

living BUDDHISM

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

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FROM OUR READERS

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

'DAIMOKU'

Balanced fire, delicate-edged chant:
exquisitely slice the cramped tissue,
free my folded wings;

Downpour on parched flesh, broken slopes, aching,
(your potter's hands rain dolphins and sleep),
flood through to snuggle my cracked bones;

Now;
split instant;

she restless sniffs the bright-dappled air:
warm, panther-young, running deep and soft, alive. . .
(full-throated everspark rejoice sweet twigs by mosses prancing)

my
self.

BY TOD RANDOLPH
New York City

FAITH REFRESHED

FIRST of all, I want to say that I truly enjoyed my visit to the U.S. and reading your publications. My faith is refreshed. I am really happy that I could join you for the Global Family Festival. It

was so much fun to see all these young people performing. The wide range of ethnic and cultural variety on stage was so impressive. It showed a lot about the cultural heritage every one of us is bearing. It is a rich and precious gift. I think that the show

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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>



offered a real chance to get in touch with different cultural backgrounds through dance, music, colors.... A sensual impression of all we cannot think about in our daily lives.

I want to thank everybody for the enormous efforts made to realize that festival.

KARIN SCHUSTER
Berlin, Germany

CORRECTION

The second sentence of Dana Williamson's comments on page 45 of the May 1998 *Living Buddhism* should read: "What is important is for the members to make a connection to the Gohonzon, so *when* they become members of society and are no longer with their parents, they can have a victory."

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

karma: Sanskrit word meaning *action*. The life tendency or destiny each indi-

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

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

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

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

Nichiren Daishonin (1222–82): The founder of the Buddhism upon which the SGI bases its activities. He inscribed the true object of worship, the Gohonzon, for the observation of one's mind and established the invocation of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo as the universal practice to attain enlightenment. *Daishonin* is an honorific title that means *great sage*.

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

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

Frequently Cited Sources

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

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

CULTIVATING THE FRIENDSHIPS WE CREATE

LAST month I had the opportunity to travel to Guam, the largest of the Mariana Islands, in the West Pacific. There, in the offices of Lieutenant Governor Madeline Z. Bordallo, I witnessed, along with other SGI-USA representatives, the signing of a proclamation designating May 3, 1998, as SGI Peace Day. At a reception that followed, on behalf of SGI President Ikeda, I received an award designating the SGI leader as Honorary Ambassador at Large.

It struck me how important it is to foster relationships—to plant seeds, so to speak, then to cultivate them. The seeds for the recognition of the SGI that I witnessed in Guam were planted some twenty-three years ago when Lieutenant Governor Bordallo met SGI President Ikeda for the first time during the festivities surrounding the SGI's found-

If we continue to cultivate carefully the seeds we plant — that is, the friendships we create as we share the Daishonin's teachings in our respective communities — I have no doubt that they will grow into giant oaks of peace, solidarity and harmony.

ing there. At that time she was the wife of Guam's governor, the late Gov. Ricardo J. Bordallo, but she never forgot the warm friendship extended by Mr. Ikeda during that visit and his vision of peace. Now as the island's lieutenant governor, she was able to honor that memory with the festivities I attended.

AS I reflected on my own life over these past twenty-five years since I came to the United States, I wondered how many "seeds" of friendship I have planted. More than three decades ago, fresh out of col-

lege, I had just joined the Soka Gakkai staff to conduct public relations activities with what was then known as the Asian People's Association. As a student I had been keenly interested in Asian matters—now it was my job to foster relationships

among the representatives from various Asian countries and Japan. Once a month we invited our Asian guests to cultural events that the Association sponsored and we also published a monthly magazine on Asian culture.

At the time I had not much interest in American or European culture. My worldview focused upon Asia. That all changed dramatically three years later when I was transferred to the *Seikyo Shimbun* as a reporter. My primary task was to cover the stories of American members who came to Japan to participate in exchanges of faith and culture. The turning point occurred when I was assigned to cover their convention held in Seattle in 1971. It was my first trip overseas.

AFTER the convention, I attended a summer English course at UCLA with other Japanese students. During this period I traveled to San Diego, San Francisco, Las Vegas, Denver, St. Louis, Chicago, Boston, New York and Washington, D.C. It was my first encounter with America and her culture. My indifference about America quickly changed. I became enchanted by the openness of the people in this country and about the diversity of ideas being expressed. As I was young and idealistic, I was very interested in the social issues of the time: the protest over the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement and the hippie movement.

When I returned to Japan, I coauthored a book about my experiences in the United States that was published by the Seikyo Press. A couple of years later, President Ikeda decided to dispatch reporters to major cities around the world. He asked us to write down the name of whatever locale overseas we each wanted to visit. Sometime later he assigned five reporters to overseas posts: one to Paris, one to Hong Kong, one to New York, one to Germany and one, me, to Los Angeles. I later learned that I was the only person to have written "Los Angeles" on my paper.

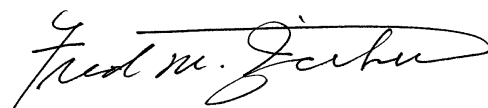
I enjoyed traveling throughout the United States and learned so much about the fabric of American society. I had the tremendous opportunity to interview many young people both inside and outside the organization, including Native American youth and Bobby Seal, the leader of the Black Panthers, as well as scholars at various universities.

What I have gained through all these unforgettable experiences is that American soil is fertile for the blossoming of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism that teaches human equality and respect for all life. And that our mission, yours and mine, is to see that this Buddhism has good, firm roots. I have a great deal of pride and confidence in what we are doing. If we continue to cultivate carefully the seeds we plant—that is, the friendships we create as we share the Daishonin's teachings in our respective communities—I have no doubt that they will grow into giant oaks of peace, solidarity and harmony.

Last month I mentioned President Ikeda's challenge he made in a March 16th address to all members to succeed him as the next president of the SGI. In that speech he states:

All of you are president of the Soka Gakkai. Please advance with this awareness....Ultimately our future development hinges on every member having the commitment required of a Soka Gakkai president. With this spirit, this sense of responsibility, this leadership in your activities, may you always work for kosen-rufu and the victory of the people. (April 17, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 10)

While I was in Guam, a quote from the speech President Ikeda made to those assembled on the island on the occasion of SGI's founding (January 26, 1975) came to mind: "I hope you do not seek praise as blossoms yourselves, but instead dedicate your whole lives to spreading the seeds of true Buddhism throughout the world." I realized that one way to do that—just like he has been doing all these years—is to never backslide in our efforts to plant and carefully nurture the seeds of human relationships.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

The Heart of a Happy Family



GREGORY NAKASUJI

In 1998, one of the areas the SGI-USA is focusing on is families. In the following conversation, Bridgett and Mark Horton discuss their journey into a loving relationship. Mark is a police officer for the LAPD and Bridgett works at Warner Brothers Studios. Living Buddhism correspondent Kathleen Slattery visited the couple and their 16-month-old baby girl, Khyla, at their home in Canoga Park, California.

Bridgett: In the beginning of 1990, we had planned to get married and then two weeks later, my husband got cold feet.

Mark: The cold feet I had was about commitment. Commitment meant that I couldn't go to the gym if I wanted to. I fought marriage tooth and nail. I just wanted to keep my freedom. I thought I was losing something. I think overall, the word *commitment* in itself scared me.

