also joined that very evening.

I grew so busy with activities that I almost forgot about my illness. After six months of practice, I realized I had overcome all of my physical problems.

IT was through my problems that I could be open-minded enough to seek and develop an active practice based on the "living philosophy" of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. I feel appreciation for my illness because it led me to the practice, as well as to my Gakkai friends. It helped me to change my life. The willingness of other members to help me enabled me to see that the spirit to sincerely care for and support one person is the heart of the SGI organization. As the Daishonin states: "The Law does not spread by itself. Because the person propagates it, both the person and the Law are worthy of respect" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 856).

Even in a place such as Atsuhara, where the lay believers gave their lives for the sake of the Law, the spirit of the Daishonin was abandoned. With that in mind, I'd like everyone to recognize that the Daishonin's spirit is always at great risk of being lost, as the current situation with Nichiren Shoshu so aptly illustrates. We can never become complacent. We must take responsibility to propagate and uphold the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin; and to embrace SGI President Ikeda's spirit to fight for justice and for the happiness of all people. After all, the Daishonin's teachings are a "living philosophy" only to the extent that we give them full expression in daily life.



Fred M. Zaitso  
SGI-USA General Director



# The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue (2)

*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.*

## Chapter 2: Nikko Shonin: The Protector of the Daishonin's Buddhism

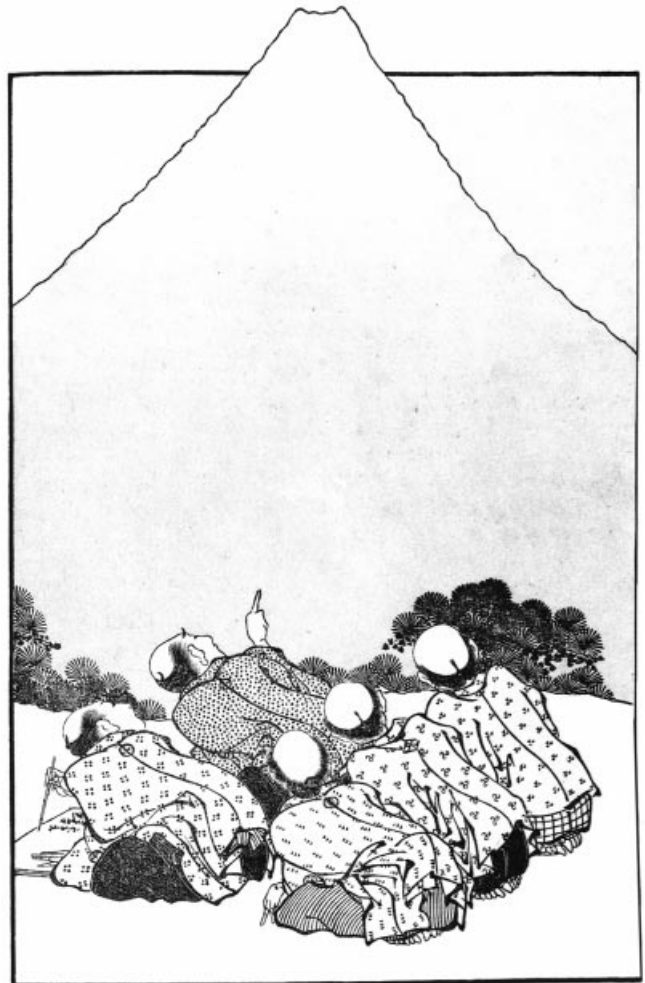
### (1) Nikko Shonin as a true disciple of the Daishonin

**A**MONG the six senior priests appointed by Nichiren Daishonin, only Nikko Shonin proved to be a true disciple. He correctly grasped the Daishonin's intent and dedicated his life to propagating Buddhism. He viewed the Daishonin as the original Buddha of the Latter Day and understood that the teaching of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo of the Three Great Secret Laws was implicit in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The other senior priests likely viewed the Daishonin as their senior, a person with vast knowledge of Buddhism, but seemingly lacked the capacity to recognize the Daishonin's true identity nor the true import of his teachings. This is the fundamental difference between Nikko Shonin

and the five senior priests.

Nikko became a disciple of the Daishonin in 1258, and for most of the remainder of his life stayed by the Daishonin's side, serving his mentor and receiving instructions from him. This allowed him to read the Daishonin's treatises and letters as well. These circumstances helped Nikko Shonin correctly grasp the entirety and distinction of the Daishonin's teachings.

While serving his teacher, Nikko Shonin also visited various places in Kai Province (present-day Yamanashi Prefecture) as well as in Suruga and Izu provinces (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture) in order to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism and teach other disciples. Because of his efforts, many started to take faith, including some priests at the Tendai sect temples Jisso-ji and Ryusen-ji in Fuji County of Suruga Province, as well as others at Shijuku-in



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

temple in Kanbara County.

Nikko Shonin's propagation efforts, however, met with strong opposition. The chief priest of Shijuku-in, for example, persecuted those who converted to the Daishonin's teaching. Furthermore, many Ryusen-ji parishoners were converted due to the efforts of Nisshu and others who became the Daishonin's disciples under the tutelage of Nikko Shonin.

Alarmed by the growing number of converts in his own parish, Gyochi, acting chief priest of Ryusen-ji, conspired to have twenty peasants of Atsuhara District, who had taken faith in the Daishonin's teaching, arrested on false charges. The Atsuhara believers were taken to Kamakura, the seat of the shogunate government, and interrogated by Hei no Saemon, deputy chief of the Office

of Military and Police Affairs (the chief being the regent himself) and steward of the ruling Hojo clan. Hei no Saemon insisted they renounce their faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. This incident is known as the Atsuhara Persecution. Because none of the twenty peasants gave up their faith despite being tortured, the three leading believers (Jinshiro, Yagoro and Yarokuro) were executed and the rest banished. The three executed peasants are known in the history of the Daishonin's Buddhism as the three martyrs of Atsuhara.

Having seen that ordinary people would stake their lives for the sake of Buddhism, the Daishonin felt that the time had come to fulfill the purpose of his advent. On October 12, 1279, he inscribed "the Dai-Gohonzon bestowed

## **“The Dai-Gohonzon bestowed upon the entire continent of Jambudvipa”**

THE reference to the Dai-Gohonzon translates as “The Dai-Gohonzon bestowed upon the entire continent of Jambudvipa.” According to the ancient Indian worldview, there are four continents situated respectively to the east, west, north and south of Mount Sumeru. They are Purvavideha in the east, Aparagodaniya in the west, Uttarakuru in the north and Jambudvipa in the south. Jambudvipa is said to be where Buddhism appears and spreads. The continent south of Mount Sumeru was originally meant to be the Indian subcontinent, but later came to denote the entire world. The Dai-Gohonzon has been referred to as “the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of true Buddhism” because it contains the side-inscription: “the high sanctuary of true Buddhism—inscribed at the request of Yashiro Kunishige” (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 8, p. 177).

In “The True Object of Worship,” the Daishonin writes: “Now is when the Bodhisattvas of the Earth will appear in this country and establish the supreme object of worship on the earth [i.e., Jambudvipa]...” (MW-1, 81). He concludes this treatise on the Gohonzon by stating: “Showing profound compas-

sion for those ignorant of the gem of *ichinen sanzen*, the True Buddha wrapped it within the single phrase Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, with which he then adorned the necks of those living in the Latter Day” (MW-1, 82). In this passage, “the gem of *ichinen sanzen*” refers to the Gohonzon. From these passages, therefore, it is clear that the Daishonin intended the Gohonzon to be bestowed upon the people of the entire world. In this regard, the twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan Shonin (1665–1726), wrote in his commentary on “The True Object of Worship”: “The Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of true Buddhism inscribed in the second year of Koan (1279) is the supreme enlightenment as well as the supreme purpose of the advent [of Nichiren Daishonin]. So this is the foremost of the Three Great Secret Laws for it is the object of worship of the entire world” (*Commentaries of High Priest Nichikan*, p. 452). Since the Dai-Gohonzon is to be spread throughout the entire world and bestowed upon all people of the Latter Day, thus leading them to enlightenment, it came to be known as “the Dai-Gohonzon bestowed upon the entire world” during the late nineteenth century.

upon the world.”

Regarding the Atsuhara Persecution, SGI President Ikeda states:

On the surface, it might appear that the three martyrs, having been executed, were the ones who suffered defeat. In fact, however, as a result of their valiant actions to protect the Law, they won eternal honor as believers and supreme

victory as human beings.

Further, by their own examples they showed actual proof that faith in the Daishonin’s teaching had become firmly established among the people and this persecution set the stage for the Daishonin to establish the Dai-Gohonzon for the sake of the entire world, thus fulfilling the purpose of his advent.

For this reason, the names of the three martyrs will be handed down eter-

nally and will ever continue to shine with brilliance.

We, too, are following the same path. Let us be confident that as a result of the present struggle we will be able to open wide the path of worldwide kosen-rufu. (May 11, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

As evidenced by his behavior and achievements as the Daishonin's disciple, Nikko Shonin far surpassed the five senior priests. In light of Nikko Shonin's faith, practice, study, character and leadership, which were tested through numerous persecutions, it was natural for the Daishonin to entrust his teaching with his most outstanding disciple.

When Hakiri Sanenaga, a steward of Minobu, and his family were swayed by the erroneous teachings of the five senior priests, Nikko Shonin severed his ties with the priests and the Hakiri family. To protect the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism and thus establish the foundation for its future, he left Minobu and moved to Fuji at the invitation of Nanjo Tokimitsu, who maintained pure faith throughout his life. Expressing the intent behind his departure from Minobu, Nikko Shonin states in his "Reply to Lord Hara": "No matter where we may go, it is of utmost importance to carry on the teaching of the sage and establish it in the world. Although I think in this way, all other disciples have committed treachery against the teacher. Nikko alone knows the correct teaching of the original teacher and thus achieves the true purpose of his life. So I shall never become oblivious to the true intent [of Nichiren]" (*Hennentai Nichiren Daishonin Goshō*,<sup>1</sup> p. 1733).

In this regard, President Ikeda states:

One must not simply allow evil teachers who go against the master to carry on in their ways—this is the fundamental spir-

it of Nikko Shonin. It is the spirit with which he abandoned Mount Minobu, where the pure flow of faith had become polluted due to the actions of Hakiri Sanenaga, who had been misled by the evil teacher Niko.

Ultimately, whether we practice in exact accord with the Daishonin's teaching or we turn against it—this alone is what determines whether we are disciples of Nikko Shonin, or followers of Niko and Hakiri.

When we make this our standard of judgment, it becomes perfectly clear that we, the SGI members, are faithfully following and obeying the treasures of the Buddha, the Law and the Priest (Nikko Shonin). (November 1991 *Seikyo Times*, p. 46)

Stressing the importance of rebuking the destroyers of Buddhism, the Daishonin states: "And if there should be eminent priests who keep the precepts and practice religious austerities, and who appear to be spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra but are, in fact, subverting them, you should perceive the truth of the matter and reprimand them" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 7, p. 114). Following the Daishonin's teaching, Nikko Shonin continued to point out the errors of the five senior priests.

As Nikko Shonin taught through his own example, unless we remain as vigilant against corruption and reveal injustice whenever it occurs, the Daishonin's Buddhism will eventually be obscured and lost.

President Ikeda discusses the important lesson to be gleaned from Nikko Shonin's life as follows:

After the Daishonin died, his correct teaching was protected because Nikko Shonin stood up alone. Had Nikko Shonin remained silent, then no doubt a history of the "justice of the five senior priests" would have emerged. Instead,

Nikko Shonin strictly refuted the erroneous teachings of the five senior priests. (*Lectures on the "Expedient Means" and "Life Span" Chapters of the Lotus Sutra*, vol. 1, p. 72)

If we slacken in our efforts to challenge Nichiren Shoshu's affront on the Daishonin's Buddhism, our next generation will not be able to enjoy the benefit of the Mystic Law. So President Ikeda states at a meeting on December 18, 1994: "If we think: 'It's probably okay to leave it at this' or 'This is good enough,' then such a half-hearted attitude [in rebuking slander of the Law] will eventually destroy our faith and thus the good fortune that we have otherwise accumulated for all eternity."

Also:

As the Daishonin teaches, "It is the way of a devil to assume the form of a venerable monk or to take possession of one's father, mother or brother in order to obstruct one's next life" (MW-6, 31).

Thus, there are instances where even a venerable priest of high standing may be misled by false teachings, or where, overcome by feelings of jealousy or anger, he loses sight of the True Law, and then, in a complete reversal, turns into a great devil who functions as an obstacle to people's attainment of Buddhahood and a hindrance to the realization of kosen-rufu.

The Daishonin's teaching contains not the least falsehood. The essence of the current problem [with the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood] becomes clear as day when viewed in light of the above Gosho passage. (May 4, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

As Nikko Shonin demonstrated in his struggle to preserve the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Buddhist practice in accord with the present time is to clarify the confusion

of the Daishonin's Buddhism brought forth by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.

## (2) Nikko Shonin's establishment of Taiseki-ji in Fuji



**I**N the spring of 1289, seven years after the Daishonin's passing, Nikko Shonin departed from Minobu and stayed for a while at the estate of lay priest Yui—his grandfather on his mother's side—in Kawai of Fuji County in Suruga Province (present-day Shibakawa, Fuji County, Shizuoka Prefecture). He then moved to Ueno (present-day Fujinomiya City, Shizuoka Prefecture) at the earnest request of Nanjo Tokimitsu, the steward of the area.

In October of the following year, Nikko Shonin founded Taiseki-ji at the scenic field of Oishigahara on the Nanjo family's estate. Dai-bo, a lodging temple was built for Nikko Shonin; it was also called Mutsubo. In the area surrounding Dai-bo, other lodging temples were built for Nikko Shonin's disciples: Renzo-bo for Nichimoku, Jakunichi-bo for Nikke, Rikyo-bo for Nisshu, Joren-bo for Nichido, Minamino-bo for Nichizen, Hyakkan-bo for Nissen, Ryosho-bo for Nichijo, and Kujo-bo for Nichizon. At this time, Nikko Shonin also designated his "six main disciples" to preserve the Daishonin's Buddhism; they were Nichimoku, Nikke, Nisshu, Nichizen, Nissen and Nichijo ("On the Matters That the Believers of the Fuji School Must Know," *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1603).

On February 15, 1298, Nikko Shonin established a temple to enshrine the Daishonin's image in Omosu, the area adjacent to Ueno, at the request of its steward Ishikawa Magosaburo Yoshitada. He then entrusted Nichimoku Shonin with Taiseki-ji and moved to Omosu. Nikko Shonin

**As Nikko Shonin demonstrated in his struggle to preserve the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Buddhist practice in accord with the present time is to clarify the confusion of the Daishonin's Buddhism brought forth by the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood.**

focused on the further education and development of his disciples, who commuted there to receive instructions from their teacher. This temple in Omosu became known as the Omosu Seminary.