Bridgett: I was freaking out. It was very difficult for me because I chanted to the Gohonzon to see if this was the person for my life. I've always met guys who wanted to play the field. I was always the "other woman," and found it difficult to find someone who would respect me—be honest with me. I'd never been in a relationship where the guy expressed so much respect for women and was sincere. This

was an indication that I had changed something.

Mark: For me it was a process of realizing that I needed to be more responsible; that commitments were just things I invented in my imagination that prevented me from taking the next step toward my development and growth. After we got married, we went through several struggles. We had a lack of communication. When we got angry...

Bridgett: We wouldn't talk at all for days.

Mark: Or my anger would come out in the form of yelling. And the next step she thought would be that I'd hit her. I reassured her that my grandmother always told me never hit a woman. That never crossed my mind. I might have yelled at her out of anger, but we didn't know how to communicate how mad we were with each other.

Bridgett: I grew up in a family where I felt I didn't have a voice. You didn't speak up or have an opinion or show your emotions. So all these years, trying to undo that has been really difficult. It's my nature to be calm and I hold things in a lot. It's a struggle for me to

say exactly what's on my mind. And with Khyla, our 16-month-old daughter, being a part of our lives, it forces me to change because I don't want her to suppress her feelings.

Mark: My struggles were with my ego, finding out who I was and how much I was lacking. The faults that I found in myself were my own anger, my own negativity, the very things that I was actually blaming on Bridgett. I really looked at her and realized this woman is really beautiful and sincere and she's always happy. I got to the point where I accepted the fact that yeah, I was getting angry on the inside and it was something that I needed to challenge—something that I was suffering about. Bridgett is basically a real mellow person, real even-keeled, really down to earth. And once again, that used to bug me.

Bridgett: My husband has to come to me and ask what's wrong, and I still might not say anything until I feel comfortable. If he does something that bothers me, I won't tell him at the moment he's doing it, even though inside I feel like ripping him apart.

Mark: Today it doesn't take as long, but it's like I'm going in

there to do surgery to get her to communicate. I mean, I don't have a doctor's degree. After chanting about it, I can go to Bridgett and say, "Hey, what's bothering you now," and I can accept it. Before, it was confrontational. I would try to match wits with her about what she was saying.

Bridgett: We had to create the environment—that's our prayer—to create the kind of environment where we can speak freely and frankly without the other person's feelings getting hurt. A passage from President Ikeda's book, *The Creative Family*, has helped us out a lot:

[T]here need be nothing extraordinary about their dialogue. Discussing with another those everyday matters that concern one the most, including what is pleasurable as well as painful, and talking honestly, from the heart, generates an inexhaustible range of topics. This is why it should not be difficult to communicate, because when one speaks frankly and openly about things that matter most, one freely reveals oneself, making it possible to be better understood and loved by others. (p. 18)

Mark: I told her before, "You've got to say what's on your mind

and don't worry about whether it's going to hurt my feelings." After chanting a lot and going back and forth with these battles of communication, we began to really understand each other. We began talking about having a baby.

Bridgett: At first, I was having a hard time about having a baby. I guess it was the freedom—that I was going to do all the work.

Mark: That's exactly what I felt. I thought I was losing my freedom.

Bridgett: After talking about it with an SGI leader and chanting daimoku about what she said, my life began to open up, and I felt like, "Okay, I can do this." It was okay.

Mark: And with this in mind, I've been telling Bridgett I want to have another baby... I never missed an appointment with the gynecologist. It was important for me to be there. That's what responsibility is about.

Bridgett: I took a week off before Khyla was due. I didn't know until later that you could have postpartum symptoms prior to the baby coming. I didn't know this was happening. I just knew that my memory was going; my emotions switched radically. Mark could be holding my hand one minute, and the next minute I'd pull away and he wouldn't know what was happening. It was like I was going through a change in personality and it was pulling us apart.

Mark: The day we went to the hospital her emotions were on edge. Bridgett began saying things that didn't make sense. She'd go from one topic to another without completing a sentence.

Bridgett: And I could see myself doing it but I couldn't control it. Everything—all the pain, hurt and anger that I'd suppressed—wanted to come out at one time. Everything blew up at once—things from childhood, things in our relationship. I thought we were on the verge, right before Khyla was born, of going our separate ways.

Mark: She was trying to figure out who she was.

Bridgett: Thank goodness for my mother and mother-in-law. They were very understanding, very patient and reassuring that I was okay.

Mark: It was like, I didn't know who this woman was; it's not the woman I married. But we finally got to the hospital with the tension going on, and our moms were there with us and Bridgett went into labor.

Bridgett: So they performed a Cesarean and Khyla was born looking just like her dad. The medication they had given me was supposed to numb me up to the waist. It numbed me to my chest and I couldn't breathe. The fear I was having of dying was profound. The pain of surgery and having a child, trying to care for this new baby and care for myself was just overwhelming...and the relationship...

Mark: She began reminiscing about an acquaintance who had a baby and found out she had ovarian cancer and died. Bridgett's thoughts were along those lines, that this was her mission to deliver this baby and then die like her friend. That compounded the fear of not being able to breathe. We stayed in the hospital for two days and finally got a chance to go home. Bridgett still wasn't getting any sleep because she was breastfeeding every two hours.

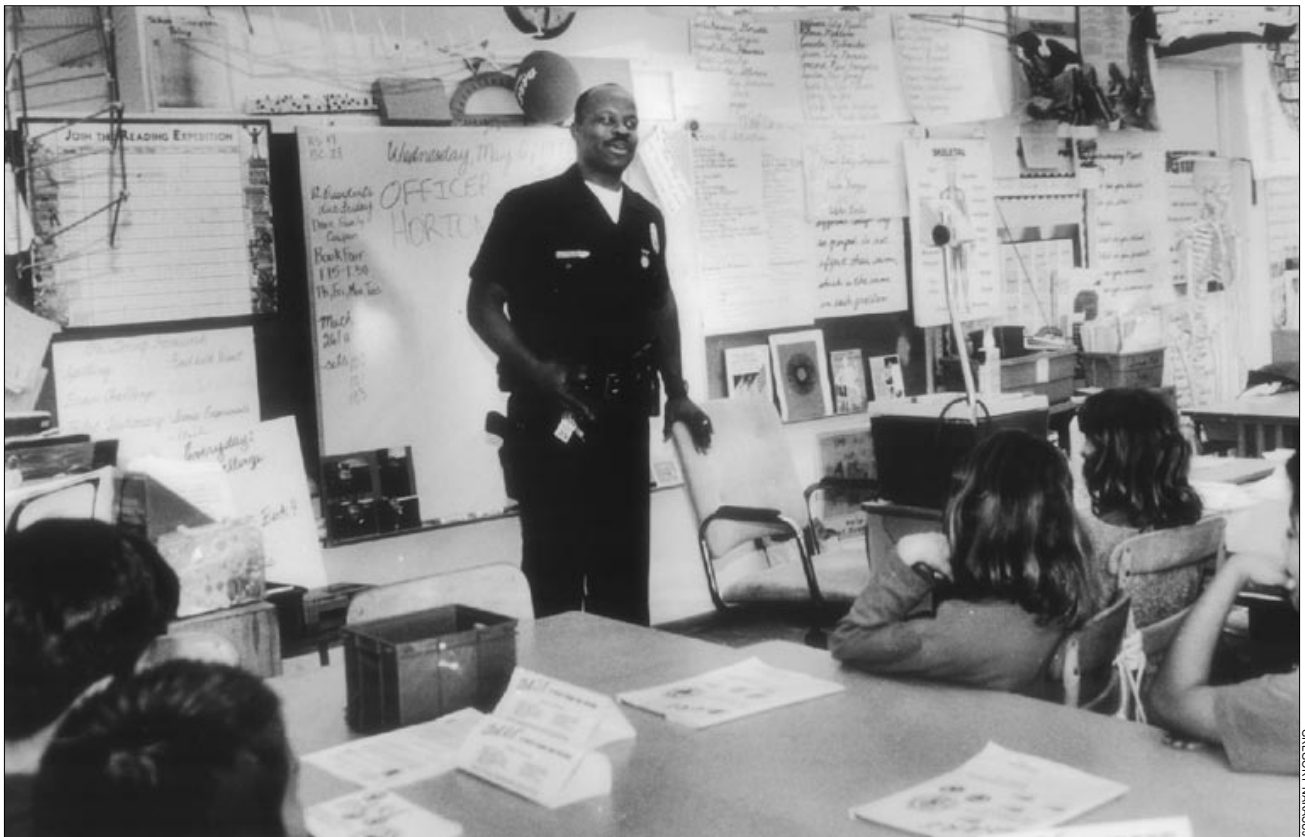
Bridgett: One day something changed in me. I guess it was the postpartum depression coming down. When I would chant, it would dissipate but then it would come back up. I felt like I was a patient, and then I had to take care of Khyla and wondering how could I do it all.