At the Omosu Seminary, Nikko Shonin read and gave lectures on the Daishonin's writings, which he called "Gosho," meaning "the Buddha's writings" ("On the Matters That the Believers of the Fuji School Must Know," *Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1604). [The word *gosho* consists of two characters: *go* and *sho*. *Go* is an honorific prefix, meaning "respectable or noble," and *sho* literally means "writings."] Out of the Daishonin's six senior disciples, Nikko Shonin alone understood the importance of these writings. For the sake of posterity, Nikko Shonin copied many of his mentor's writings. Of those, forty-nine copies of the Daishonin's writings are extant today, including "On Chanting the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra," "On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism" (Jp. *Rissho Ankoku Ron*), the excerpts of "The Opening of the Eyes," "The True Object of Worship" and "The Essentials of the Lotus Sutra." Besides those copies made by Nikko Shonin, there are only three copies by Nichimoku Shonin and two by Nippo still in existence. None of the five senior priests attempted to preserve their teacher's writings.

Furthermore, Nikko Shonin selected the ten major writings of the Daishonin and recorded the location of each of these writings for the sake of future believers. The ten major writings desig-

nated by Nikko Shonin are: 1) "On Chanting the Daimoku of the Lotus Sutra"; 2) "On Securing the Peace of the Land through the Propagation of True Buddhism"; 3) "The Opening of the Eyes"; 4) "The True Object of Worship"; 5) "The Essentials of the Lotus Sutra"; 6) "The Selection of the Time"; 7) "Repaying the Debt of Gratitude"; 8) "On the Four Stages of Faith and the Five Stages of Practice"; 9) "Letter to Shimoyama"; and 10) "Questions and Answers on the Object of Worship." He selected these writings as essential for the practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism and added to the manuscripts the phrase *the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra*.

Nikko Shonin dedicated his later years to the development of his disciples at the Omosu Seminary. According to legend, he strictly scolded a disciple named Nichizon during a lecture—for absent-mindedly staring at the leaves falling from a pear tree in the yard—and expelled his student from the seminary, saying: "One who wishes to spread the great Law does not let his mind wander and stare at leaves falling while listening to the preaching of Buddhism" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 5, p. 227). Spurred by his teacher's strict rebuke, Nichizon traveled throughout various provinces and spread the Daishonin's Buddhism. It is said that after establishing thirty-six temples in twelve years, he was pardoned by his teacher. This story tells us something of Nikko Shonin's dedication to the Daishonin's Buddhism.

A believer named Jakusen-bo

Nitcho had become a disciple of Niko, one of the five senior priests who betrayed the Daishonin. Later, he renounced Niko and came to Nikko Shonin. Nikko Shonin named Nitcho to be the first chief priest of the Omosu Seminary, entrusting him with the task of instructing student priests. When Nitcho died young, Nikko Shonin appointed Sanmi Nichijun as the second chief priest.

Nichijun wrote: "I received instructions [from Nikko Shonin] at Dai-bo lodging in the morning and, in the evening, preached at Mie-do [where the image of Nichiren Daishonin is enshrined]" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 2, p. 124). As he states, Nichijun lectured on the Daishonin's writings, such as "The Opening of the Eyes" and "The True Object of Worship." In this manner, many young student priests were nurtured, including six new disciples designated by Nikko Shonin. They were Nichidai, Nitcho, Nichido, Nichimyo, Nichigo and Nichijo.

While Nikko Shonin was at the Omosu Seminary, Nichimoku Shonin stayed at Taiseki-ji. He often visited Tome County of Rikuzen Province (present-day Tome County, Miyagi Prefecture), which was the estate of his Niida clan, and founded several temples. He also traveled to many other areas, spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism and developing many new disciples. Furthermore, on behalf of Nikko Shonin, Nichimoku Shonin remonstrated with the sovereign forty-two times, visiting the shogunate government in Kamakura and the imperial palace in Kyoto.

During his youth, Nichimoku Shonin began traveling so extensively on foot that he damaged his left ankle severely. But this did not prevent him from traveling for the sake of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

When at Taiseki-ji, he led a simple life, farming vegetables in the fields.

Nichimoku Shonin often sent his home-grown melons to Nikko Shonin at Omosu. In one reply, Nikko Shonin writes: "Since I could not harvest melons in my field at Omosu due to the drought, I am grateful for your rare gift" (*One-Hundred Sacred Admonitions*, p. 192). This indicates that Nikko Shonin as well lived a modest life, farming himself.

Regarding the behavior and lifestyle of a priest, the Daishonin states: "With no knowledge of Buddhist law, most priests in the Latter Day grow so conceited that they despise the original teacher and flatter newfound patrons. Only honest priests who desire little and are happy with whatever they have can be called 'priests' in the true sense of word" (MW-1, 165).

Nikko Shonin and Nichimoku Shonin lived in accord with their teacher's expectations while the five senior priests degenerated into "priests in the Latter Day." The Daishonin severely condemns this type of priest, referring to him as "an animal dressed in priestly robes" (MW-3, 215).

Regarding the behavior and attitude of priests, President Ikeda comments:

The honest priest must, first of all, uphold the correct teachings of Buddhism. The disciples of the Buddha are those who, no matter what may happen, strive wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu, dedicated to faith and practice exactly as the Daishonin teaches.

In contrast, dishonest and unjust priests are those who, though they appear to nobly embrace the True Law, actually disobey the Daishonin's teachings and hinder the progress of kosen-rufu. They commit evil acts such as plotting to destroy the Soka Gakkai, which propagates the Daishonin's Buddhism.

In light of Nichiren Daishonin's teachings, if priests live extravagantly, they are no longer true priests. (September 23, 1991, *World Tribune*, p. 4)



### (3) Nikko Shonin's "Twenty-six Admonitions"

NIKKO Shonin wrote "On the Matter 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) in order to clarify the doctrinal differences between himself and the five senior priests. Furthermore, to prevent the destruction of the Daishonin's Buddhism by corrupt priests, Nikko Shonin penned "Twenty-six Admonitions" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1617–19) on January 13, 1333 [see p. 16].

In these warning articles, Nikko Shonin clarifies that the Fuji School (i.e., the school founded by Nikko Shonin) is the orthodox school of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism, while the schools founded by the five senior priests deviate from his mentor's teaching. Nikko Shonin urges his disciples: "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618). He also teaches his disciples to give their utmost respect to those who practice in accord with the Daishonin's writings.

Nikko Shonin cautions that those priests who seek worldly fame and profit without spreading Buddhism and rebuking slander may not be known as his disciples. Furthermore, he strictly admonishes that even the chief priest of Taiseki-ji (i.e., the high priest of the Fuji School) is not an exception to his warning articles, stating: "Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and propounds his own views" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

Throughout his "Twenty-six Admonitions," Nikko Shonin emphasizes that to protect and spread the

Daishonin's Buddhism is of utmost importance. Nikko Shonin's fundamental stance expressed in these admonitions may be summarized thusly: Those who wish to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism must regard the Gohonzon and his writings as the basis of faith and practice and strive toward the widespread propagation of their mentor's teaching. He concludes his admonitions by saying: "Those who violate even one of these articles cannot be called disciples of Nikko" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1619).

On the most important of all the admonitions of Nikko Shonin, that is, "Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618), President Ikeda comments:

While the SGI has always put kosen-rufu first, the priesthood has always placed its own self-preservation above all else, thereby hindering the progress of kosen-rufu.

Where in the priesthood can one find people spreading the teachings "without begrudging their lives"? In stark contrast, not only do its members lead indulgent lives, but they are even seeking to destroy the SGI and to bring the flow of kosen-rufu to a halt. Such priests are enemies of the True Law and enemies of Nikko Shonin.

Without defeating these enemies of the Buddha, realizing the kosen-rufu of the True Law will be impossible. Therefore, just as Nikko Shonin admonishes, we must continue to pursue them without begrudging our lives. A person who does so will accumulate tremendous benefit. (November 23, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 1)

Also:

Nikko Shonin states, "Those who violate even one of these articles cannot be called

**Nikko Shonin's fundamental stance expressed in these admonitions may be summarized thusly: Those who wish to practice the Daishonin's Buddhism must regard the Gohonzon and his writings as the basis of faith and practice and strive toward the widespread propagation of their mentor's teaching.**

disciples of Nikko." This is the strictness of the path of master and disciple. The priesthood, which has violated not one but every article, is an "anti-Nichiren Daishonin" and "anti-Nikko Shonin" group that has separated itself from the lifeline of the True Law. (November 23, 1992, *World Tribune*, p. 5)

When we examine the aberrant behavior of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in light of Nikko Shonin's "Twenty-six Admonitions," it becomes clear that the SGI is the only group carrying on the orthodoxy of the Daishonin's Buddhism today. Shortly after World War II, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest, said to one of his disciples: "Does the current priesthood have anything other than the Gakkai? The priesthood must be detested if it excludes the Gakkai." The priesthood could call itself Nichiren Shoshu or "the orthodox school of Nichiren" because of its association with the SGI. But now that it has unilaterally severed its ties with the SGI, Nichiren Shoshu has gone astray from the Daishonin's Buddhism.

On February 7, 1333, soon after completing "Twenty-six Admonitions," Nikko Shonin died at Omosu, at age 88. Before his passing, Nikko Shonin had appointed Nichimoku Shonin as his successor in a document titled "Articles Regarding the Succession of Nikko," dated November 10, 1330 (Jp. Nikko Ato Jojo no Koto) (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 8, p. 17). Until his death, Nikko Shonin had continued to lead the spread of the Daishonin's

Buddhism, responding to the expectations placed on him by his mentor, who referred to him as "the great leader of the propagation of true Buddhism" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600). Under Nikko Shonin's leadership, Nichimoku Shonin and other disciples also had made valiant efforts in propagation. As a result, by the time of Nikko Shonin's death, the Fuji School had spread throughout Japan—from Tohoku, the northeastern part of Japan's main land (present-day Miyagi, Yamagata and Fukushima prefectures) down to the southern island of Kyushu (present-day Fukuoka and Miyazaki prefectures).

Because Nikko Shonin spread the Daishonin's Buddhism despite numerous persecutions and protected its integrity when threatened by the five senior priests, he is regarded as the treasure of the *samgha* or group of believers—priests and lay believers alike—dedicated to the transmission and preservation of the Buddha's teaching. The *samgha* has been regarded as one of the three treasures of Buddhism along with the treasures of the Buddha and the Law (i.e., the Buddha's teaching) because, without it, people could not possibly benefit from the treasures of the Buddha and the Law. As Buddhism migrated from India to China and then to Japan, the functions of the *samgha* were fulfilled chiefly by the clergy. Hence the *samgha* came to denote the Buddhist priesthood, and thus the treasure of the *samgha* has often been translated as the treasure of the priesthood.

In the Fuji School, the treasure of the Buddha is Nichiren Daishonin because he expounded the Mystic Law, which enables all people to reveal their innate Buddhahood; the treasure of the Law is the Gohonzon bestowed upon all humanity because it is the essence of the Daishonin's teaching; and the treasure of the *samgha* is Nikko Shonin because, as mentioned previously, he correctly transmitted and preserved the Daishonin's Buddhism. Without his efforts, we could not enjoy the benefit of the Daishonin's Buddhism today.

Regarding the three treasures of the Fuji School, Nittatsu Hosoi, the sixty-sixth high priest, states:

In our school, the three treasures are established as follows: the treasure of the Law is the Gohonzon; the treasure of the Buddha is the Daishonin; and the treasure of the *samgha* is Nikko Shonin.... The successive high priests are not same as the Daishonin. The high priest is often described falsely as the Daishonin himself, and this causes problems. I wish to clarify this point." (From a sermon delivered on May 26, 1977)

The current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, however, propounds that "the high priest is the Daishonin of the modern day" (June 1991 *Dai-Nichiren*) and that "the high priest and the Dai-Gohonzon are one and inseparable" (a document by the Nichiren Shoshu executive priests dated September 6, 1991). These assertions clearly ignore the meaning of the three treasures in the Daishonin's Buddhism.

Regarding believers' reverence for the three treasures, Nittatsu Hosoi also states: "In short, the correct way of our school is to regard the Gohonzon of the oneness of the Person and the Law as the basis of all. In the Gohonzon are contained all of the three treasures. When you enshrine the Gohonzon in a Buddhist altar and exert yourself in

faith morning and evening, you are already paying sufficient respect toward the three treasures" (from a sermon delivered on July 27, 1977). In other words, to revere the three treasures of the Daishonin's Buddhism means to regard the Gohonzon as the basis of faith and practice. President Ikeda comments:

The Nikken sect, claiming that the high priest's inner enlightenment and the Gohonzon are "the two indivisible entities of the object of worship," is using the Gohonzon and establishing an erroneous "high priest creed."

This creed of the high priest and doctrine of the high priest's infallibility are plainly erroneous doctrines that were formulated in later ages. To equate the object of worship with oneself is to have a very disparaging attitude toward the Gohonzon. Even the five elder priests and Hakiri Sanenaga were not guilty of such arrogance and slander.

In the first place, Nikken merely uses the Gohonzon as an instrument to subordinate lay believers and reap donations. He does not have even an iota of faith in the Gohonzon. That is why he can propound such erroneous doctrines. (December 20, 1993, *World Tribune*, p. 4)

The current priesthood's erroneous interpretation of the three treasures clearly indicates its ignorance of the Daishonin's Buddhism as well as of Nikko Shonin's efforts to spread and protect his mentor's teaching.

*To be continued*

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1. *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.

# An Explanation of Nikko Shonin's 26 Admonitions

*The following is part of a speech SGI President Ikeda gave at the Kansai Executive Conference, held at the Kinugasa Ikeda Hall in Kyoto, Japan, on October 24, 1992. The speech was originally published in the November 23, 1992, issue of the World Tribune.*

**W**HAT is the standard that the followers of Nikko Shonin, the heirs to the true lineage of Nichiren Daishonin, must observe? Needless to say, it is articles of warning that the second high priest set down on the thirteenth day of the first month of the third year of the Genko era (1333). These are the admonitions that Nikko Shonin, at age 88, gave to his disciples one month before his death. For what purpose did he write down these warning articles?

In the preface, he states: "I will here set forth some articles for the sake of later students of Buddhism. This is solely because I treasure the [Daishonin's] golden words regarding kosen-rufu" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1617).

Again, in the concluding passage, he writes, "I have set forth these 26 articles for the sake of the eternal salvation and protection of humankind" (GZ, 1619).

Until the moment of his death, Nikko Shonin's life blazed with the great wish to accomplish kosen-rufu and lead all people to happiness—to realize the Daishonin's decree.

Herein lies the original spirit of the correct school [of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism].

Again, in the concluding passage, Nikko Shonin strictly warns: "Those who violate even one of these articles cannot be called disciples of Nikko" (*ibid.*).

These articles of warning were originally intended for priests. Nonetheless, we in the SGI, awakened [to our mission] as Bodhisattvas of the Earth, have strictly put these admonitions into practice.

President Toda composed and dedicated the following poem to youth:

You, young people,  
engraving in your hearts

the twenty-six precepts,  
dedicate your lives  
to the path of the Mystic Law.

The "twenty-six precepts" in this poem refers to Nikko Shonin's twenty-six warning articles. President Toda urged young people to struggle for kosen-rufu, just as the second high priest admonished, with the spirit of not begrudging their lives.

Now, I would like to read and explain each of the individual warning articles.

**1. The doctrines of the Fuji school must not differ in the least from the teachings of the late master.**

THE Fuji school is the line of Nikko Shonin's followers. The

“late master” is Nichiren Daishonin.