Mark: I took two months off from work to help out. One day Bridgett came running to me, saying, "Who's going to take care of me?"

Bridgett: I felt so alone, I couldn't express myself.

Mark: I didn't know what was going on. We went to the OB-Gyn and Bridgett said, "Mom, Mark, I'm going to be okay." And I think she quoted something from Nichiren Daishonin. We left the office by this point. I accepted the fact that she was saying statements that might be a little bit different. Then she started chanting real loud—yelling daimoku, basically screaming.

Bridgett: That morning I won-



As part of his assignment as an officer of the Los Angeles Police Department, Mark talks to Calvert Elementary School students in Woodland Hills, California, about the department's D.A.R.E. program, a drug education program.

dered if people knew when they were about to die. I felt like I was falling into...

Mark: This sinkhole.

Bridgett: Yeah, like a sinkhole. I dipped into this psychotic type of person. I chanted and then I just snapped out of it, and went in front of the Gohonzon and said, "I will not die!" I made a determination to live and devote my life to this practice.

Mark: The night before we went to the doctor, I was chanting and I said in my prayers: "Okay, bring it on. Whatever it is, let's get busy. Let's see it in its entire-

ty." So when the yelling started, I was prepared. Everything that I thought would be lacking was there—the confidence, the courage, the patience. I pulled the car over in an alley, held her and started chanting. The ambulance showed up and police officers came.

Bridgett: No one could get me out of the car.

Mark: There were three police officers.

Bridgett: I felt like if I moved out of the car I was going to die. So when I started screaming, it was as if my life were closing. I was

fighting for my life and that's the kind of strength that came out of me.

Mark: We got her to the hospital. I had to continue to fight, though I didn't know what the outcome would be. We had SGI members who came over and were there at the crucial moment.

Bridgett: This all started happening a week after Khyla's birth.

Mark: It was difficult for me to decide on the best facility for Bridgett. So her father and I both agreed to keep her at UCLA.

Having a big heart that forgives the minor faults and mistakes of each other is one of the keys to a successful relationship between husband and wife.... We should acknowledge and praise each other's strengths and offer warm encouragement.

While she was there, I visited every day. I knew I had to just listen to what she had to say, whatever she was experiencing. I listened to her because we just had a baby and I had to be there for her.

Bridgett: This brought us together as a family in this crucial moment and made us all the more stronger.

Mark: And Khyla! I'm so in love with her. I never knew it would be so good, and especially having a daughter because this is little Bridgett. Khyla is our little princess. Khyla's at the stage where we really have to help her. We have to really develop ourselves in order for her to be a great individual. I look at things like changing her diaper, or holding her or reading to her. When she walks up to me and just holds a book out to me, how can I not read to her?

Bridgett: Mark does everything I do. We share the responsibility of caring for Khyla. There's nothing he can't do and won't do. I thought a man would say, "I'm going to the gym now." They don't even ask, "Oh, honey could you watch the baby?" It's just automatically assumed it's the woman's responsibility. But I chanted a lot of daimoku about

it and I'm sure Mark has chanted about it, and it's no longer an issue. I remember an SGI friend saying that when you first get married you are parallel to each other and then over time you become one. You know each other's thoughts... you're in sync.

Mark: I finally began to respect Bridgett's opinion and to appreciate the things she has to say. I realize she's an individual, and as much as I want to change her, she's not going to do that. So I started, as painful as it was...I began to think, "Okay, what do I need to do so this suffering can cease?"

Bridgett: What do I need to change?

Mark: And anger was most of it, basically. Because growing up, I didn't have a father that was around.

Bridgett: My parents were never married, and Mark's parents divorced when he was a kid. So it was just hard to pave the way in this relationship.

Mark: It was like we were looking for a recipe for a family.

Bridgett: We didn't have role models.

Mark: We got to the point

where we decided we're going to have to create a happy relationship and family.

Bridgett: Reading President Ikeda's guidance on family and chanting about what it is that I need to change for this or that to happen has helped a lot in pulling our relationship together. I used to go to my husband and say, "Do you even like me?" Because he would hate it when I wouldn't speak up or express myself. I couldn't do it. And I was mad at myself that I couldn't do it. But that began to change after Khyla was born.

Mark: I just wanted to make sure she had a pulse. I wanted to see the fight in this woman, and I did see it that day in the car. The kind of fight that I didn't have to worry about her sticking up for herself or speaking up for herself anymore.

Bridgett: It was very painful.

Mark: "Is there someone in there breathing? Hello! Hello! Hello! This is Mark Horton."

Bridgett: We would point a finger at each other and just drown in misery and that's where we would stay.

Mark: But even that was beneficial, because we realized that's where we were—that we

were pointing a finger at each other. Now I can share my experiences and not worry about what other people think. I didn't have enough self-esteem in relationships—I didn't think I was worthy or capable of having anybody in my life for any length of time.

My mom is Shirley Jackson and has been practicing for twenty-four years. Her strong practice to fight through anything and everything has encouraged me. She's my hero. She's been through so much raising three kids and then moving out here from Chicago. Having a really good relationship with my mom was key to me because that also was a reflection of my relationship with Bridgett.

Bridgett: That's right. At our wedding, someone asked us what we wanted to convey to people about our marriage, and one of the things was to be an example for other people. I know that's why we've gone through so much, to be able to help others. And that doesn't mean that it's perfect. It's a work in progress. No matter what struggle we go through, no matter how dire, we always come back stronger. It's scary when you're going through it because we're thinking...

Mark: It's over.

Bridgett: And I think to myself, I can be miserable all by myself.

Mark: I don't need anybody else to be miserable!

Bridgett: But it's amazing how

much more we're in love.

Mark: Three or four years ago, I told my mom I needed to talk to my dad. It was a difficult step. I was always intimidated by my dad. When he came over I told him I loved him, but also about what hurt me. We were both just sitting there crying.

My dad is not used to expressing himself. I began to open up—to believe that it's okay if some things are bugging me—to express myself. I don't have to hold it in. If I have to cry, it's okay. Now it's gotten to the point where I can chant with my dad on the phone. I understand and accept my father the way he is.

With the practice and encouragement, I stepped out of my limitations. Once I started chanting, it opened up so many areas of things that I thought were impossible, because before they were not possible. Having a kid was not possible for me. I just didn't see it.

Bridgett: Marriage seemed like an impossible dream to me. Neither of my parents were married, so it just didn't seem like it was something that was going to be real or last very long.

Mark: November 23 is our seventh anniversary. It's really been about expanding my life condition, so I can have the capacity to open up my life to people and not be secretive, but feel I have a voice, I am important, I have something to contribute.

Bridgett: President Ikeda's

guidance is the key to our success. I also think it's so important to continue reading about successful relationships. When the parents are happy, the children will also be happy. But if you let your relationship die, then things just fall apart.

By keeping our relationship happy, and fresh, Khyla is so happy watching us. There's some advice we received that says, "Having a big heart that forgives the minor faults and mistakes of each other is one of the keys to a successful relationship between husband and wife. Rather than harping on faults and mistakes, we should acknowledge and praise each other's strengths and offer warm encouragement. Marriage is made for two people aiming at a mutual goal."

Mark: I feel like I can finally appreciate a relationship that is functional where we are able to create value.

Bridgett: I'm starting to realize what President Ikeda means about building a life without regret. I realize it's taking action at the time. Then you won't have any regrets. And that's what he does with his life—takes action.

I think it's crucial for me to keep developing myself. There are a lot of things that I have to constantly work on—constant self-improvement.

Mark: Our families and future family will be able to show actual proof, not by having the easy way, but by being able to challenge struggles and overcome them—as a family united. □

Nichigen-nyo: The Woman With Sunshine Eyes

By Stephanie Celano, Staff Writer

NICHIGEN-NYO was one of Nichiren Daishonin's premier followers in Kamakura. The second wife of Shijo Kingo, Nichigen-nyo presumably married at the customary age of 14 or 15. Shijo Kingo would have been around the age of 28. It is believed that she became a follower of the Daishonin the same year as her husband in 1256. Both were strongly devoted to him and actively propagated his teachings.

The Daishonin gave Nichigen-nyo her name which means "woman with sunshine eyes." (Her birth name is not known.) The Japanese character *gen* connotes eyes of wisdom, possibly signifying the wisdom cultivated through faith in the Lotus Sutra.

In Japan during this medieval era, a woman depended on her husband to support her; whether she had fortune was directly related to how well she married. Nichiren Daishonin clearly understood the plight of women as he states in "The Unity of Husband and Wife": "The [Japanese] character for woman implies 'to depend.' The wisteria depends on the pine tree and a woman depends on a man." In the case of Nichigen-nyo, however, because she took faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism, he stated that "a woman who embraces this sutra not only excels all other women but also surpasses all men" (MW-5, p. 157).

The closeness of the relationship between the Daishonin and Nichigen-nyo is expressed through the many letters that he sent to her at crucial moments in her life. In one instance, she and her husband had been trying to conceive a child but were unable to do so for some years. The day before the birth of her first child, at age 28 she consulted the Daishonin about an easy and safe labor.

In response, on May 7, 1271, the letter "Easy Delivery of a Fortune Child" was sent: "You will surely bear a jewel of a child who will carry on the seed of the propagation of the Lotus Sutra. I wholeheartedly congratulate you. How could you suffer prolonged labor? The child will surely be delivered easily." He assures her that a woman of sincere faith is always protected.

The following day, having given birth to a baby girl, Nichigen-nyo asked the Daishonin to name her newborn. That same day he sent a letter of congratulations. "The fulfillment of your wish is now complete, just

like... the blossoming of flowers in a spring meadow. Please call her Tsukimaro. How happy you both must be!" (MW- 3, pp. 39—40) The Daishonin's elation was as if his own child had been born.

SIMILARLY in the autumn of 1272, the Daishonin named their second daughter Kyo'o. In August 1273, Kyo'o became extremely ill and not even Shijo Kingo, a doctor, could find a cure. The Daishonin had just conferred the Gohonzon upon the family and in encouraging them he wrote: "In inscribing this Gohonzon for her protection, Nichiren is like the lion king... Believe in this mandala with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?... Kyo'o Gozen's misfortunes will change into fortune." (MW-1, pp. 119—20)

Inspired by the Daishonin's words, Nichigen-nyo and Shijo Kingo were able to help their baby daughter overcome her illness.

Nichigen-nyo personally exhibited her bravery in supporting the Daishonin in many ways, specifically when her husband accompanied him to Tatsunokuchi in September 1271, and again when he made the dangerous journey to Sado in April 1272. At such times, left on her own with two young children, she had to rely on her faith, prepared for the possibility that her husband may not return. In recognition of her efforts, the Daishonin comments that her 'sincerity is deeper than the earth...loftier than the sky' (MW-2 [2nd ed.], p. 195).

IN the letter "The Causal Law of Life," he urges Nichigen-nyo to unite with her friends and fellow women believers in Kamakura and lauds their courageous faith. "I hope you will read this letter over and over again together with Toshiro's wife. You two women were born as commoners... yet you believe in the Lotus Sutra without concern for the prying eyes of others or the danger it may pose for your lives. This is nothing short of extraordinary." (MW-2, [2nd ed.], p. 195)

These ordinary women, of such strength, were a rarity considering the turbulent times in which they lived. Their faith was based on nothing other than a strong bond to their mentor, Nichiren Daishonin. Nichigen-nyo, worthy of admiration, serves as an example of a true victor in faith and life.

Nichigen-nyo: "My Story"

By Fay Hovey, Maui, Hawaii

The articles on pages 12-13 introduce Nichigen-nyo, one of Nichiren Daishonin's most famous disciples. The first article on page 12 gives a brief account of her life. In the second article, Faye Hovey presents a fictionalized, first-person account of Nichigen-nyo's thoughts.

WHAT is it that makes a woman put herself into the hands of a man and say, "Yes"? So many marriages were arranged in those times, and, if fortunate enough, a woman would come to love her husband as years passed. When my husband asked me to marry him, I said "Yes" because I saw a strength in the set of his chin and something else, something important to me in his eyes. I could tell that he was capable of deep devotion, a singular passion for life. And yes, there was his impetus and outspoken demeanor. I knew I would never lack for good company and the unexpected as long as he lived.

I was, of course, schooled in

all of the womanly and wifely arts from childhood. A woman was to know her place, to follow, to make a man's home his sanctuary. I was no longer a girl when we married and I felt he was a man I could respect enough to follow rather than having to follow just because he was a man. I had other prospects, it was true enough. However, whenever he came to visit, sitting formally with my father and discussing governmental affairs and the weather's effect on the rice crop, I would listen on the other side of the screen before bringing them both tea, and I liked his voice. I liked how he questioned the way of things: his earnest belief that things could

be better by making them so.

We had a good time together. Even though we had our social responsibilities to fulfill and the maintenance of our manor and lands to contend with, we were happy in all of the ways a man and woman can be happy with one another. And I felt protected from that other world that began outside our gate. Can there be a greater happiness than having the door closed against the world at night, one's family in good health, the sounds and smells of a meal cooking fragrant in the kitchen? To sleep at night, everything strong and good?

THERE were many times when we thought we





couldn't go on. When crops failed, children sickened, earthquakes leveled the landscape. Death came, and my husband fought it like he once fought with his sword. He was a physician and there was hardly a time when our hall wasn't pungent with cooking herbs and his ointments and potions. A quiet knocking on the gate at night and he would be off to tend to someone. I grew accustomed to not being startled when I awoke alone, his side of the bed grown cold.