One can sense the profound spirit of Nikko Shonin in his having made this the first warning article. To not differ in the least from the teachings of the Daishonin—this is the most basic essential of the correct school. This passage is documentary proof of [what it means to have] a direct connection with the Daishonin. It is the foundation of the correct school. Today, only the SGI practices and abides by this admonition.

The Nikken sect teaches that “one must not differ from Nikken”—not that “one must not differ from the Daishonin.” The foundation is erroneous. Far from “not differing in the least,” the Nikken sect is acting completely contrary to the Daishonin’s teachings. Specific examples of this are well known to all of you.

## 2. The doctrines of the five senior priests differ in every regard from the teachings of the late master.

THE true nature of the five senior priests is revealed by their betrayal of the master. The members of the Nikken sect are the Latter Day followers of the five senior priests.

It must be concluded that each of the doctrines established by the Nikken sect in recent times, including their alteration of the doctrine of the three treasures, differs in every

regard from the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

The five senior priests criticized the correct teachings of Nikko Shonin; they claimed that he was “establishing a different teaching and had lost the Way.” The priesthood [of the Nikken sect], while deeply immersed in its own slander of the Law, vilifies the correct practice of the SGI. On this point as well, the actions of the priesthood perfectly mirror those of the five senior priests.

## 3. There will [in the future] appear persons who slander our school, saying that the Goshō are forged writings. You must not associate with such evil priests.

IT was Nikko Shonin who treasured the Daishonin’s writings, giving them the honorific appellation *Goshō*, which literally means the “honorable writings.” In addition to lecturing on the Goshō himself, he collected the Daishonin’s writings and left behind many copies in his own hand for later generations.

To treasure and base oneself on the Goshō—this is the prime foundation for and the essential spirit of the followers of Nikko Shonin.

The five senior priests disregarded many Goshō, including most of the Daishonin’s letters, on account of their being written in a mixture of Chinese

characters and Japanese phonetic syllabary. They also slandered Nikko Shonin for revering the Daishonin’s writings as “Goshō” and for delivering lectures on them. They went so far as to bleach the paper on which the Daishonin had written certain Goshō [so that it could be reused for other purposes], or else consigned them to flames. Further, they labeled as forged writings and repudiated those Goshō that showed their own ideas in a disadvantageous light.

Nichiko, the fifty-ninth high priest, once commented: “In deprecating the Goshō, [the five senior priests] certainly were guilty of turning their backs on the master.”

The Soka Gakkai published the *Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) with the editorial supervision of Nichiko, and we have applied ourselves to strict Buddhist study with discipline like that of master swordsmen. We take pride in the fact that, as followers inheriting the true legacy of Nikko Shonin, we have made the Goshō our foundation.

The priesthood is so determined to establish the high priest as the foundation that it has distorted the true path. It has even gone so far as to advance the peculiar claim that “to make the Goshō the foundation is egotistic.” As I will explain later, making the high priest of the time the foundation itself amounts to betraying Nikko Shonin’s articles of warning. Article 3 states that one must not associate with or follow such evil priests.

**4. Those who produce forged writings and say that they are Gosho, or who practice with the view that the essential and theoretical teachings [of the Lotus Sutra] are the same, are parasites in the lion's body.**

NIKKO Shonin says that there will appear evil priests who use forged writings to suit their needs, who fail to distinguish between the theoretical and essential teachings and who practice false teachings.

Before and during World War II, there was a priest in Nichiren Shoshu who advocated the false doctrine of *shimpon busshaku*, which asserts that the Buddha of absolute freedom is a manifestation of the Shinto deity (the Sun Goddess). Even after the war, the priesthood, rather than taking this evil priest to task, instead took punitive action against the Soka Gakkai, which had confronted him for his offenses.

The five senior priests and their modern-day counterparts, unaware of the most profound concepts of the essential teaching (i.e., the Daishonin's Buddhism) and theoretical teaching (i.e., Shakyamuni's Buddhism), could not revere Nichiren Daishonin as the original Buddha. Today, the members of the Nikken sect, while claiming that they have inherited the tradition of Nikko Shonin, base themselves on Nikken rather than the Dai-

shonin. Truly, they are "parasites in the lion's body" of the Daishonin's Buddhism.

**5. You should refrain from indulging in poetry or non-Buddhist works, or from engaging in idleness and chatter without [having the aim of] rebuking slander.**

THE Daishonin states: "Though one may have been fortunate enough to be born as a human being..., if he fails to study Buddhism and to refute its slanderers but simply spends his time in idleness and chatter, then he is no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes" (MW-3, 215).

Many priests, freely using lay followers' offerings and failing to carry out the practice of propagation, have succumbed to sensual pleasures. While living in the lap of luxury, they have wiled away their time in "idleness and chatter" and indulged in the crass amusements of the *nouveau riche*. The Daishonin says that while donning the garments of teachers of the Law, inwardly such priests are animals.

**6. Lay believers should be strictly prohibited from visiting [heretical] temples and shrines. Moreover, priests should not visit slanderous temples or shrines, which are**

**inhabited by demons, even if only to have a look around. To do so would be a pitiful violation [of the Daishonin's Buddhism.] This is not my own personal view; it wholly derives from the sutras [of Shakyamuni] and the writings [of Nichiren Daishonin].**

THE SGI has all along strictly condemned slander, exactly as Nikko Shonin admonishes; this is a fact that is known to all. President Makiguchi's death in prison ultimately resulted from his refusal to compromise with slander.

By contrast, as successive revelations have made clear, the priesthood has become mired in slander.

The current high priest set up a family tombstone in the cemetery of a Zen temple, even conducting a ceremony to consecrate it there, and then left the temple grounds without refuting the mistaken views of the Zen priests, only to go on to a banquet. This shows just how erroneous the priesthood's faith is.

Nichiko once remarked, "A person who puts on a show of strictly refuting slander while inwardly guilty of accommodating slander is a monster."

Even well after the war had ended, Shinto talismans and other slanderous objects of worship continued to exist in Nichiren Shoshu temples—from local branch temples to the head temple itself. It was due to the efforts of Soka Gakkai members that these slanderous objects

## The Daishonin's way of training his disciples is not an authoritarian system of apprenticeship. What is important is that each person be enabled to fully and freely manifest his or her abilities.

were discarded. Members from the early days can readily attest to this.

The Soka Gakkai instructed the priesthood to discard the slanderous objects of worship. It was due to the Soka Gakkai that Nichiren Shoshu was revived as the orthodox school of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

**7.** Disciples of ability should be allowed to devote themselves to the study of the Goshu and other doctrines of Buddhism, without being pressed to perform miscellaneous services for their teachers.

THIS is the spirit of selecting and raising capable people. The Daishonin's way of training his disciples is not an authoritarian system of apprenticeship. What is important is that each person be

enabled to manifest his or her abilities fully and freely and carry out activities for the sake of the Law and kosen-rufu.

The priesthood, instead of warmly raising people, forces people into submission, and capable people are systematically oppressed through harassment and violence reminiscent of the old Japanese army. Such practices represent a fearful deviation from Nikko Shonin's articles of warning.

**8.** Those of insufficient learning who are bent on obtaining fame and fortune are not qualified to call themselves my followers.

THE Daishonin refers to priests who merely seek profit and others' reverence, while not practicing properly themselves, as "priests with the hearts of dogs" (MW-4, 93), or "Law-devouring hungry spirits" (ibid.).

Nichiko once decried conditions within the priesthood stating: "The passage at the end of the *jigage* (verse) section of the 'Juryo,' or 16th, of the Lotus Sutra reads, '[This is my constant thought:] How I can cause all living beings to quickly attain Buddhahood?'"

This refers to the immense compassion of the original Buddha who is continually active over the three existences.

"However, the desire that ceaselessly preoccupies the priests of these degenerate times over the three existences is, 'How can I increase my wealth and quickly become rich?' It is truly deplorable to hear such things."

In view of his declaration that such priests "are not qualified to call themselves my followers," Nikko Shonin would certainly excommunicate the present priesthood. This is all too clear.

**9.** Until they are well versed in the difference between the provisional and true teachings, followers of later generations should visit this temple, setting aside the debt of gratitude they owe to their parents and teachers, and undertake various studies in order to free themselves [from the sufferings of birth and death] and attain the Way.

THE purpose for visiting the

head temple is to contemplate and gain freedom from the sufferings of birth and death and to attain the Way of the Buddha. It is so that, with earnest devotion to Buddhist practice, one may sever one's attachments to the secular world and wholeheartedly devote oneself to "various studies." In essence, it is to learn correct faith.

Yet the head temple today, much to the contrary, is even more occupied with secular concerns than lay persons in society.

Priests marry and have families [although celibacy is the traditional practice of Buddhist priests, as is indicated in Article 25] and there is no serious study of any kind. Permeated by an air of discrimination and violence, it has become a place where the faith of acolytes is destroyed and corrupt priests are nurtured.

**10. Unless you have a thorough understanding of and firm faith in the teachings [of Nichiren Daishonin], you should not study T'ien-t'ai's doctrines.**

WHILE Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is concerned with "actuality," T'ien-t'ai's doctrine is concerned with "theory." It was the five senior priests who—failing to realize the monumental difference between the actual teaching and the theoretical, a difference comparable to that between

**While Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism is concerned with "actuality," T'ien-t'ai's doctrine is concerned with "theory." It was the five senior priests who—failing to realize the monumental difference—called themselves "disciples of T'ien-t'ai."**

heaven and earth—called themselves "disciples of T'ien-t'ai" [when pressured by the Kamakura government after the Daishonin's death].

If one delves into the doctrines of T'ien-t'ai before one has a profound grasp of the Daishonin's Buddhism, there is a danger that one may lose one's bearings and deviate from the path of correct faith.

Such admonitions notwithstanding, at the head temple, priests who have not yet made a thorough study of the Goshō lecture haphazardly on T'ien-t'ai doctrine. Moreover, priests' lack of earnestness in studying the Goshō itself runs counter to this article.

**11. Followers of this school should engrave the teachings of the Goshō in their lives and thereby inherit the ulti-**

**mate principles expounded by the master. Then, if they have any leisure time, they should inquire into the doctrine of the T'ien-t'ai school.**

THE sixty-fifth high priest, Nichijun, clarified that this article is an admonishment of the tendency then prevalent to consider the Daishonin's teachings from the standpoint of T'ien-t'ai's doctrine. He made the point as follows, "The Daishonin's teachings are determined in every respect by the Daishonin's Goshō."

Here, Nichijun stresses the importance of basing ourselves on the Goshō.

Nikko Shonin states that his followers should "engrave the teachings of the Goshō in their lives" and "inherit the ultimate principles from the master."

The members of the Nikken

sect have engraved not even a single word or phrase of the Goshō in their lives.

What's more, they have completely desecrated the path of master and disciple between themselves and Nichiren Dai-shōnin and Nikkō Shōnin as well as the path of master and disciple between themselves and preceding high priests. Their actions epitomize the betrayal of the master. The Nikken sect on the most fundamental level goes against Nikkō Shōnin's admonition, "Followers of this school ... should inherit the ultimate principles expounded by the master."

**12. You should be inclined to engage in discussion or deliver lectures [on Buddhism], and you should refrain from pursuing secular concerns.**

WE can interpret this as an admonition to continually seek the Buddhist Way, persevere in our practice and study of Buddhism and advance toward kosen-rufu.

Yet I wonder if there is anyone in the Nikken sect who is inclined to engage in earnest discussion or deliver lectures on the Law.

Neither spreading the teachings to others nor talking about Buddhism among themselves, they are a gathering of "Law-devouring hungry spirits." This is the reality of the present priesthood; it has completely

turned its back on Nikkō Shōnin's admonitions.

**13. Until kosen-rufu is achieved, propagate the Law to the full extent of your ability without begrudging your life.**

THIS admonition, termed by Nichikō the "principle for all generations to come" and the "first principle of eternal importance," is the unchanging standard that is the most crucial and pivotal of the twenty-six warning articles.

The sixty-sixth high priest, Nittatsu, once remarked: "It is Soka Gakkai members who, embodying the spirit of spreading the teachings even at the cost of their lives, are safeguarding Buddhism, protecting the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary and carrying out the practice of propagation for the sake of the eternal transmission of the Law.

"At the same time, by overcoming all manner of persecutions by slanderous people, Soka Gakkai members are carrying out the practice of the 'six difficult and nine easy acts'<sup>1</sup> with their lives, and accomplishing kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law."

It is the SGI that is putting this admonition into practice. Our history is a golden record of our efforts to put this admonition into practice.

While the SGI has always put kosen-rufu first, the priest-

hood has always placed its own self-preservation above all else, thereby hindering the progress of kosen-rufu.

Where in the priesthood can one find people spreading the teachings "without begrudging their lives"? In stark contrast, not only do its members lead indulgent lives, but they are even seeking to destroy the SGI and to bring the flow of kosen-rufu to a halt. Such priests are enemies of the True Law and enemies of Nikkō Shōnin.

Without defeating these enemies of the Buddha, realizing the kosen-rufu of the True Law will be impossible. Therefore, just as Nikkō Shōnin admonishes, we must continue to pursue them without begrudging our lives. A person who does so will accumulate tremendous benefit.

**14. As for practitioners who treasure the Law more highly than their own lives, even if they are but humble teachers of the Law, you must hold them in great esteem, revering them as you would the Buddha.**

ARTICLES 14, 15 and 16 concern faith, practice and study, respectively.

With these three admonitions, Nikkō Shōnin teaches that faith is concerned with the individual's practice and real ability. It is not a person with outward status or position but

## The SGI is a world where people study together and support one another in seeking the Law—irrespective of social standing, profession or age—as members of the Soka family.

one who is actually spreading the teachings and advancing kosen-rufu who should be respected.

Article 14 admonishes us that we should revere as a Buddha those who spread the teachings without begrudging their lives.

This is an anecdote I have mentioned before, but a television program once aired footage of a woman Soka Gakkai member propagating this Buddhism, making her a target of ridicule.

Nittatsu explained that he was so moved at viewing the TV program that he cried and bowed his head to the woman, “because I saw in this poor woman a noble Buddha working to save the people.”

Nittatsu also once remarked, “The offense of those who speak ill of and obstruct the votaries of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law—we who embrace faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism—is in fact more serious than the offense of Devadatta, who for a long time bore great malice toward Shakyamuni in his actions, words

and thoughts.”

The phrase *practitioners who treasure the Law more highly than their own lives* refers to SGI members. Who apart from SGI members could it possibly indicate? The offense of evil priests who disdain and seek to plunge respectable SGI members into difficulties far exceeds that of Devadatta.

**15.** You should revere a teacher of the Law who engages in its propagation as a sacred priest, even though he may be your junior.

AS the testimony of priests who have severed ties with the head temple makes clear, discrimination along hierarchical lines pervades the priesthood to an extreme degree.

The current priesthood is totally out of accord with Nikko Shonin’s admonition that persons excelling in faith and practice should be respected, even though they may be of low rank

or junior in age or position.

The SGI, by contrast, treasures those who practice in earnest, even though they may have joined only recently, prays for their growth and seeks to give them guidance and training in faith. For precisely this reason, we have succeeded in creating a steady stream of capable people for kosen-rufu and have raised many young successors.

The appellation *a teacher of the Law who engages in its propagation* refers to the SGI. However, inspired by contempt for the SGI, the priesthood excommunicated us.