I had to become used to the fact that he could be called away by Lord Ema on some mission. Our lives went on without him when he was away, however, I kept one ear waiting to hear his horse neigh, his voice joking with the someone in the courtyard, his calling for some hot sake as he scooped his running children up in his arms and shouldered into the house.

One day he took me with him to see the priest Nichiren outside Kamakura. He had been sharing his impressions of

this man and in my husband, I saw a renewed fire, a hope rising up in him that the anguish of persistent disease and government corruption had almost extinguished. I wanted to meet the man that could make my husband so excited.

NICHIREN Daishonin was unlike any priest that I'd ever met. For one thing, he didn't treat women like they were something to be barely tolerated and of lower caste. In us, he saw the same Buddha nature that existed in men. He seemed to know my heart, my concerns and asked me about our children and their health. I felt as if I could ask him any question, however private. We visited as often as we could, drawing close to this man who was like a great beacon of truth in a world grown intoxicated with tragedy, superstitious with grief and fear. We put ourselves and our lands and our family in grave danger in doing so during times when people were being jailed for simply walking by his door.

My husband and I began to

see that together we had an even more important role to play. That there was a sacred and very real meaning to our being together beyond the family and his life as a retainer to Lord Ema. Because of our practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism and the chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, we had become sources of encouragement to people. And there can be no better way to attract attention to oneself than to be completely happy and truly concerned for others in such a deluded and cynical age. In a time when no one believed anything the government said, when suffering abounded and it seemed like human beings debased themselves with every sort of vice and lowness, a truly happy person was considered a revolutionary or, at best, a fool. Such a person should be prepared for anything.

One night, a commotion at the gate woke us all up. We knew it wasn't someone sick with fever needing my husband's care. I heard the urgent, decisive talk of men and draw-

ing on an outer robe, I saw one of our servants hastily pulling Yorimoto's horse from the stable and he mounted, calling for the gates to be opened. He looked at me sharply from across the expanse between us saying: "They're taking him tonight to Tatsunokuchi. I leave you in charge of everything," and he dug his bare feet into the sides of the horse and was gone. It had only been a few minutes since we'd been sound asleep. He hadn't stopped to put on his boots.

ISTOOD there on the steps for a long time, shaking and listening as quiet settled on the courtyard, the sound of the crickets in the hedges. Tatsunokuchi was the remote beach where criminals were executed. Never before had I felt such a strong desire to be a man, to be the one who goes forth, sword in hand to meet life. I stood there and felt how all women feel when they have to wait, to know they may never see their husbands again. I hurried back into the hall and lighting the candles

and incense, I chanted for his protection, determined to hold back the seemingly random and dispassionate forces of destruction from descending on all those she loves.

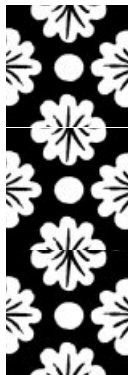
My husband, the impetuous and outspoken man that he was, rode barefoot in his night robe to intercept the army that was accompanying the Daishonin to his death. He slipped from his horse and taking the reins of the Daishonin's horse, he insisted on leading him down the stony path to the dark beach, fully preparing himself to die with him. It was said that he openly wept as he led the horse. Later, when I heard this story, I knew that was the moment when my husband had become more than a man and I more than a wife and mother. To discover that there is something worth dying for is a great and humble realization.

As the Daishonin stretched forth his neck, exulting in the opportunity to die for the Lotus Sutra, a great light shot through the night sky, a fireball whose center and trail lit up the beach as if it were day. The sol-

diers dropped their swords and fell back, reluctant to kill such a man. And the executioner slowly lowered his sword. There would be no death that night, the taste for it no longer in anyone's mouth. When the Daishonin stood up, he stood up more than man. He had become a lion of courage, afraid of nothing.

SO it was that Yorimoto returned to me and our family alive—full of awe telling his story repeatedly to anyone who would listen. That night, curved against him as he soundly slept, my eyes were open in wonder to the night sky. "Nichigen-nyo" was the name the Daishonin had given me. "Sun-Eyes Woman." I knew from this night, I would always see things differently. I had prayed with the force of my entire being and the greatness of my own life unfolded before me. I held my husband's hand, happily listening to his breathing. I felt the sun rise in my heart as the world began to move from darkness tonight. □





The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue (4)

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. The last installment explained the dispute between the priest Nichigo and fourth high priest Nichido. Nichigo had the deed to a large tract of head temple land transferred to himself.

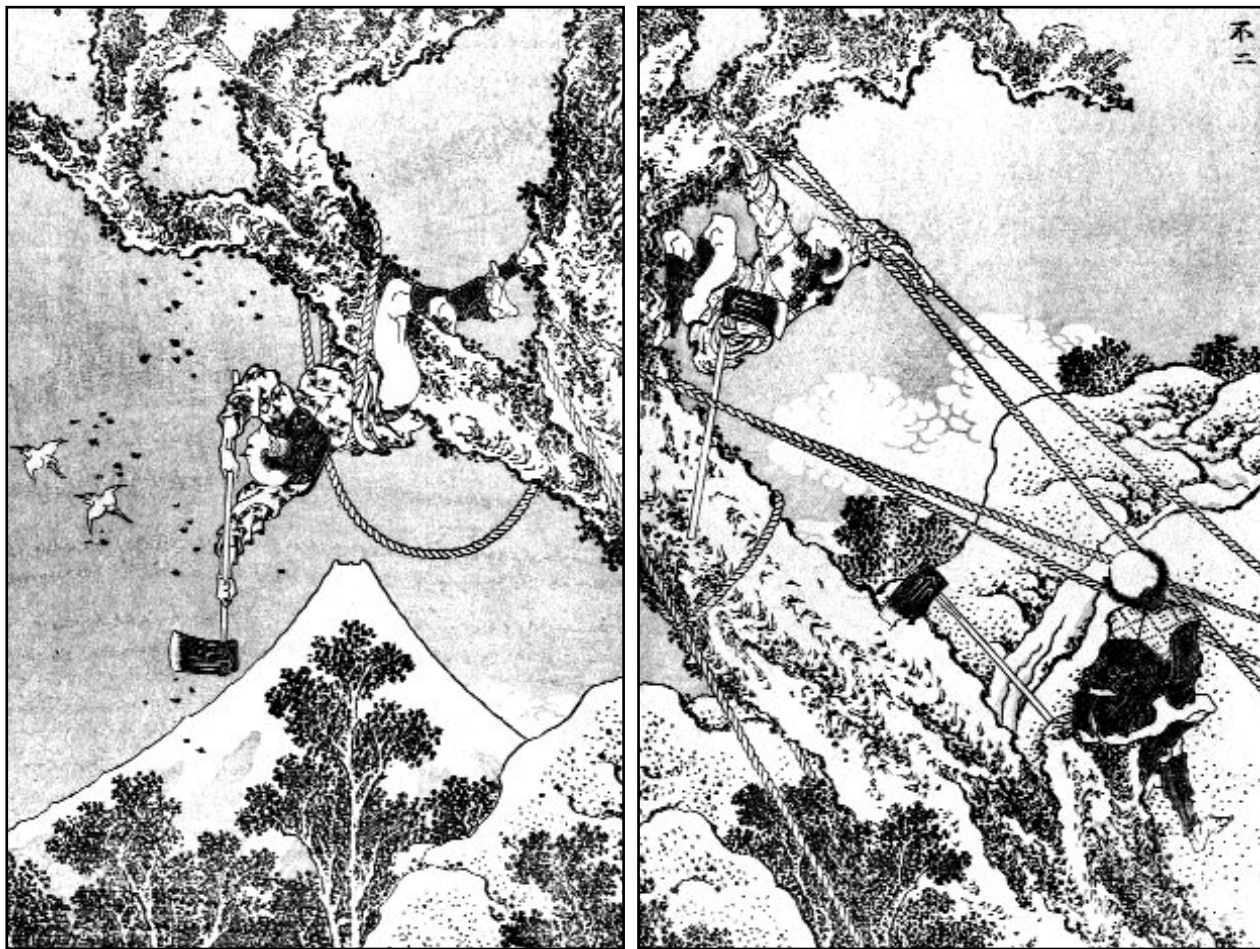
Chapter 4: Taiseki-ji Sold Off by High-ranking Priests



(1) Nichiu's restoration of the sect after the protracted land dispute

As a result of its seventy-two-yearlong land dispute with Nichigo and his followers, Taiseki-ji declined considerably. The land dispute exhausted the head temple's financial and human resources. The number of student priests studying at the temple decreased, and the temple lost many branch temples as well due to the internal turmoil. There is an

account of Nichiei, the eighth high priest (1352–1419), having to transfer the heritage of the Law to a lay believer as its temporary keeper because of a lack of capable priests at Taiseki-ji. *The Accounts of the Fuji School* (Jp. Fuji Monkachu Kenbun) states: "High Priest Nichiei commented to other priests: 'It is my sadness and lament that there is no opportunity to transmit the heritage of the Law.' At last, in the twenty-sixth year of O'ei [1419], when he fell ill, he bestowed the heritage of the Law upon Aburano Joren" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 5, p. 255).



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

If this account is true, the ninth high priest, Nichiu (1402–82), presumably received the transmission from the lay person Aburano Joren at the age of 17. He was from the respected Nanjo family and became known as a restorer of the Fuji school because he contributed to the maintenance and repair of buildings at the head temple, the development of student priests and the restoration of branch temples. Nichiu's scholarship was also well known, and many student priests visited him at Taiseki-ji.

While managing Taiseki-ji, Nichiu traveled extensively to spread the

Daishonin's Buddhism. He went east to Oshu, the northeastern region of Japan's main island, and west to Kyoto, the seat of the imperial government. He also visited Echigo Province¹ in the north and further on to Sado Island. In 1432, he submitted a letter of remonstrance to the Ashikaga shogunate government in Kyoto. Many of the old temples of the Fuji School in the northeastern region of the main island are said to have been founded by Nichiu.

In *The Accounts of Teacher Nichiu*, compiled by Nichi'in, the thirty-first high priest, recounts this incident: Once

while Nichiu was away from Taiseki-ji, the three high-ranking priests appointed by him to protect Taiseki-ji during his absence changed the ownership of the head temple and sold it off. *The Accounts of Teacher Nichiu* states:

[Teacher Nichiu] appointed three priests as his deputies during his absence. But who knows what they had in mind? These deputies abandoned this temple [Taiseki-ji], so for six years, it was a place slanderous of the Law. But when the elder priest [Nichiu] returned, he restored the spirit of the sage, the respectable founder [Nichiren Daishonin]. Although it had become a place of slander, he purchased Taiseki-ji back from Lord Okutsu for twenty *kan* of coins, thereby restoring the spirit of the sage, the respectable founder. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, pp. 185–86)

Regarding this incident, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest and noted authority of the history of the Fuji School, comments:

Put simply, he [High Priest Nichiu] appointed three deputies. But the three of them sold off Taiseki-ji according to other documents. Then High Priest Nichiu, it is recorded, returned and banished them. Those three or four deputies were all high-ranking priests because they had the title of *Ajari*.... We do not know who purchased it [Taiseki-ji] or under whose name it was registered. Probably the deputies changed the ownership to their own names. If someone respectable had bought it, I do not think that he would have given it up so easily. So I think that the deputies changed the ownership into their names. (From "On the History of the Fuji School: An Interview With High Priest Nichiko," November 1956 *The Daibyakurenge*)

This incident attests to the condition

of the priesthood during the late fifteenth century. While Nichiu was traveling far and wide to spread the Daishonin's teachings, corrupt high-ranking priests at Taiseki-ji were concerned only about their own interests. Having to deal with the corruption within his own priesthood is another reason Nichiu is known as a restorer of the Fuji School.

(2) Nichiu's attempt to restore the Daishonin's spirit in the priesthood



To fight against the spiritual decay in the priesthood, Nichiu strictly reminded his disciples of the Daishonin's earnest desire to spread his teachings, stating:

According to the words of the respectable founder [Nichiren Daishonin], we should continue to spread [the Law] widely even under stupas or bridges so long as the king and his subjects do not take faith in it. We should not be idle in our dwellings even for a moment. We should not be seeking wealth nor high status. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 208)

He also states:

Since our age is already into the Latter Day of the Law, this school, influenced by the conditions of society, entered the Latter Day as well. This is because our faith has become weaker than in the past. Furthermore, we have become extremely lax in terms of rebuking the sins of slandering the Law. In short, I think, now is the Latter Day of this school, which I find most difficult. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 2, pp. 139–40)

Nichiu's statement indicates that

Nichiu's statement indicates that about 100 years after Nikko Shonin's death, priests' faith and spirit to preserve the integrity of the Daishonin's teaching had already weakened considerably.

about 100 years after Nikko Shonin's death, priests' faith and spirit to preserve the integrity of the Daishonin's teaching had already weakened considerably. In his attempt to revive the Daishonin's teaching, Nichiu exerted himself in propagation and study. Despite his efforts, however, many priests lost faith and became corrupt.

The Daishonin himself was a reformer who revived faith in the Lotus Sutra. Because he realized that the Lotus Sutra was the correct teaching for the time, he was especially strict toward the Tendai sect. That sect claimed to be an orthodox school of the Lotus Sutra while distorting its teachings and combining it with the Shingon esotericism. The Daishonin criticized the Tendai sect more than 200 times in about sixty writings. In his criticism of the Tendai sect, he did not mince words, referring to the sect as "a thief of the Law" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1004), "the foremost slanderers of the Law" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1067) and "the beginning of our country's ruin" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 5, p. 228). He condemns priests Jikaku, Annen and Eshin of the Tendai sect by describing them as "the three worms who devoured the lion-body of the Lotus Sutra and the Great Teacher Dengyo" (MW-3, 169). The reformist spirit to revive the humanistic

ideals of the Lotus Sutra is at the core of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Unless this commitment is widely shared among believers, the stream of his teaching will become corrupt and eventually run dry as demonstrated by the history of Taiseki-ji.

(3) Nichiu's understanding of the heritage of the Law

Nanjo Nichiju, one of Nichiu's disciples, compiled many of Nichiu's instructions on the teachings and traditions of the Fuji School in "On the Formalities of True Buddhism" (Jp. *Kegi Sho*). In this writing, Nichiu confirms some of the fundamental aspects of the Daishonin's teaching. For example, he states: "The object of worship in this school shall be limited to that of Sage Nichiren" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 65). He also states: "In the Hokke [Lotus] sect [i.e., the Fuji school], we must not regard [the images] of the Buddhas and the bodhisattvas such as Kannon [Skt. Avalokiteshvara] or Myoon [Skt. Gadgadasvara] as objects of worship no matter how artfully they are painted. We shall make use only of the object of



It is through faith as taught by the Daishonin that we inherit the heritage of the Law and reveal ourselves as entities of the Mystic Law, as Buddhas.

worship in which Sage Nichiren inscribed the ten worlds" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 70). These statements by Nichiu suggest that there was confusion about the object of worship within the Fuji School.