**16.** Even though they may be lowly, you should deeply respect and regard as your teachers those whose understanding of Buddhism surpasses your own.

SESSON Doji learned the Law from a lowly demon. Herein lies the Buddhist spirit of seeking the Law.

This spirit, too, is entirely lacking in the priesthood, which is dominated by authoritarian and discriminatory attitudes.

The SGI is a world where people study together and support one another in seeking the Law—irrespective of social standing, profession or age—as members of the Soka family. Further, it is a realm where seniors apply themselves to raising their juniors, burning

with a sense of responsibility to enable them to become more capable than they are themselves.

It is a world of equality; a world where one's real ability counts; a world based on the Law.

## 17. Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and pro-pounds his own views.

NIKKO Shonin strictly warns that we must not follow a high priest who undermines Buddhism and the Law.

Nikko Shonin's inclusion of this article among the twenty-six admonitions clearly demonstrates that he did not think that the high priest was infallible.

On the contrary, we can infer that Nikko Shonin was concerned about the emergence of the kind of high priests who should not be followed. For this reason, we have refused to follow Nikken, who pro-pounds his own views, and we have strictly taken him to task for his slander of the Law; in so doing, we have been carrying out a practice that exactly accords with the admonitions of Nikko Shonin.

President Toda once wrote:

In June 1943, Soka Gakkai leaders were ordered to the head temple. The Rev. Jikai Watanabe, on behalf of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood, suggested that the Soka

Gakkai direct its members to temporarily accept the Shinto talisman [to appease the authorities]. This suggestion was made with the current and retired high priests on hand as witnesses.

Again, in the "Twenty-six Admonitions of Nikko," Nikko Shonin states that we should not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha's Law and pro-pounds his own views. In this spirit, President Makiguchi flatly refused to accept the Shinto talisman and then left the head temple. (—from "The History and Conviction of the Soka Gakkai")

It is precisely because President Makiguchi refused to go along with the authorities, persevered in following the true teaching and stood by the admonitions of Nikko Shonin to the end that the path of kosen-rufu was not lost.

Again (in August 1951), shortly after his inauguration as the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda spoke as follows:

At this time 700 years after the founding of true Buddhism, the entire body of Nichiren Shoshu believers amounts to a mere 10 or 20,000 households throughout the country. The present reality shames us before the two masters [Nichiren Daishonin, founder of true Buddhism, and Nikko Shonin, founder of the Head Temple Taiseki-ji].

My heart is filled with trepidation at the thought of how the two masters would decry

this situation and take us to task were they here today. My sense of unworthiness and shame pains me mentally and physically....

It is truly most unfortunate that at such a time as this there should be some in the priesthood who obstruct the advance of propagation out of senseless feelings of jealousy.

President Toda felt personally responsible for kosen-rufu. He stood up alone in the vanguard and took direct leadership of the propagation campaign.

However, far from cooperating with the Soka Gakkai, the priesthood at the time refused to show any understanding whatsoever. In addition, some priests, succumbing to irrational feelings of jealousy, actively obstructed efforts to propagate this Buddhism.

For President Makiguchi, too, the lack of understanding and obstructive actions of priests had been a constant source of irritation. And, in the end, he died in prison as a result of the priesthood's betrayal.

President Toda continued: "The long tradition of this school (Nichiren Shoshu), dating back 700 years, is on the one hand noble and pure, truly something that is worthy of respect. Nevertheless, it is bound to be plagued by 'mice and stray cats.' But eventually it will be rid of them, so there is nothing to worry about."

Sadly, the priesthood today has been overrun "by mice and stray cats." Odious priests, who prey on the Daishonin's

Buddhism like so many stray cats and hungry mice and spend their time frantically jostling for offerings, must be driven off from the world of faith directed toward advancing kosen-rufu.

And what in fact has happened is that these corrupt priests, finding it impossible to remain in the pure world of kosen-rufu, have left it of their own accord.

**18. Even if a view is set forth unanimously [of believers], the high priest should repudiate it if it goes against the Buddha's Law.**

THIS warning article is paired with Article 17. The phrase *if he [it] goes against the Buddha's Law* is found in both.

The basic point is that truth or falsity should be determined neither by authority (i.e., by the high priest) nor by the weight of the view of the multitude (i.e., by a conference of believers). In all matters, what counts most is whether something accords with the correct Buddhist teaching. And it goes without saying that the Daishonin's golden words are the standard to be used in making any such determination.

In using his authority as high priest in an attempt to crush the correct views of the believers based on the Goshō, Nikkō is going completely against this admonition.

**19. Black robes should not be worn [by priests].**

SINCE the time of Nichiren Daishonin, it has been part of the code of the Fuji school that priests should wear robes of a light-grey color [contrary to the black robes worn by priests of other sects]. In the first place, the reason for this was to protect the correct teaching. A sutra passage states, "Wearing black robes is slanderous; those who do so will certainly fall into hell."

By admonishing priests to wear garments different in color from those of the priests of other sects, Nikkō Shōnin taught that they should always conduct themselves in a manner befitting followers of Nichiren Daishonin. Being immediately recognizable as priests of the Fuji school, they would have to be careful to conduct themselves properly and in an upright manner. The spirit of this warning article is that followers of the Fuji school, as the Daishonin's followers, should be careful to ensure that their conduct and their faith are free of any blemish.

However, priests of the Nikkō sect change their priestly robes to be less conspicuous in their immoral pursuits, with some going so far as to use pseudonyms to further conceal their identity.

The conduct of Nichiren Shōshū priests has become so deplorable that light-grey robes have now come to symbolize the height of priestly decadence. How Nikkō Shōnin

would deplore the current state of affairs.

**20. Jikitotsu should not be worn [by priests].**

*JIKITOTSU* are ornamental garments, pleated from the waist down, that are generally worn by priests of other sects. Nikkō Shōnin admonishes that priests must not wear ornate robes, but should be simple in their attire.

Thus, even though he may not be wearing a *jikitotsu* per se, a priest who wears such costly and luxurious robes as Nikkō does is going completely against the spirit of this admonition.

**21. You should not sit together with slanderers of the Law [at religious ceremonies] for fear of suffering the same punishment as they.**

IN October 1922, a Nichiren Shōshū high priest (the fifty-seventh, Nisshō) sat down together with the high priests of the Nichiren sect (Minobu school), the Kempon Hokke sect and other schools of the Nichiren sect and read the "Juryō" chapter and chanted daimoku in a ceremony led by the high priest of the Minobu school.

**To accept offerings made by slanderers is to condone their slander. The result of accepting offerings from slanderers, as with the previous warning article, is that one suffers the same retribution as they.**

This high priest had joined representatives of other Nichiren schools in petitioning the government to grant the Daishonin the title of “Great Teacher (Daishi).” They gathered at a ceremony held to commemorate the conferral of the title of “Great Teacher of the Establishment of the True Teaching (Rissho Daishi).” [By joining the leaders of these heretical sects in this undertaking,] this high priest, in stark contrast with the conduct of the Daishonin, sought to ingratiate himself with the authorities.

After this, there was also a high-ranking priest (the sixtieth high priest, Nichikai, Nikken’s father) who drafted a memorandum stating that the Daishonin’s sacred tomb was at Minobu and submitted it to the government authorities.

Trampling on the sublime spirit of Nikko Shonin, who departed from Minobu [because of slander], these former high priests aligned themselves with the slanderers of Minobu. By acting in such a manner,

they incurred the same offense as the Minobu school; they committed great slander.

**22. You must not accept offerings from slanderers of the Law.**

TO accept offerings made by slanderers is to condone their slander. The result of accepting offerings from slanderers, as with the previous warning article, is that one suffers the same retribution as they.

For this reason, priests who do not refute the mistaken views of lay followers who enshrine slanderous objects of worship, yet accept offerings from such followers, are turning their backs on this admonition.

Also, after the war, to increase the revenues of the impoverished head temple, the priesthood at one time planned to follow the example of other slanderous temples and turn Taiseki-ji into a tourist site. It

was President Toda who stopped them from doing this. Thus the Soka Gakkai saved the priesthood from accepting the offerings of non-believers.

In light of this warning article, the contradictions in the priesthood’s stance—in accusing the Soka Gakkai of slander while at the same time accepting the donations of Soka Gakkai members and living in temples donated by the Soka Gakkai—become apparent. In short, their true motive lies not in abiding by Nikko Shonin’s admonitions but in amassing wealth; they have not the slightest interest in the distinction between correct and erroneous Buddhist teachings. Some people even believe that money is the current priesthood’s object of worship.

**23. Carrying a sword or staff in order to protect the Buddhist Law is permissible. However, [weapons] should not be worn when presiding over religious services, though accompanying priests may be permitted to carry them [to protect themselves and others].**

NICHIKO commented on this warning article, saying, “This article applied to weapons of self-defense during certain periods of social unrest and turmoil in feudal times.”

We should ponder the solemn spirit of Nikko Shonin

conveyed by the clause “in order to protect the Buddhist Law.” No matter how dangerous the circumstances, to protect the Buddhist Law, we must not begrudge our lives.

The SGI has persevered in protecting the Buddhist Law while undergoing great persecutions to pioneer kosen-rufu in the midst of the harsh realities of society. In this sense, we have truly put the spirit of this admonition into practice.

By contrast, the members of the priesthood, having completely relied on the SGI’s efforts to protect Buddhism and Nichiren Shoshu, have grown decadent. They know nothing of the spirit to protect the Buddhist Law. All that concerns them is their own base self-preservation.

## **24. [At religious ceremonies] young acolytes should not occupy seats lower than those of high-ranking lay followers.**

NIKKO Shonin instructs priests on the fundamental attitude they must take. He says that priests must not flatter or curry favor with lay followers who lack faith, even if they be of high social standing, because to do so would amount to degrading the Law.

In explaining this warning article, Nichiko once pointed out: “During times of strife, the warrior was all-powerful. In religious circles, the ordinary non-ranking priests faced pov-

erty and hardships in their daily lives; therefore they tended to show the powerful feudal clans special treatment, which led the warrior to grow arrogant.”

Simply put, though they might be impoverished, priests must not court money. Placing Buddhism above the mundane concerns of their daily lives, priests must possess the dignity to win the respect of lay followers. They should respect not people of high standing or power but people of faith. This is the spirit that Nikko Shonin stresses in this article.

However, not only have the members of the Nikken sect gone money-mad, but taking advantage of the respect and reverence that SGI members showed them, they discriminated against and looked down on lay followers.

Furthermore, they have denigrated and persecuted the SGI—a most praiseworthy organization of faith made up of ordinary people who have no special standing in society.

They are going completely against Nikko Shonin’s admonition to make Buddhism the standard and not to fawn upon people of high standing.

## **25. My disciples should conduct themselves as holy priests, patterning their behavior after that of the late master. However, even if a high priest or a priest striving for practice and under-**

**standing should temporarily deviate from [the principle of] sexual abstinence, he may still be allowed to remain in the priesthood [as a common priest without rank].**

THIS admonition is clear documentary proof that Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin absolutely prohibited priests from marrying.

The term *holy priests*, which may also be interpreted as pure priests, denotes priests who refrain from marrying and eating meat. That Nichiren Daishonin himself had neither wife nor children, nor ate meat, is clear from the Goshō passage, “I, Nichiren, have neither wife nor children, nor do I eat fish or fowl!” (MW-5, 6).

Again, to his follower Sairen-bo, he wrote: “Even a priest who belongs to one of the provisional sects should do so [observe the precepts not to marry or eat meat]. It goes without saying that it applies even more so to a practitioner of the True Law” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1357).

Nichiko, touching on this admonition, once remarked: “I see the present situation as a temporary anomaly.... Eventually and as a natural development, I pray, we will reform ourselves and return to the conditions that prevailed during the time of our founder, Nichiren Daishonin, and Nikko Shonin, who succeeded him and established the head temple.” [Nichiko himself observed the precept of celibacy

throughout his life.]

Based on the premise that a priest who has relations with a woman should by rights be defrocked and made to return to secular life, Nikko Shonin here stipulates that, in the event that a high priest temporarily deviates from the principle of sexual abstinence, his rank should be reduced to that of common priest.

Nichiko comments on this admonition, “It can only be interpreted as meaning that the person should lose the position of high priest and descend to a low status.”

Far from “temporarily deviating,” Nikken, by his repeated shameless conduct and the fact that he is married, has long continued to defile the character of the school and bring disgrace upon the chair of the high priest. Nikko Shonin clearly directs that such a person should be removed from his post and stripped of his rank. Those who go against this admonition are traitors of Nikko Shonin.

## 26. You should treasure those practitioners who are skilled in difficult debate, just as the late master did.

THE phrase *skilled in difficult debate* is from a passage of the “Yujutsu” (Emerging From the Earth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. These are words spoken in praise of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

Nichiren Daishonin devoted himself to raising people of out-

standing ability, comparable to those described in this sutra passage. For example, in a doctrinal debate with a scholar of the Tendai sect, the Daishonin appointed Nichimoku to represent him. To the astonishment of many, the youthful Nichimoku completely refuted the learned priest.

There are many masters of propagation in the SGI who have developed formidable skill in difficult debate. All along, we have highly praised, respected and honored the courageous practitioners of kosen-rufu who refute false teachings and spread the true teaching, thereby leading people to take faith in the Gohonzon. This is the tradition of the SGI.

For this reason, while spreading the True Law throughout the world, we have been able to prosper along with the Law.

Without people who spread the Law, kosen-rufu would never be anything more than an empty dream. In this final admonition, Nikko Shonin reiterates the point that those who spread the Law should be treasured.

The Nikken sect, however, looked down on, used and ultimately excommunicated the Soka Gakkai—an order of emissaries of the original Buddha and practitioners of propagation.

In reading each of these warning articles, it becomes clear that the present priesthood has gone against every one of Nikko Shonin’s admonitions and trampled on their spirit.

Nikko Shonin states, “Those who violate even one of these articles cannot be called disciples of Nikko.” This is the

strictness of the path of master and disciple. The priesthood, which has violated not one but every article, is an “anti-Nichiren Daishonin” and “anti-Nikko Shonin” group who has separated itself from the lifeline of the True Law.

Today, there is no legitimate body apart from the SGI—no body that inherits and carries on the correct teaching and practice directly connected to Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin. In light of Nikko Shonin’s articles of warning, in light of the Goshō, and in light of the reality of worldwide kosen-rufu, this is something that no one can deny.

The priesthood recovered its legitimacy thanks to the Soka Gakkai. The Soka Gakkai made Nichiren Shōshū the correct school (*shōshū*) again. However, by excommunicating the Soka Gakkai, the priesthood has of its own accord completely cut itself off from the world of correct faith. Without the Soka Gakkai, it has become a heretical school.

The SGI is the order of the original Buddha. Those who advance together with the SGI will definitely enter the path of attaining Buddhahood. Their lives will be bathed in great benefit and fortune over the three existences. □

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1. Six difficult and nine easy acts: A series of comparisons set forth by Shakyamuni in “The Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (eleventh) chapter of the Lotus Sutra to show how difficult it will be to embrace the sutra in the evil age after his death. (Refer to *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Concepts*, p. 400–01.)

# Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra

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

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*This is the twenty-eighth 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 May 1997 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.*

*Continuing their discussion of the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” found in the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, participants this time delve into the heart of the essential teaching, which explains how one can develop a state of life of eternal indestructible happiness.*

## 28 Establish a State of Life of Eternal, Indestructible Happiness

**Haruo Suda:** This past April [1997], much to the delight of amateur astronomers the world over, Comet Hale-Bopp made its closest pass to the earth since its last appearance some 4,200 years ago. Reportedly the comet is on a trek around the sun that won't happen again for another two or three thousand years.

**Takanori Endo:** A human being, by contrast, rarely lives even a hundred years. No one alive today will live to see this comet come again.

**Katsuji Saito:** When we contemplate the grand workings of the universe, we find ourselves forced to ponder the ultimate nature of the self and the meaning of human existence. I wouldn't be surprised if there were a great many people who were prompted by the sight of the comet to begin thinking along these lines.

**Daisaku Ikeda:** As we grapple with difficult Buddhist concepts, it is also important that we



JAN SIBERT

Comet Hale-Bopp taken from Angels Camp, California.

have the inner richness to be able to look up at the stars or the moon and compose a poem once in a while—to actually be the romantics you each sound like. When we open our minds and fix our gaze on the universe, we fix our gaze on our own life.

**Suda:** Yes, I agree. But amid the press of daily life, it is often difficult to find the time in the day or the space in our lives to ponder life from such a lofty perspective. And when you add our anxiety over the most trifling matters as you try to keep up with the demands of day-to-day living, it is hard not to fall into a more mundane mind-set.

**Ikeda:** And that's the importance of religion.

The year before second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda passed away, the Soviet Union successfully launched the first man-made satellite (Sputnik, October 4, 1957). This became the talk of the world. When he heard what a fuss people

were making over it, President Toda chided them, saying: "It's nothing to get so excited about. We just have one more tiny star in the sky. From the standpoint of the vastness of the universe as taught in Buddhism, it's no more than a tiny speck." President Toda talked about the universe as though it were his own backyard; it gave one a sense of the vastness of Buddhism, as well as the grand scale of President Toda's life.

When in conflict people tend to make big deals of the smallest things. So we become joyful or sorrowful because of trivial matters, bouncing forth and back. As a result they often find themselves fluctuating between feelings of joy and sorrow. Such narrow-mindedness can only produce misery.

Nichiren Daishonin says that with the passage of time, "even the large-hearted become narrow, and even those who seek the Way lapse into erroneous views" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 6, p. 239). In a sense, the purpose

of Buddhism and of the movement for kosen-rufu lies in opening and expanding hearts that have grown narrow. The greatest expression of broad-mindedness is the principle of “three thousand realms in a single moment of life,” or *ichinen sanzen*; a principle that allows us to thoroughly grasp the truth that our mind and the universe are inseparably connected throughout all eternity. The purpose of Buddhism is to enable us to achieve this understanding.

In terms of our topic, Nichiren Daishonin says that without the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true,” as it is clarified in the “Life Span” chapter, there is no true *ichinen sanzen*. Why is that? In our discussion today I hope we can delve a little further into the meaning of this fundamental principle.

### Shakyamuni and the Teaching of *Ichinen Sanzen*

**Thus, since I attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My life span is an immeasurable number of asamkhya kalpas, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering extinction. Good men, originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last twice the number of years that have already passed. (LS16, 227)**

**Endo:** Okay. Last time we learned about the significance of the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true.” To recap, we discussed how Shakyamuni became a Buddha by making the “eternal Law at one with the eternal Buddha” his mentor. With the teaching of casting off the transient and revealing the true, Shakyamuni urged his disciples to follow his example and make the same eternal Law their mentor as well.

The powerful message here is: “Return to Shakyamuni the human being! Acquire for yourself the same foundation that enabled Shakyamuni to become a Buddha!” When I heard this, I felt as though I had truly grasped this principle for the first time.

**Saito:** The eternal Law is Nam-myoho-renge-kyo.

And the eternal Buddha is the Buddha of absolute freedom who has been enlightened since time without beginning or the Nam-myoho-renge-kyo Thus Come One.

**Ikeda:** That’s right. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is the Law; but at the same time it is also the life of the Buddha. The Person and the Law are one. The oneness of the Person and the Law is the important point.

While we may speak of the Law as though it were independent, if it really were separate from the Person (the Buddha) it would be no more than a theoretical construct. What the Buddha realizes is the Law. The Buddha’s wisdom is the Law. The Buddha and the Law can never be separate.

The Buddha from time without beginning, or *kuon ganjo*, the Buddha existing eternally without beginning or end, is the life of the universe itself. It is the constant and ceaseless work to lead all to enlightenment, without a second’s pause. In fact, that Buddha, and we ourselves, are one. Then, we ourselves have been working to lead people to happiness and for kosen-rufu since the remote past; not only in this lifetime. This awareness is the heart of the “Life Span” chapter.

When our viewpoint expands from the present to the entirety of the eternal universe, we awaken to our life’s profound mission. Similarly, Shakyamuni realized that he was in fact one with the eternal Buddha, and he described this self as “undying.” He said: “It is better to live a single day aware of the undying self than to live a hundred years ignorant of the undying self”; and, “Rather than living a hundred years ignorant of supreme truth, it is better to live a single day perceiving supreme truth.”<sup>1</sup>

**Endo:** Here, “undying self” and “supreme truth” refer to the same thing.

**Ikeda:** That’s right. Simply put, they both refer to the doctrine of the “three thousand realms in a single moment of life.” Shakyamuni gave partial explanations of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* in various sutras, but the explanations in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are not satisfactory. There is a well-known passage relating to this point in *The Major Writings*, “The Opening of the Eyes.”

**Suda:** Yes. The Daishonin says:

All the other sutras such as the *Kegon*, *Hannya* and *Dainichi* not only conceal the fact that people of the two vehicles can attain Buddhahood, but they fail to make clear that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas in the past. These sutras have two flaws. First, because they teach that the Ten Worlds are separate from one another, they fail to move beyond the provisional doctrines and to reveal the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life as it is expounded in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. Second, because they teach that Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment for the first time in this world, referring only to his provisional aspect, they fail to reveal the fact, stressed in the essential teaching, that the Buddha attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago. (MW-2, 87 [103])<sup>2</sup>

The sutras before the Lotus Sutra discriminate against those of the two vehicles (voice-hearers and *pratyekabuddhas*, or Learning and Realization), by concealing the fact they can attain Buddhahood. The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings also do not reveal the fact that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment in the remote past. Therefore, no genuine equality is in these teachings.

When the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings say that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India, they overlook and therefore do not explain his actual attainment in the remote past. In other words, they do not address the critical principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true.”

**Endo:** Regarding the principle of enlightenment of the people of the two vehicles and the principle of Shakyamuni’s actual attainment in the remote past, the Daishonin says, “These two great doctrines are the core of the Buddha’s lifetime teachings and the very heart and marrow of all the sutras” (MW-2, 87 [103]). He indicates, in other words, that these constitute the core of Shakyamuni’s lifetime teachings.

We have learned that the enlightenment of the people of the two vehicles reveals the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* of the theoretical teaching, whereas Shakyamuni’s actual attainment of enlightenment in the remote past reveals *ichinen sanzen* of the

essential teaching.

**Saito:** In this connection, the Daishonin says:

The *Hoben* [Expedient Means, second] chapter, which belongs to the theoretical teaching, expounds the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life, making clear that persons of the two vehicles can achieve Buddhahood. It thus eliminates one of the two errors found in the earlier sutras. But it nevertheless retains the provisional aspect, and fails to reveal the eternal aspect, of the Buddha’s enlightenment. Thus the true doctrine of the three

When the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings say that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India, they overlook and therefore do not explain his actual attainment in the remote past.

thousand realms in a single moment of life remains unclear and the attainment of Buddhahood by persons of the two vehicles is not properly affirmed. Such teachings are like the moon seen in the water, or rootless plants that drift on the waves. (MW-2, 87–88 [103])

The difficulty here is the question of why, in order to articulate the teaching of true *ichinen sanzen*, Shakyamuni had to employ the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true.” Why does the Daishonin refer to these teachings as rootless plants?



SEIKO GRAPHIC

The ruins of Nalanda Monastery, located at the present-day village of Baragaon in Bihar, India. As a center of Buddhist study that attracted many learned monks, it prospered from the fifth through twelfth centuries. It was founded in the fifth century C.E. by Kumaragupta (414–455), king of the Gupta dynasty, also called Shakraditya.

**Ikeda:** Let's consider this methodically. First, what is *ichinen sanzen* of the theoretical teaching? We went through this earlier in our discussion of the second or "Expedient Means" chapter, but it might help to reconfirm the main points of that chapter here.

**Saito:** Okay. The Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China established the principle of *ichinen sanzen* based on the passage of the "Expedient Means" chapter, which describes the true entity of all phenomena and the ten factors.<sup>3</sup> The teaching of the true entity of all phenomena represents a radical departure from the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings because it bridges the hitherto insurmountable gap between the world of Buddhahood and the nine worlds.

The pre-Lotus Sutra teachings not only describe the beings of each of the Ten Worlds from Hell to Buddhahood as existing separately; they go so far as to say that the Buddha and the beings of the nine worlds actually dwell in different lands. But the "Expedient Means" chapter of the

Lotus Sutra brings things into focus, explaining that the Buddha and the beings of the nine worlds are in fact all entities of life who equally exhibit the same ten factors. This eliminates the discrimination found in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings.

**Ikeda:** The ten factors are also termed the true entity of the ten factors. The substance of the true entity is none other than Myoho-enge-kyo itself. The factors of "inherent cause" and "latent effect," along with the other eight factors, exist in one's life at each moment. This is the simultaneity of cause and effect. This simultaneity is the marvelous Law of the lotus that we all are entities of that Law.

"All phenomena" in the phrase "the true entity of all phenomena" indicates the Ten Worlds. While the phenomena of the universe are infinite, they are all included in the beings and environment of the Ten Worlds. All phenomena of the Ten Worlds are the true entity; that is, they are all entities of the Mystic Law. That is the meaning of the true entity of all phenomena.

**Endo:** Regarding the principle of the true entity of all phenomena, in our discussion of the “Expedient Means” chapter, we touched on the true aspect of life as viewed from the enlightened state of Buddhahood. At that time, President Ikeda, you said:

Here, all things, all phenomena are equal, transcending distinctions and differences between subject and object, self and others, mind and body, the spiritual and the material. It is an infinitely expansive realm of eternal life without beginning or end and transcending distinctions of the Ten Worlds.

**Ikeda:** That’s right. The true entity accords with the dynamic life of the universe, without beginning or end. The true entity of all phenomena reveals the Law through which all beings in the Ten Worlds can equally attain Buddhahood. This is *ichinen sanzen* of the theoretical teaching.

### Why Is the Theoretical Teaching Like a Rootless Plant?

**Suda:** From that explanation, it seems that with the theoretical teaching, or first half, of the Lotus Sutra the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* has been all but completely elucidated. Why then does the Daishonin say that it would be like a rootless plant in the absence of the one remaining principle of casting off the provisional and revealing the true?

I believe it is because even though the theoretical teaching reveals that the nine worlds contain the world of Buddhahood through the explication of the doctrine of the enlightenment of the two vehicles, it does not teach the converse of this—that the world of Buddhahood contains the other nine worlds. As the Daishonin indicates where he says, “The doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life begins with the concept of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds” (MW-2, 66 [80]), the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds is the core of the doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*. But we do not have the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds until it is clarified both that the nine worlds contain the world of Buddhahood, and that the world of Buddhahood contains the nine worlds.

From the point of view that Shakyamuni

attained enlightenment for the first time in India—that is to say, from the account of Shakyamuni as an ordinary person [representing the nine worlds], renouncing the world at the age of 19, carrying out Buddhist practice, and ultimately becoming a Buddha—we only see the aspect of the nine worlds containing the world of Buddhahood. Accordingly, it is in order to reveal the world of Buddhahood endowed with the nine worlds that Shakyamuni casts off his transient status and reveals his true identity.

**Endo:** That may be so. But isn’t it also true that, on a theoretical level at least, the principle of the “mutual possession of the Ten Worlds” in some sense arises from the explanation of the true entity of all phenomena that we find in the theoretical teaching? Since it is explained that all beings in the Ten Worlds are equally entities of, and fundamentally one with, the Mystic Law, it goes without saying that beings in the nine worlds possess the world of Buddhahood. Likewise, it also follows that beings in the world of Buddhahood possess the nine worlds.

Since the principal objective is to enable beings in the nine worlds to become Buddhas, the teaching of the enlightenment of the people of the two vehicles—that is, that the nine worlds contain the world of Buddhahood—naturally is given priority in the theoretical teaching. Therefore, part of the significance of casting off the transient and revealing the true lies in Shakyamuni’s discussing, based on his own experience and in actual terms, the point that the world of Buddhahood contains the other nine worlds—which until that juncture had been merely “theory.”

**Ikeda:** This is so complicated it seems you are all at odds in your views. Indeed, I sense an uncharacteristic lack of clarity about the true purpose of the teaching of “casting off the transient and revealing the true.”

Certainly, the doctrine of the true entity of all phenomena is the key that opens up a correct view of life, according to which the nine worlds are endowed with the world of Buddhahood; and the world of Buddhahood, with the nine worlds. But a major contradiction arises between this teaching of Shakyamuni’s and his apparent enlightenment within his lifetime in India.

Put another way, the teaching of the true entity of all phenomena points directly to the vast life of the Buddha who exists eternally without beginning or end—the world of the original Buddha whom Shakyamuni made his mentor. In short, the teaching of the “Expedient Means” chapter subtly offers the world of the eternal Mystic Law that is at one with the eternal.

**Saito:** In expounding this teaching, as long as Shakyamuni maintains the position that he attained enlightenment for the first time during his present lifetime, the “teaching expounded” and the “person expounding it” are not in agreement. And the only way for Shakyamuni to bring them into agreement is to reveal the realm of the Buddha from time without beginning, which the teaching of the true entity of all phenomena implies.

In conclusion, the teaching of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” is a necessary link to, and provides actual proof of, the teaching of the true entity of all phenomena.

**Ikeda:** That’s why when Shariputra, who was regarded as the foremost disciple in wisdom, hears Shakyamuni preach the true entity of all phenomena, he immediately realizes Shakyamuni’s “true identity,” which is implicit in this teaching. And by realizing Shakyamuni’s true identity, he at the same time recollects his own true identity.

The Daishonin calls this Buddha the “Buddha of the true entity of all phenomena” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 714). To make this even clearer, I’d like us to now return to “The Opening of the Eyes” and look at what Nichiren Daishonin says about the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true.”

### **The World of Buddhahood From Time Without Beginning and the Nine Worlds From Time Without Beginning**

**Endo:** Yes, the Daishonin says:

When we come to the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, then the belief that Shakyamuni first obtained Buddhahood during his present lifetime is demolished, and the effects of the four teachings are like-

wise demolished. When the effects of the four teachings<sup>4</sup> are demolished, the causes of the four teachings are likewise demolished. Thus the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds as expounded in the earlier sutras and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra are wiped out, and the cause and effect of the Ten Worlds in the essential teaching are revealed. This is the doctrine of original cause and original effect. (MW-2, 88 [103–104])

“Cause and effect of the Ten Worlds,” here, means the cause and effect of attaining Buddhahood. This can be thought of as the “path” of attaining Buddhahood whereby the world of Buddhahood (the effect) is attained through carrying out the practice of the nine worlds (the cause). But this “cause and effect of the Ten Worlds” is completely different before Shakyamuni casts off his transient status and reveals his true identity than after he does so.