Regarding the concept of the heritage of the Law, Nichiu states:

Faith, the heritage of the Law and the pure flow of the Law are identical. Continuous faith indicates the unbroken lineage and thus the correctly transmitted heritage of the Law and the uninterrupted pure flow of the Law. As a person shall not contradict his or her parents in the secular world, we in the religious world shall not go astray from what is in the heart of our teacher in order to receive the correct heritage and pure flow of the Law. When our faith does not differ from that of the noble founder, our body and mind manifest as the body and mind of Myoho-enge-kyo. When our faith differs [from that of the noble founder], however, we are ordinary mortals in body and mind. Then we do not possess the heritage of the Law that allows us to attain Buddhahood in our present forms." (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 64)

The original Japanese term for the heritage of the Law is *kechimyaku*, which literally means "bloodstream." The term indicates how a Buddhist teaching is transmitted flawlessly from teacher to disciple just as blood flows in the human body. Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest and noted Buddhist scholar, comments on the above passage by Nichiu as follows:

When we do not go astray in the slightest from the faith of the great teachers of Buddhism, that is, Great Sage Nichiren, the noble founder, and Nikko Shonin, the founder [of Taiseki-ji], we as their followers shall transform our evil and defiled minds into the body and mind of Myoho-enge-kyo, which is true, good and pure. Such a transformation of body and mind depends upon sincere faith and earnest practice. If we do not reverently uphold these essentials, our faith becomes unsound, impure, evil and confused, thus contradicting the Buddha's intent. Then we will obstruct the passage of the pure flow of the Law, so we will manifest our intrinsic self as deluded ordinary mortals in body and mind. Thus we will destroy our qualification to inherit the heritage of the Law that allows us to attain Buddhahood in our present form. This is unfortunate.

(*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 176)

It is through faith as taught by the Daishonin that we inherit the heritage of the Law and reveal ourselves as entities of the Mystic Law, as Buddhas.

Regarding Nichiko Hori's commentary, President Ikeda states:

He [High Priest Nichiko Hori] states that those who destroy Buddhism, whomever they may be, lose the qualification to receive the heritage of the Law that enables them to attain Buddhahood in their present form. The foundation of Buddhism always lies in faith, not in status or authority. Only through faith can the heritage of the Law flow from the original Buddha and pulsate in our lives. The higher the status people hold, the more severely the Law will judge them if they lose faith or allow their faith to be twisted. Some say to other believers, "The lifeblood of your faith is cut off," in an attempt to intimidate them. By saying such a thing, however, they are severing their own flow of the heritage of the Law. We must never be deceived. The faith of the Soka Gakkai has not changed in the least; it remains unmoved." (From a December 15, 1991, address)

The lifeline of the Daishonin's Buddhism lies in faith. If believers lose faith, there can be no prospect for their enlightenment. Even the high priest will not receive the heritage of the Law if he loses faith. As high priest, his betrayal of people's trust and expectations in his office becomes a function as what Buddhism terms "the devil of the sixth heaven," or life's negative workings to obscure one's innate Buddhahood. Quoting from the Nirvana Sutra, the Daishonin refers to those who assume a saintly appearance yet obstruct the spread of the Lotus Sutra after the Buddha's passing as

"devils in the guise of a Buddha" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 76). As the Daishonin cautions us, we must be aware of such negative potential lurking in religious authority.

If the heritage of the Law is faith, something shared by all believers, then what does the priesthood's interpretation of "the transmission of the heritage of the Law from one high priest to another" mean? We can see the prototype of this transmission in the transfer of the office of high priest from Nikko Shonin to the third high priest, Nichimoku. The following is the entire translation of the document titled "Articles Regarding the Succession of Nikko" (Jp. Nikko Ato Jojo no Koto) dated November 10, 1330:

When Hon'mon-ji [the Temple of True Buddhism] is built, Niidakyo Ajari Nichimoku shall become its chief priest. In Japan and the rest of the entire world, half the temples shall be administered by Nichimoku's successors, and the other half by other priests.

Nikko shall bestow upon Nichimoku the Dai-Gohonzon inscribed in the second year of Koan [1279] as well as the documents drawn up in the fifth year of Koan [1282].

Nichimoku shall conduct gongyo and await the time of kosen-rufu while administering and repairing the temple at Oishi [Taiseki-ji]—both its halls and cemetery. The aforementioned Nichimoku, at the age of 15, met Nikko and took faith in the Lotus Sutra. Since then until now at age 73, he has not committed an error. At the age of 17, he visited Sage Nichiren's dwelling at Mount Minobu in Kai Province and stayed there for seven years constantly at his service. Since his passing, through the eighth year of Koan [1285] till the second year of Gentoku [1330], for fifty years, the merits in his remonstrance with the sovereign have been distinguished from those of others. Thus I set

down so that this may serve as proof for posterity. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 8, p. 18)

From this document it is clear that the transfer of the heritage of the Law from one high priest to another boils down to the transfer of the administrative responsibilities associated with the office. These responsibilities include the management of Taiseki-ji and its branch temples and the safekeeping of the Dai-Gohonzon and some documents. It should be also noted that Nikko Shonin's appointment was not arbitrary. He states in the transfer document that Nichimoku is qualified to be his successor because of his outstanding faith and consistent practice from the ages of 15 to 73. Nichimoku was appointed because of his courage to remonstrate with the sovereign as well as of his passion to seek instructions from the Daishonin at Mount Minobu. The transfer document "Articles Regarding the Succession of Nikko" explains that the transfer of the heritage of the Law from one high priest to another is the transfer of the administrative responsibilities of that office, and the essential qualification for the office of high priest lies in faith and practice.

The priesthood explains that Nichimoku "directly inherited the Living Essence from Nikko Shonin" (*The Liturgy of Nichiren Shoshu*, Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple Taiseki-ji ed., English version, p. 35). This "Living Essence," which is also referred to as "the entity of the heritage of the Law," has been passed down from one high priest to another for more than 700 years, according to the priesthood. Despite the priesthood's efforts to mystify this "Living Essence" or "the entity of the heritage of the Law" possessed only by the high priest, Nikko Shonin clearly indicates in his transfer document to Nichimoku that it is nothing other than the Dai-Gohonzon. In this

regard, Nichio, the fifty-sixth high priest, states: "The entity of the Law specifically entrusted [to the successive high priests] is the Dai-Gohonzon of the High Sanctuary of true Buddhism kept in secrecy at our temple" (*Bennaku Kanjin Sho*, p. 212). What the priesthood calls the transfer of "Living Essence" from one high priest to another is essentially the transfer of the high priest's administrative responsibility to protect the Dai-Gohonzon. Needless to say, with this responsibility must come the high priest's faith and practice for the propagation of the Daishonin's Buddhism as Nikko Shonin saw in his successor, Nichimoku.

By describing the transfer of the office of high priest with terms like "the Living Essence of the True Buddha," the priesthood tries to create a myth that there is some secret teaching that only the high priest knows. All the transfer documents from the Daishonin to Nikko Shonin are, in one sense, explanations of the Gohonzon. For example, some documents discuss the Daishonin's Buddhism implicit in the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra or others discuss the doctrinal comparison between the Daishonin's Buddhism and Shakyamuni's Buddhism. These teachings were not widely known nor accepted in the early days of the Fuji School; therefore, they were considered "secret."