**Suda:** In the first place, by casting off the transient and revealing the true, Shakyamuni rejects the view that he attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence, and in effect refutes the “effects of the four teachings.” The effects of the four teachings mean various states of Buddhahood taught in the four teachings of the Tripitaka, connecting, specific and perfect teachings—that is, in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra. These explanations of the effect of Buddhahood are all premised on the view that Shakyamuni attained Buddhahood for the first time in India. That view is fundamentally rejected when we come to the Lotus Sutra’s essential teaching.

**Endo:** Shakyamuni himself refutes the view of Buddhahood that had prevailed until then, announcing in effect: “That is not the true nature of the Buddha’s life!”

**Saito:** The Daishonin says that this also amounts to a refutation of the “causes of the four teachings.” The denial of the Buddhahood of the Buddhas described in these teachings amounts to a denial of the authenticity of the causes or practices said to have led to these effects.

In this way, the essential teaching entirely refutes the causality of the Ten Worlds expound-

ed in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings and the theoretical teaching.

**Endo:** It is a momentous change of scene.

**Saito:** At the same time as he refutes the causes and effects that he had preached up to that point, Shakyamuni reveals the original cause and effect—the True Cause and True Effect—of his enlightenment. In “The Opening of the Eyes,” the Daishonin describes the content of this revelation as follows:

It reveals that the nine worlds are all present in the beginningless Buddhahood, and that Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds. This is the true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the true hundred worlds and thousand factors, the true three thousand realms in a single moment of life. (MW-2, 88 [104])

The principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” in the “Life Span” chapter clarifies the true entity that possesses both the “beginningless Buddhahood” and the “beginningless nine worlds.” On this basis, the Daishonin affirms that the true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, the hundred realms and thousand factors, and *ichinen sanzen* are established.

**Suda:** “Beginningless” literally means without beginning or eternal in contrast to “with beginning,” or having a point of origin sometime in the finite past. The view of Shakyamuni as having attained Buddhahood for the first time during his present existence suggests, erroneously of course, that his enlightenment has a definite beginning.

### “Beginningless” Implies Simultaneity of Cause and Effect

**Ikeda:** Which passage of the “Life Span” chapter substantiates the key concepts of “beginningless Buddhahood” and “beginningless nine worlds?”

**Endo:** “Beginningless Buddhahood” is indicated by “it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood” (LS16, 225). Here, Shakyamuni is saying that an

immeasurable period of time has passed since he attained Buddhahood; this is the revelation of his actual attainment in the remote past.

**Suda:** The passage “since I attained Buddhahood, an extremely long period of time has passed. My life span is an immeasurable number of *asamkhya kalpas*, and during that time I have constantly abided here without ever entering extinction” (LS16, 227), has much the same meaning.

**Saito:** From these passages, the Daishonin states that the life of the Buddha is “beginningless.”

**Endo:** The term *beginningless nine worlds* comes from the passage, “originally I practiced the bodhisattva way, and the life span that I acquired then has yet to come to an end but will last twice the number of years that have already passed” (LS16, 227). This is saying that the life of the nine worlds (represented here by the world of Bodhisattva) also continues eternally.

**Ikeda:** The Buddha briefly speaks of the beginningless state of his life. Referring to this, the Daishonin says: “The nine worlds are all present in the beginningless Buddhahood.” In other words, the world of Buddhahood didn’t just suddenly appear; it exists inherently in life from time without beginning.

“Buddhahood is inherent in the beginningless nine worlds.” The nine worlds neither suddenly appeared, nor will they at some point simply disappear. Rather, like the world of Buddhahood, they are eternal. This is the truth of all Ten Worlds, precisely described in the “Life Span” chapter.

If the Ten Worlds were not beginningless, they would not be “inherently and eternally existing.” On the contrary, they would be “without roots and existing only in the present”—truly the image of rootless plants.

It is only with this clarification of “beginningless Buddhahood” and of the “beginningless nine worlds” that the two distinct concepts of the nine worlds and Buddhahood become one, indivisible and equal. At this point of congruence, cause (the nine worlds) and effect (world of Buddhahood) are simultaneous. This is the “true mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.”

An astronomer makes stellar observations at L'Observatoire De Floirac in Bordeaux, France.



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**Suda:** Can we rephrase this as follows? If one subscribes to the view that Shakyamuni first attained enlightenment during his present lifetime, his Buddhahood was attained as a result of having practiced for countless aeons. It is therefore without origin, existing only in the present. In terms of cause and effect, the cause of Buddhahood (the nine worlds) comes first, and the effect of Buddhahood (the world of Buddhahood) comes later; which obviously is not the simultaneity of cause and effect.

According to that view, before achieving the effect of Buddhahood one would possess only the nine worlds; which separates the nine worlds from the world of Buddhahood. And after the effect of Buddhahood is attained, one would possess only the world of Buddhahood; separating one from the nine worlds.

**Ikeda:** That's right. Within that view, there is no mutual possession of the Ten Worlds. And without the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, there is no doctrine of *ichinen sanzen*. That's why the Daishonin compares the doctrines of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds and *ichinen sanzen* found in the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra to "rootless plants," or "the moon seen in the water."

The Daishonin calls the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds expounded in the theoretical teaching "mutual possession of the Ten Worlds of

initial attainment"; and he calls the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds found in the essential teaching "mutual possession of the Ten Worlds of original attainment and original endowment." He thus indicates that these two doctrines are completely different. The key difference is whether there is a recognition of the original Buddha whose life is without beginning or end.

**Endo:** In *The Major Writings*, "Jippokai Ji" (On the Ten Dharma Worlds) says the following regarding the difference between "initial attainment" and "original attainment":

The theoretical teaching expounds only the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds of initial attainment and nowhere reveals the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds of original attainment and original endowment. Therefore, the beings who receive this teaching and the perfect Buddha who expounds it



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Dr. Shun Ishiwa uses a computer and a microscope to analyze a cortex during brain research at the Kennedy-Kreiger Institute.

are all of initial attainment. Since this is the case, how can it be free from the flaw of “without origin and existing only in the present”? (GZ, 421)

Both the multitude of beings who are taught and the Buddha who teaches are like rootless plants “without origin and existing only in the present.” Neither are connected to the truth of the “mutual possession of the Ten Worlds without beginning or end.”

**Saito:** The passage continues:

You should understand that it is a superficial view based on the theoretical teaching that the four Buddhas of the four teachings become perfect Buddhas. Consequently, in the theoretical teaching,

there is no teaching of the true Buddha whose life is without beginning. Therefore, the theoretical teaching lacks the doctrine of eternity and remains incomplete. Also, it is not endowed with the doctrine of both body and mind existing eternally without beginning. (GZ, 421)

**Ikeda:** Yes. This is important.

**Saito:** The Buddhas appearing in the four teachings (Tripitaka, connecting, specific and perfect) and the accounts of their enlightenment have validity only up to the theoretical teaching. The fact is that these are Buddhas of initial attainment. As the Daishonin says, they are “without origin and existing only in the present,” like rootless plants. These teachings explain neither the doc-

trine of eternity nor the true Buddha whose life is without beginning. The Daishonin, therefore, refutes these teachings for not recognizing the fact that the true Buddha exists originally and eternally in both body and mind.

### Those Confused About the Original Buddha Are Like "Animals"

**Ikeda:** The purpose of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra is to awaken people to the true Buddha whose life is without beginning. In fact, this is the ultimate purpose of all Buddhism. Without recognizing the original Buddha, we can never recognize the mentor of all Buddhas of past, present and future, nor truly awaken to the fact that we ourselves can attain Buddhahood. We would be like children who do not know their parent, and who, as a result, do not know themselves either. It is just as the Daishonin indicates when he says, "The people of these sects who are ignorant of the teachings of the Juryo chapter are similarly like beasts....Therefore, Mialo states: 'Among all the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime, there is no place ... where the true longevity of the Buddha is revealed.... If a son does not even know how old his father is, he will also be in doubt as to what lands his father presides over'" (MW-2, 131 [153]).

Such people do not know the origin, the source of their own life, supremely worthy of respect, and one with the great eternal universe. Unable to respect either themselves or others, they live out their lives in interminable conflict and harming others.

People like this, no matter how superior they act, are no better than "talented animals." The Daishonin compares them to animals because they do not understand the relation of parent and child. At the beginning of "The Opening of the Eyes," the Daishonin says, "In the age before the Three Sovereigns,<sup>5</sup> people were no better than birds and beasts in that they did not even know who their own fathers were" (MW-2, 59 [71]).

**Suda:** It seems to me that this gets at the heart of what ails modern civilization. We have seen explosive growth in scientific technology and other spheres of human knowledge. Yet the basic conditions of people's lives have not substantially changed. Human society is still essentially animalistic.

**Endo:** We can now calculate the orbit of comets with remarkable accuracy. But by comparison little progress if any has been realized in the investigation of our "inner universe."

**Ikeda:** Elevating humanity to become truly humane is the object of the Lotus Sutra and the object of our efforts for kosen-rufu.

**Saito:** To confirm what has been said so far, only when we base ourselves on the perspective of life without beginning or the eternal can we genuinely understand the oneness or mutual inclusiveness of the nine worlds and the world of Buddhahood.

It occurs to me that, while ordinarily it is natural to proceed from cause to effect, that is not the case in the realm of the true Buddha from time without beginning, or the true entity of life. This is a mystic realm in which the world of Buddhahood (the effect of Buddhahood) and the nine worlds (the cause of Buddhahood) actually exist simultaneously. This simultaneity of cause and effect flies in the face of conventional causality.

**Endo:** The world of the simultaneity of cause and effect could not be revealed without casting off the transient and revealing the true. The view that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India could only point to a consecutive sequence of causality, in which cause comes first and effect later. But the truth to which Shakyamuni became enlightened is the Mystic Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect. And it was to reveal this truth that he cast off his transient status and revealed his true identity.

**Ikeda:** This Law of the simultaneity of cause and effect is the life of the Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Thus Come One, the true Buddha from time without beginning.

Practicing this Law from time without beginning is the "original cause." And the effect of Buddhahood we attain through this practice is the "original effect." The doctrine of True Cause and True Effect points to this ultimate Law. Its purpose is to cast off the transient and reveal the true.

True Cause means the fundamental cause for becoming a Buddha, including all practices. So

once we embrace this True Cause, it is not necessary that we practice for countless aeons before we can attain Buddhahood.

**The Mystic Law Simultaneously  
Contains Both the Cause and the  
Effect of Buddhahood**

**Suda:** The meaning of the well-known passage in the Major Writings, “The Entity of the Mystic Law” is now clear to me:

The supreme principle [that is the Mystic Law] was originally without a name. When the sage was observing the principle and assigning names to all things, he perceived that there is this wonderful single Law [*myoho*] which simultaneously possesses both cause and effect [*rengē*], and he named it Myoho-rengē. This single Law that is Myoho-rengē encompasses within it all the phenomena comprising the Ten Worlds and the three thousand realms, and is lacking in none of them. Anyone who practices this Law will obtain both the cause and the effect of Buddhahood simultaneously.

The sage practiced with this Law as his teacher and attained enlightenment, and therefore he simultaneously obtained both the mystic cause and the mystic effect of Buddhahood, becoming the Thus Come One of perfect enlightenment and fully realized virtues. (MW-7, 65–66)

**Ikeda:** Yes. Only when we arrive at the teaching in the depths of the essential teaching do magnificent “lotus flowers” bloom in the lives of all people. It is then that the Law of the “lotus flower” embodying the simultaneity of cause and effect becomes manifest.

Since this is a key point, I’d like to try to summarize things from another angle. The essential teaching explains that the life of the Buddha is eternally endowed with both the world of Buddhahood and the nine worlds. It is neither only the world of Buddhahood, nor only the nine worlds; rather they exist together eternally. The Daishonin calls this doctrine of the essential teaching “the teaching of cause and effect existing eternally together” (GZ, 871). By contrast, he calls the provisional teachings that precede the Lotus Sutra “teachings of the distinct natures of cause and effect” (GZ, 871).

**Suda:** That’s right. The Buddhas appearing in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings are said to possess states of life that can only be actualized through first eradicating the nine worlds. In other words, they are “Buddhas who have distanced themselves from and extinguished the nine worlds” (GZ, 403). These Buddhas are said to have become Buddhas as a result of having practiced lifetime after lifetime over countless aeons, and having completely eliminated the delusions innate to the nine worlds. The Daishonin calls these “teachings of the distinct natures of cause and effect” because they treat the cause of Buddhahood as if it were completely separate from the effect.

**Endo:** The Lotus Sutra, then, through the teaching of the true entity of all phenomena in the “Expedient Means” chapter, clarifies that the world of Buddhahood and the nine worlds are both realities of the true entity endowed with the ten factors of life. The Daishonin therefore designates the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra as the “teaching of the identical nature of cause and effect” (GZ, 871).

But in the theoretical teaching, Shakyamuni’s stance is the same as in the pre-Lotus Sutra teachings; namely, that he had practiced for countless aeons in the past and attained enlightenment for the first time in his present existence.

**Saito:** In other words, in the theoretical teaching, even though he says that the world of Buddhahood and the nine worlds have an identical nature, there is no clear indication of what the relationship between the two might be in terms of Shakyamuni’s own life.

**Suda:** And only when we get to the essential teaching is it revealed that Shakyamuni’s true identity is that of the Buddha possessing the nine worlds.

**The Buddha Originally Possessing  
All Ten Worlds**

**Saito:** The Buddha revealed in the “Life Span” chapter is not a Buddha who has distanced himself from and extinguished the nine worlds, but the Buddha originally possessing the life of the Ten Worlds. The Daishonin says, “The heart of the

'Life Span' chapter is the originally existing Ten Worlds" (GZ, 834).

**Ikeda:** That's right. The Buddha of the "Life Span" chapter is the Buddha originally existing in all beings of the Ten Worlds (MW-2, 211 [243]).

This Buddha is originally endowed with the world of Buddhahood, the states of Bodhisattva, Learning and Realization, as well as Hell, Hunger and Animality, and so on. Shakyamuni did not at some point in time suddenly become a Buddha; nor did the nine worlds cease to exist in his life at some moment of enlightenment.

The Ten Worlds are also called the Ten Dharma Worlds. "Dharma World" indicates the universe, the entirety of phenomena. The entire universe expressed as the Ten Worlds is a great entity of life, a great Buddha whose life is without beginning or end and who continually acts with compassion. For precisely this reason, all beings, whichever of the Ten Worlds is their dominant tendency, are one with this Buddha.

When we realize that our lives are one with the great and eternal life of the universe, we are the Buddha. The purpose of Buddhism is to enable all people to come to this realization. But people suffer because of their attachment to the small self and their narrow-mindedness. The Lotus Sutra exists to help us break through this shell of delusion and cause the sun of the great life of *kuon ganjo* [time without beginning—eternity] to rise in our hearts.

Since the Buddha we are talking about is the Buddha originally possessing the Ten Worlds, the "true identity" revealed in the "Life Span" chapter is not the identity of Shakyamuni alone, but the actual identity of all beings of the Ten Worlds.

In the line, "it has been immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of nayutas of kalpas since I in fact attained Buddhahood," [LS16, 225] "I" literally means Shakyamuni, but implicitly it stands for all beings of the Ten Worlds. Thus, we ourselves are unquestionably the eternal Buddha.

**Suda:** That's why in the "Ongi Kuden" (Record of



the Orally Transmitted Teachings), the Daishonin says, "'I' represents the living beings of the Dharma-realm. Each and every one in the Ten Worlds is being referred to here in the word 'I'" (GZ, 753).

### The Teaching for This Lifetime Versus the Eternal Teaching

**Ikeda:** What is the meaning of "I"? What is the meaning of "self"? These questions are not just abstract philosophy but go to the root of our human existence.

One view would be to think only in terms of one's present existence, identifying the self in terms of one's parents, or the particular day, month and year of one's birth. And in terms of the future, likewise, one would think of the self as



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encompassing the span of time until one's death.

I once accompanied President Toda on a trip to encourage members in the Sendai area. As always, even aboard the train, Mr. Toda made me study. I recall that on that trip I was reading in *The Major Writings "Hyaku Rokka Sho"* (The One Hundred and Six Comparisons). I asked President Toda about Shakyamuni having attained enlightenment for the first time in India compared to Shakyamuni having attained enlightenment in the remote past. President Toda remarked: "We might say that the view of his attaining enlightenment for the first time is an argument about the present. It considers everything only in terms of the present existence."

For example, President Toda said, we may think of marriage as a bond existing only in the present existence. Similarly, we might think about

our having taken faith, our being born and dying, our relations with our parents and siblings, and so on, all only in terms of the present existence. This underlies the view that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time in India.

Thinking this way produces only unhappiness—for the individual, for society, and for the world. If everything were limited to just our present existence, people might conclude that they should merely live frivolously and only for enjoyment; and if things came to a deadlock, they would be justified in resorting to any underhanded tactic at their disposal to get ahead; and that if every attempt to get ahead failed, then there would be no point even in going on living. Many people's actions, attached only to things as they are, evince such an attitude.

On the other hand, President Toda continued, "The view of Shakyamuni as having actually attained enlightenment in the remote past is premised on an eternal perspective of life." According to this view, for example, we marry the person we marry because of a past relationship. Also, there is nothing coincidental about our having taken faith in the Daishonin's teaching. In the past we formed a relationship with the Lotus Sutra; in fact, we have been Bodhisattvas of the Earth since the remote past. That is why we have embraced the Mystic Law in this existence. And the same will be true in the future as well. We are eternal friends and comrades.

There are countless stars in the universe, billions and billions. After our present existence comes to an end, we can freely be born anywhere we wish in the universe. And we can work there to help people become happy and attain enlightenment.

The lives of all people continue eternally. When we understand this, we understand what a great crime it is to create nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.

The understanding that life continues eternally prompts us to think not about fighting with one another, but about learning how to get along with, encourage and assist one another; and about how to pool our energies and construct peaceful and happy lives. When we understand that all people are Buddhas, heinous crimes such as murder become unthinkable. Likewise, it simply could not happen that people would point-

lessly destroy the environment if they understood that all life possesses the Buddha nature. This is the spirit that the Lotus Sutra teaches.

**Saito:** The Lotus Sutra is itself a fundamental message of peace. And the “Life Span” chapter, in particular, holds the key to elevating the lives of all people.

### Don't Lose Sight of the Big Picture

**Endo:** I think we can also talk about “initial attainment” and “actual attainment in the remote past” in terms of faith. Most people initially embrace faith in the Daishonin's teaching on account of illness or worries in their families or personal lives.

**Suda:** I can't imagine that many people take faith out of a sense of mission from the remote past.

**Endo:** As we overcome our worries, we gain confidence and advance in our practice and study. As a result, we gradually come to the realization that we have been born in this life in accord with a vow that we made in the past to work for kosen-rufu. It seems that this is similar to the point of view of actual attainment in the remote past.

**Ikeda:** That's exactly right. Certainly there is a great difference between understanding something theoretically and understanding it through actual practice and experience. When hungry, knowing the right proportions of water and grain, knowing the precise cooking temperature does not satisfy. A pot of delicious, steaming rice does.

Similarly, even if we understand the Lotus Sutra theoretically, unless we take action for kosen-rufu, it won't do us any good. Indeed, failure to take action is the very proof of not understanding!

On the other hand, eternal Buddhahood manifests in the depths of the lives of those who take action daily for kosen-rufu, for the Mystic Law and for the happiness of others—regardless of how much theory they “know.” Such action is the source of inexpressible joy and vitality, courage and wisdom. It is the origin from whence a sense of exuberance wells forth, infusing and permeating their lives. Their lives are filled with a visible

brilliance, good fortune and benefit.

Those who truly embrace the Mystic Law are most noble just as they are. And it is in their lives that the world of the great and eternal life of the “Life Span” chapter appears. This is the true condition of immortality.

We should never allow ourselves to become totally consumed by our immediate circumstances. When we become completely caught up by immediate circumstances, our vision is clouded by the view of “initial attainment.” Rather, we should live with our gaze fixed on eternity and the universe, without being knocked off balance by our immediate concerns.

It is important to view this present existence based on that fundamental awareness. Seen from the vantage point of eternity, the present existence is the most important. This life is short; from the standpoint of eternity, it is but a moment. But by maintaining a steadfast practice throughout this existence, we can firmly establish Buddhahood as the basic tendency of our lives. Then we can continue to enjoy the state of life of the Buddha eternally. That's why it's so important that we practice wholeheartedly in the present.

### Revealing the State of Absolute Happiness

**Suda:** The “Life Span” chapter explains this transformation.

**Ikeda:** Yes. This could be termed a revolution in the state of life.

President Toda said:

It's only natural that we should want to make a lot of money, live in a fine house and be healthy. And it is a true religion that enables us to realize these wishes....

The difference is that in our case, even though we may desire these same things, in the future we will be able to attain a state of life of absolute happiness. We cannot truly say that we desire a state of absolute happiness. But even so, we still attain this state, no matter how badly we might want not to!

Absolute happiness is a state such that, whatever your situation, you feel an immense sense of worth and satisfaction; and wherever you are, to be alive is itself a joy... Even when we encounter situations that make us angry, we become angry joyfully.

When we establish such a state of life, our life is one of boundless joy.<sup>6</sup>

When we aspire only for relative happiness, we are basing ourselves on the view of “initial attainment.” This view, taken alone, is like a rootless plant. It is empty and fleeting.

Absolute happiness means realizing the state of actual attainment in the remote past. To achieve that state, we need to spiritedly struggle for *kosen-rufu*, not lead a self-centered existence. This is what it means to practice faith in the essential teaching. By practicing with a spirit of not begrudging our lives, we can break through the darkness of the small self. And to the extent that we do so, the life of the great self wells forth in us.

**Endo:** “We become angry joyfully”—that’s quite a state of life.

**Ikeda:** In reality, this is what it means for the nine worlds endowed with the world of Buddhahood. When we are angry, we are in the world of Anger. Joy is the world of Buddhahood.

Also, since the world of Buddhahood is endowed with the nine worlds, attaining Buddhahood does not mean the end of worries or suffering. Many difficult and unexpected things happen in the course of life. But because we embrace the Mystic Law, we can enjoy these waves of difficulty as we can joyfully “surf” these waves of difficulty. It is in fact that very variety and unpredictability that makes life truly interesting.

The important point here is awareness. Because the Ten Worlds are inherent in our lives, through believing in the Mystic Law of *kuon ganjo* we can immediately call forth the world of Buddhahood, no matter what world we happen to be in at the time. As long as we do not forget the awareness that we gain through faith, even the world of Anger becomes an enlightened land.

While enduring the extreme cold of prison, Mr. Makiguchi, our founding president, wrote in a letter to his family dated January 17, 1944, “Single-mindedly practicing faith is my occupation these days. As long as I do this, I do not have any worries. Basing my heart on faith, even in Hell I feel peace and ease.”<sup>7</sup>

It is definitely not a matter of length of practice.

Even senior leaders or people of longtime practice will be no longer successful if they lose faith and their hearts become corrupt.

As long as our mind of faith shines, then, whether we are investigating the truth in the worlds of Learning and Realization or battling corrupt authorities in the world of Anger, all our actions ultimately accord with the wisdom of the Buddha.

On the other hand, should we lose our faith, only ugly egoism will remain. There have been any number of people who have lost their faith, succumbing to desires surrounding their immediate circumstances. What is the value for such people in their having daily read the “Life Span” chapter? It would seem that they missed the point entirely. In the future they are sure to suffer. They are truly pitiful.

**Saito:** Our faith, our life, should never be like a rootless plant. I think this means never forgetting the mentor-disciple relationship. Herein lies the essence of the “Life Span” chapter. That’s because, fundamentally, the “Life Span” chapter seeks to reveal Shakyamuni’s own mentor, “this wonderful single Law [*myoho*] which simultaneously possesses both cause and effect [*rengē*]” (MW-7, 65–66) that is one with the Buddha of *kuon ganjo*, time without beginning.

However, this “single Law” is not explicitly stated in the sutra itself. The sutra only goes so far as to indicate Shakyamuni’s true identity as the Buddha who attained enlightenment in the extremely remote past of *gohyaku-jintengo*.

**Ikeda:** That’s why Shakyamuni is called the teacher of the True Effect. On a literal level, the “Life Span” chapter explains the original effect that Shakyamuni gained in the remote past through practicing the Mystic Law. But it does not clarify the original cause that enabled him to achieve this effect.

Put another way, there is no object of worship in the twenty-eight-chapter Lotus Sutra. While it certainly does present a succession of brilliant teachings, in conclusion the sutra is not at all clear about what should be made the object of worship. This has long been a point of much discussion and controversy.

In a sense, it is natural that the sutra doesn’t

explain an object of worship. The people in Shakyamuni's day could all attain Buddhahood through the Lotus Sutra. They intuitively understood what the object of worship was. But those in the world after Shakyamuni's passing, and particularly those of the Latter Day of the Law, had no such understanding.

**Endo:** That's why the Daishonin had to expound the Buddhism of the True Cause.

### The Universal Scale of the Teaching of the True Cause

**Ikeda:** To put it figuratively, Shakyamuni as described in the "Life Span" chapter who attained enlightenment in the remote past is like fully ripened fruit. This fruit has a wonderful appearance, but the seeds that produced it are nowhere to be found in the passages of the sutra. They are hidden. It will take the teaching in the depths of the sutra to reveal the seeds within the fruit.

I think we will have the chance later on to discuss this point from various angles. But from the standpoint of the theory of causality that we discussed earlier, the Daishonin refers to the Buddhism of the True Cause that he revealed as the "doctrine of a single moment of life which encompasses within itself both cause and effect" (GZ, 871).

**Suda:** This is in contrast to the "doctrine of the distinct nature of cause and effect" (of the provisional teachings), the "doctrine of the identical nature of cause and effect" (of the theoretical teaching of the Lotus Sutra), and the "doctrine of cause and effect existing eternally together" (of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra).

**Ikeda:** The "doctrine of cause and effect existing eternally together" is the essential teaching of Shakyamuni's Lotus Sutra. The "doctrine of a single moment of life, which encompasses within itself both cause and effect," is Nichiren Daishonin's ultimate teaching. The difference between these is crucial.

From a literal standpoint, the essential teaching is saying only that Shakyamuni's life eternally possesses both Buddhahood (the effect) and the nine worlds (the cause). It does not explain the

original cause that enabled him to attain Buddhahood.

That original cause is "this wonderful single Law [*myoho*] which simultaneously possesses both cause and effect [*rengē*]." The person who reveals this original cause directly and without distortion is the "teacher of the True Cause." Nichiren Daishonin declares, "I, Nichiren, am the teacher of this doctrine" (GZ, 863).

**Endo:** This is from the passage of the "Hyaku Rokka Sho" (The One Hundred and Six Comparisons) that goes, "The 'Life Span' chapter in the depths of our lives means the original cause in the depths of the 'Life Span' chapter of the Buddhism of harvest. I, Nichiren, am the teacher of this doctrine" (GZ, 863).

**Ikeda:** The "Mystic Law of the True Cause" is itself the "object of worship of all Buddhas throughout time" that is concealed in the depths of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra. It is true *ichinen sanzen*. This "one Law" is itself at the same time both the True Cause and the True Effect. The cause and effect of Buddhahood occur simultaneously.

The only way to attain the effect of Buddhahood, that is, to become a Buddha, is by becoming a person of the strongest possible faith. Faith, the cause of Buddhahood, is itself the effect of Buddhahood. Faith itself is the embodiment of the world of Buddhahood. Our mind of faith is fully endowed with both the cause and the effect of Buddhahood.

**Saito:** That, in other words, is the "doctrine of a single moment of life which encompasses within itself both cause and effect."

**Ikeda:** We could say that this is the meaning of the "doctrine of a single moment of life which encompasses within itself both cause and effect" as viewed from the standpoint of living beings.

Fundamentally, we have the moment of life, or *ichinen*, of the Buddha from time without beginning whose body and mind are one with the entire universe, and is endowed with the original cause and original effect of enlightenment, as well as with all phenomena in the Ten Worlds. In that sense, the teaching of *ichinen sanzen* in the depths

of the sutra encompasses the entire universe.

We can say that *ichinen sanzen* of the theoretical teaching tries to indicate the three thousand realms existing in a single moment of life of unenlightened beings of the nine worlds. And that *ichinen sanzen* of the essential teaching tries to indicate the three thousand realms contained in the mind of the individual Buddha Shakyamuni. Both of these doctrines of *ichinen sanzen* thus reflect the reality of individual beings.

By contrast, the implicit and ultimate doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* views all beings in any of the Ten Worlds as expressions of a single moment of universal, eternal life. This implicit doctrine of *ichinen sanzen* is the true “actual *ichinen sanzen*” that enables all Buddhas of past, present and future to attain enlightenment.

**Suda:** That is on a scale that boggles the mind.

### The True Cause Is the Buddhism of the Sun

**Ikeda:** To illustrate, if the implicit Buddhist teaching revealed by Nichiren Daishonin is compared to the sun, then the theoretical and essential teachings of the Lotus Sutra could be likened, respectively, to the planets and the moon, which reflect the light of the sun in varying degrees.

**Saito:** One can see from this that profound doctrinal meaning attaches to the fact that Nichiren

Daishonin compares the Buddhism of the True Cause that he himself revealed to the sun, and Shakyamuni’s Buddhism to the moon.

**Ikeda:** All Buddhas over the three existences without a single exception attain Buddhahood by causing this sun to rise in their hearts. Our practice is not to gaze upon the moon or the stars and think about the sun, but to directly cause the sun to rise in our hearts by continually basing our lives on the Mystic Law.

**Suda:** We don’t have to practice for countless aeons to attain Buddhahood. We can attain Buddhahood in this very lifetime.

**Ikeda:** Yes. Therefore, Nichiren Daishonin says repeatedly that those who chant Nam-myohorenge-kyo “will be able to attain Buddhahood readily” (MW-6, 201). He also states, “There can be no doubt that those who correctly practice the Mystic Law will easily become Buddhas equal to Shakyamuni” (GZ, 817); and “it is not difficult to become a Buddha” (MW-1, 259).

What a wonderful Buddhist teaching this is! How truly fortunate we are! What a wonderful jewel the Daishonin has bestowed upon humankind!

This teaching represents the true humanization of Buddhism.

(To be continued)

1. Hajime Nakamura, *Budda no Shinri no Kotoba, Kankyo no Kotoba* (The Buddha’s Words of Truth, Words of Inspiration) (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1988), p. 26.  
 2. Editor’s note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the second edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.  
 3. Ten factors: (1) appearance (*nyo ze so*): the external manifestation of life; (2) nature (*nyo ze sho*): the spiritual or mental aspects of life; (3) entity (*nyo ze tai*): the totality of life consisting of appearance and nature; (4) power (*nyo ze riki*): inherent energy; (5) influence (*nyo ze sa*): externally-directed action; (6) inherent cause (*nyo ze in*): the direct cause for things to

occur; (7) relation (*nyo ze en*): the causes or conditions that activate the inherent cause; (8) latent effect (*nyo ze ka*): the result produced [in the depths of life] by inherent cause and relation; (9) manifest effect (*nyo ze ho*): the concrete, perceptible manifestation of the latent effect; (10) consistency from beginning to end (*nyo ze hommatsu kukyoto*): the perfect integration of these nine factors in every moment of life.  
 4. The four teachings of doctrine: A classification of the Buddhist teaching by T’ien-t’ai according to content and consists of the Tripitaka teaching, the connecting teaching, the specific teaching and the perfect teaching. These corre-

spond to the Hinayana, the introductory Mahayana, the Mahayana teaching specifically for bodhisattvas, and the perfect teaching which encompasses and unifies the other three.  
 5. Three Sovereigns: Fu Hsi, Shen Nung and Huang Ti, legendary rulers of ancient China said to have realized model governments.  
 6. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, pp. 443–44.  
 7. *Makiguchi Tsunesaburo Zenshu* (Collected Works of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi) (Tokyo: Daisan Bummeisha, 1987), vol. 10, p. 284.

# An Enchanting Journey: The Story of Alfredo Arreguin

By Allana Joy Bourne  
Seattle, Washington



Alfredo Arreguin and his wife, Susan Lytle (right), and daughter, Leslie.

TO stand before an Alfredo Arreguin painting is to feel once again the depths of emotion a true artist can bring out. Daring eyes, at first hidden, suddenly look directly and powerfully at you. Luscious, juicy berries twinkle like ripe stars. Beautiful women at first hide in lush forests, and then boldly bare their breasts. The more you stare, the more you see. And the more you realize there is left to see. And to find.

Internationally renowned, and a friend of the SGI, Alfredo Arreguin is a man you want to say creates a world of magic; but only through years and years of disciplined effort in an artist's studio. Now he shares that studio in his modest home with the other two artists in his family—his wife and daughter.

Some art critics have called his art, "baroque." *Art in America* profiled him in 1993 and said, "It's when pattern is ignited by figure—mythical, political or religious—that Arreguin comes into his own." His art is exact and exacting. So rich in color that *The Seattle Times* stated in

1996: "Nobody uses color like Arreguin: hot, warm and cool—all at once." So rich in detail that the National Academy of Sciences honored him with his own retrospective in January 1996, in Washington, D.C. The Academy more recently published *Biodiversity II: Understanding and Protecting our Biological Resources*, with a copy of his triptych, "Tree of Life," on its cover. A description of this painting in the exhibition brochure states that the actual six-by-twelve-foot painting "draws the viewer into an astonishing realization: beneath the surface, in each shape and design, teeming life pulsates with complex, hidden vitality." And yet, so child-like, a portion of it was also published in *Ranger Rick* magazine in October 1997. Arreguin, a man who loves children, was most pleased by this.

In 1992, an exhibition of his works at the Tacoma Art Museum was called "Viva la Vida: Paintings by Alfredo Arreguin," and his friend, the poet Tess Gallagher, wrote the program notes. "It is the capacity of our eyes to feast that

Arreguin celebrates most," she wrote. President Ikeda, in his recent dialogue on art with the youth division, states: "With a painting, we start by looking. Too many people ... are so intent on analyzing a piece of art that they don't really see it." Seeing is what an Arreguin work is all about. Once you start, you continuously see something new.

Arreguin was very young when he first felt art's pull—he credits his artistic mom. At 9 years old, his grandfather, seeing his drawings, took him to study at Morelia Bellas Artes Academy in Morelia, Mexico, his birthplace. It was, as Alfredo says, a "fantastic school of the fine arts," and he was its youngest student. There had never been a child like him enrolled there before. Not really being serious about art at that age, however, he mostly liked painting mustaches on other artists' pretentious portraits. Looking at him now, it's easy to see him as an impish, even a wild-hearted, youth filled with an undeniable explosive energy.

His father, who had plans to turn him into an architect, took him later to Mexico City, but, by age 19, Alfredo took off for Acapulco. Seeking to learn English, he met an American family there and offered to take them around and show them the sights. They were from Seattle, Washington. They fell in love with Alfredo, and brought him back with them to the United States. The year was 1959.

Alfredo started attending the University of Washington to become something his father wanted when he was called up for the Korean War. After the war (where he says he spent thirteen months visiting Buddhist temples), he went back to the University of Washington, and having learned by then to speak excellent English, went on to get a master's degree in art. He met the noted sculptor George Tsutakawa, who became his mentor. And he made a commitment to become a full-time artist, which he has been ever since.

Alfredo's art is visually stimulating and disturbing at the same time. You cannot remain immune. You cannot remain passive. As the Academy's brochure further says: "Arreguin paints ... with the unbridled enthusiasm of a child fascinated with every detail and willing to believe in forces and powers that are sensed but unseen. These apparitions appear in his paintings in direct proportion to the viewer's willingness to believe." His strongest influences were not other well-known Mexican artists so much as the people's art of Mexico: colonial Mexican tiles, indigenous textiles, baroque church facades. His

grandfather took him to the market as a child and the embroidery and the pottery captured his imagination. Those patterns are reflected in his paintings, especially the triptychs like "Tree of Life," and "Sueno (Dream: Eve before Adam)," which was purchased by the Smithsonian in 1995 (and which they regard as one of the seven most important acquisitions from among 600 works of art collected by the museum that year.)

Other influences include Eastern and Near Eastern sources "as diverse as the stenciled kimono or the intricately chased sword hilt.... The dialogues of these patterns as Arreguin uses them in concert causes all history to become an instantaneous present...," states Tess Gallagher in her 1992 program notes. She also includes this description of the triptych, "Sueno":

Especially in this triptych I am aware of how pattern induces a certain state of tranquillity, a spiritual balance, in which it is possible again to believe in what is before us. Arreguin has made the jungle paradise more real than life, so that it has enough excess to be true—this sinless effulgence of breasts and butterflies, parrots and red berries, baboons and iguana, tendrils and primordial eyes emerging from indigo leaves.

Alfredo's uncle invited him back to Mexico to exhibit in 1992. "I was very worried," Arreguin says, "when I returned to Mexico thirty years later, how my fellow Mexicans would view my

art. Americans have accepted me as an artist, but would Mexico?" It was then he realized, although living in the United States all these years, he had actually tapped into the deepest cultural well of his own country. People's reaction to the exhibit was emotional. "Other artists told me," he said, "the youth of Mexico are distracted by art which has no meaning and no connection to the culture. Your paintings, they said, even though painted in the United States, bring out the deepest feelings of our culture." In 1997, he was awarded the "Ohtli" award (signifying, "the straight path, the one that will take you to the realization of your destiny") by the Government of Mexico. This honor is given to Mexican-Americans who work consistently for the benefit of their communities. It was at this ceremony that his SGI friend, Jose Cifuentes, decided to introduce Alfredo Arreguin to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and the writings of Daisaku Ikeda. Alfredo immediately responded, wanting to know more.

Echoing President Ikeda's words that "true art, true culture, strives to enrich the individual and encourage self-expression," Alfredo declares that art exists to enrich the culture, not to make money. His deep feeling for life and his universality outside the narrow confines of one cultural influence are reflected in his collaborations with other artists. "I never expect the emotion that people get from my paintings," he concludes. "But when I see people in tears, I realize it anew." He and Tess Gallagher created a card in 1986 using her poem,

"Tula," 1996,  
oil on canvas,  
48 x 72 in.



"Refusing Silence," and his triptych, "Shilshole," to speak out against the buildup of nuclear weapons worldwide. It is this personal history that makes him very interested in the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the desire to create a peaceful world.

Indeed, just as President Ikeda says that "public art museums were born when the people insisted that they, too, had a right to have access to the great works of art," his own success, Arreguin says, is due to museum exposure, not to art sales in galleries.

I gave Alfredo a copy of President Ikeda's dialogue on art after our initial interview. When I asked him later what he thought of it, he joyously declared: "Everything he said is what I have been doing and say-

ing all my life! And it's very wonderful how President Ikeda expresses himself, very simply and beautifully."

"Each painting is like your own child," Alfredo continued. "If you sell it at all, you must first make sure it is going to be well taken care of." He has exhibited all over the world, and in 1997, he was asked to contribute a piece ("Frida's Messengers," a presentation of Frida Kahlo) to the Seattle-Nagoya International Print Exhibit in Nagoya, Japan.

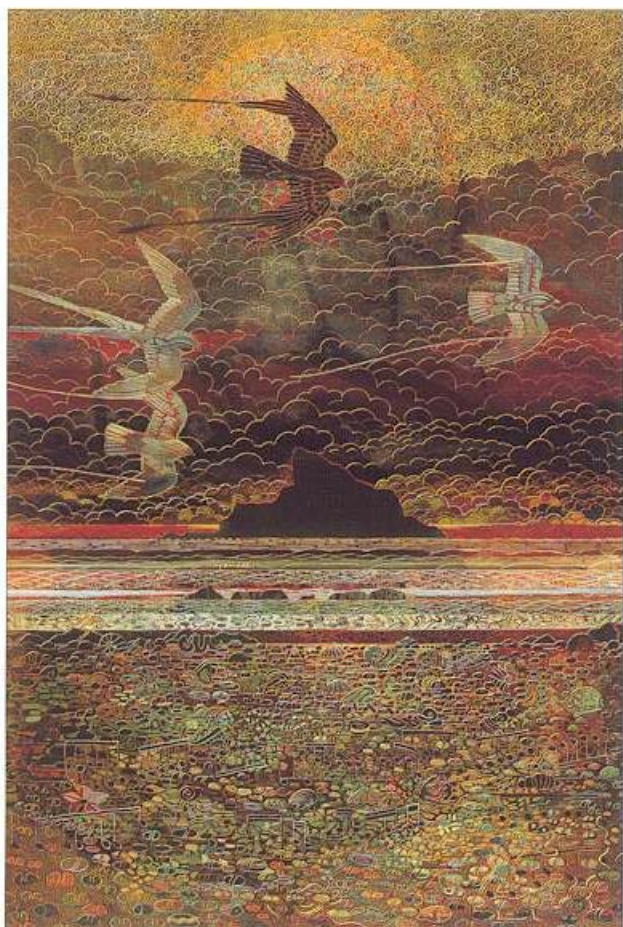
Coming full circle, Alfredo's father attended the National Academy of Sciences opening in 1996, coincidentally his 90th birthday, and, seeing the scope of his son's work, was moved to tears. "Please forgive me, son," Alfredo relates his father's words at that time. "I thought you were just fooling around all

these years, until I heard you were exhibited in the Smithsonian." His greatest success, he further states, is that his father admires his work, and has created a special gallery in his home to display it.

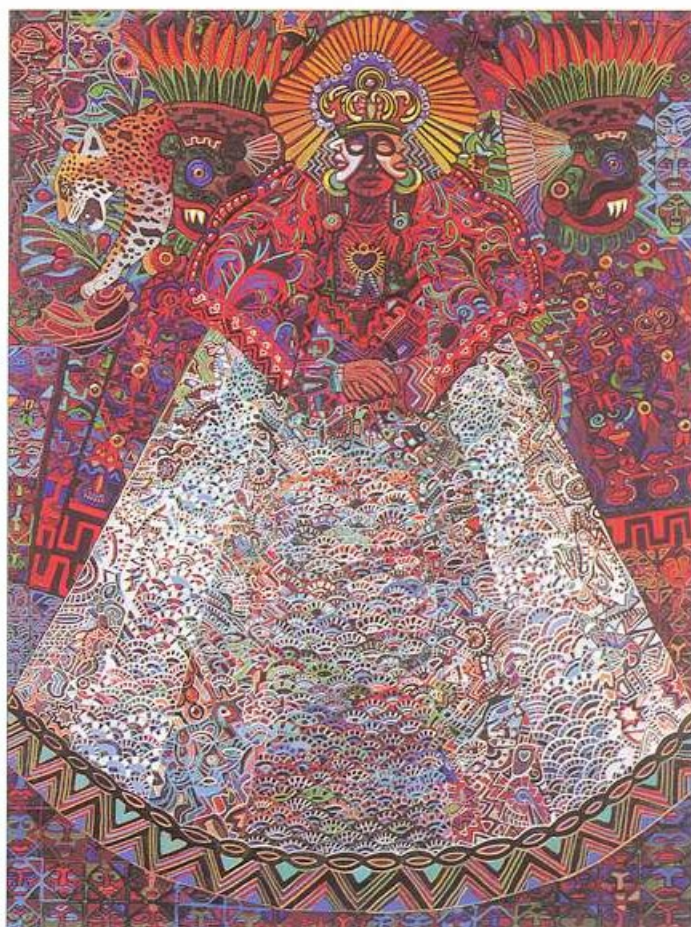
When meeting a true artist, one can never remain objective, or untouched. My experience in visiting Alfredo Arreguin's home and interviewing him for this article was to realize President Ikeda's point in the deepest part of my own life when he says: "People who appreciate art and culture are important. Truly cultured people are those who value peace and lead others to a world of beauty, hope and a bright tomorrow. For that reason, nurturing and spreading an appreciation for art and culture are crucial toward creating peace." □



*Tree of Life*, triptych, 1995, oil on canvas, 72 x 144 in.



*La Push*, 1981, oil on canvas, 48 x 32 in.



*La Malinche*, 1993, oil on canvas, 42 x 36 in.



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THE UNTOLD HISTORY OF THE FUJI SCHOOL (2)  
NIKKO SHONIN'S TWENTY-SIX ADMONITIONS



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**L**OCATED on the hill of Saltsjöbaden, about twelve miles southeast of central Stockholm, the Sweden SGI (SSGI) Culture Center was opened in June 1989. The First SGI Nordic General Meeting was held at this time, with participants from Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland and Iceland. During the celebrations, SGI President Ikeda dedicated the poem "Peaceful Land of Woods and Lakes" to the Swedish members. The "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" exhibition was also held in 1989 at the Ikeda Peace Center, which is part of the white three-story center.

Members focus their activities at the culture center on discussion meetings twice a month, prayer meetings and study sessions to learn about Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

## SWEDEN CULTURE CENTER



SHINGO PRESS

At the culture center's opening, SGI President Ikeda encouraged the Swedish members to train themselves in study as if they were attending a "Swedish college of Buddhism," and then put what they learn into action.