However, all the so-called transfer documents or secret traditions of the Fuji School have already been published. There is no important doctrinal document accessible only by the high priest. Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest, who is well known for his scholarship, compiled all the major documents of the Fuji School and published them as the *Complete Works of the Fuji School*. From this work, Nichiko Hori selected important documents and published them as the *Essential Writings of the Fuji School*. In the first volume of

There is no special significant teaching that only priests know. The Dai-Gohonzon is the purpose of the Daishonin's advent. The Gohonzon in our community centers and homes to which we pray daily have the exactly same powers of the Buddha and the Law.

this collection, he published the eight transfer documents. Furthermore, in 1952, at the request of President Toda, *Nichiren Daishonin Goshō Zenshū* (The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin) was published under the editorial supervision of Nichiko Hori. This collection of the Daishonin's writings also includes major documents transferred from the Daishonin to Nikko Shonin.

In the eighteenth century, the twenty-sixth high priest, Nichikan, systematized the Daishonin's teachings and made a clear distinction between the Daishonin's Buddhism and that of Shakyamuni in writings such as his *Six-volume Writings* and various commentaries. In the past, before the appearance of the Soka Gakkai, Nichikan's writings were also considered "secret traditions" and were held in importance next to the transfer documents. So they were available only to a handful of people. President Toda, however, in his efforts to promote Buddhist study, made Nichikan's writings available and encouraged people to study them. He said, "In terms of Buddhist study, we must return to the time of High Priest Nichikan."

Regarding this point, SGI President Ikeda states:

There is no special significant teaching that only priests know. The Dai-Gohonzon is the purpose of the Daishonin's advent. The Gohonzon in our community centers and homes to which we pray daily have the exactly same powers of the Buddha and the Law.... As the Daishonin states: "There is no supernatural power or secret [of Thus Come One] other than the attainment of enlightenment" (*Goshō Zenshū*, p. 753),... the power of the Dai-Gohonzon that enables all people to attain enlightenment is "the secret and supernatural power [of Thus Come One]." The Daishonin makes it clear that there is no secret teaching other than the Gohonzon. (From his speech delivered on November 18, 1991)

To assert that only the high priest knows a certain secret teaching or that only through the high priest can one correctly practice the Daishonin's teaching absolutely contradicts the Daishonin's teaching and intent.

Nittatsu Hosoi, the sixty-sixth high priest, states:

Nichiren Daishonin's writings are based upon the Lotus Sutra. His writings give life to the sutra and present guidelines



As long as we SGI members continue to develop firm faith in the Gohonzon and practice for kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's writings, the heritage of the Daishonin's Buddhism that enables us to reveal our innate Buddhahood will continue to flow in our lives.

for its spread. They open the way for kosen-rufu. The Daishonin appeared in the Latter Day of the Law and revealed himself to be a Buddha. So he is the Buddha of the Latter Day. His teachings are contained in his writings. This is why we must imbue our hearts and minds with the Daishonin's writings. (From a speech delivered on July 27, 1974)

President Ikeda also states:

The Soka Gakkai has been advancing while making the Gohonzon and the Daishonin's writings as our basis exactly as the Daishonin taught. Please continue to move forward courageously and cheerfully with the firm conviction that the Gakkai is advancing along the correct path of the Daishonin's Buddhism in accord with his writings as well as the instructions of the previous high priest. (From a November 18, 1991, address)

As long as we SGI members continue to develop firm faith in the Gohonzon and practice for kosen-rufu in accord with the Daishonin's writings, the heritage of the Daishonin's Buddhism that enables us to reveal our innate Buddhahood will continue to flow in our lives.

The priesthood likes to emphasize the ceremonial formalities regarding the transfer of the office of high priest. It asserts that "the specific lifeblood of the entity of the Law received by only a single person" has been handed down within the priesthood through "bequeathing the Golden Utterance to the direct successors" (*Refuting the Soka Gakkai's "Counterfeit Object of Worship"—100 Questions and Answers*, comp. by the Nichiren Shoshu Doctrinal Research Committee, p. 24). The records of the Fuji School, however, do not indicate that "bequeathing the Golden Utterance" has been conducted without fail from one high priest to the next throughout its history. For example, in the early seventeenth century, Nichiju, the sixteenth high priest, could not be with Nissho, the fifteenth high priest, at the time of his death, so the latter transferred the heritage of high priest to his deputy, Rikyobo Nichigi, as a temporary custodian of the heritage. Nichigi later transferred it to Nichiju.

In response to criticism that the transmission was severed because a proper ceremony was not conducted between the two high priests, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest, states:

The issue may arise regarding whether

the transmission of the lineage of high priest lies in the formality of bequeathing the Golden Utterance to the direct successors or in the person of the recipient. If the appropriate authority resides in the recipient, the transfer ceremony is merely a formality to establish his authority, and the case of Teacher Nichiju does not present any inconvenience resulting from the severance of the lineage or the interruption of the flow of the Law. But if the authority [of high priest] derives only from the formalities and the recipient may be anyone, then the aforementioned case would be an unfortunate instance in the secession of the heritage. (From "The Rebuttal to and the Historical Examination of the Severance of the Lineage of High Priest," *Dai-Nichiren*)

The believers of the Fuji School have been told that the lineage of high priest has been handed down orally from one high priest to the next. If so, however, such a tradition requires that the recipient stay by the current high priest to receive the lineage before he dies. In the past when there was much difficulty with transportation and communication, it was only natural that sometimes the recipient could not do so. In those cases, a third person would receive the lineage of high priest for the time being and then transfer it to the next high priest.

As mentioned before, what has been transferred from one high priest to the next (or what the priesthood refers to as "the specific lifeblood of the entity of the Law received by only a single person") is nothing other than the responsibility for safekeeping of the Dai-Gohonzon along with other administrative functions. So the transfer ceremony was a formality to make it known among other priests and believers that the transfer of the office of high priest was conducted between the high priest and a certain recipient. If the transfer ceremony were vital to the transmission

of some secret oral teachings, then the lineage of high priest and its secret traditions would have become extinct a long time ago.

Besides the case of the fifteenth high priest, Nissho, there are instances where the high priests died without conducting a transfer ceremony or appointing a successor: In 1830, Nisso, the forty-ninth high priest; in 1836, Nichijo, the fiftieth high priest. In 1865, following a great fire at Taiseki-ji, Nichijo, the fifty-third high priest, vanished from the head temple without appointing his successor, and his whereabouts were unknown for some time. In those cases, retired high priests are said to have appointed the next high priest. Historical records prove that a "mystical" transfer ceremony of the office of high priest was never an absolute.

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism explains that people can reveal their innate Buddhahood through embracing the Gohonzon. In "The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon," the Daishonin writes: "The most important thing is to chant only Nam-myoho-enge-kyo and attain enlightenment" (MW-1, 214). The current priesthood describes the simple transfer of the administrative responsibilities of high priest as "the specific lifeblood of the entity of the Law received by only a single person," thereby suggesting that there is a secret teaching known only to the high priest or that only the high priest possesses "the Living Essence of the True Buddha"—some kind of a mysterious spiritual entity. In the Daishonin's Buddhism, however, the heritage of the Law needed to attain Buddhahood lies only in our earnest faith and practice. To say otherwise amounts to the denial of the Daishonin's teaching and intent.

To be continued

1. Present-day Niigata Prefecture.

DIALOGUE

on the *Lotus Sutra*

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

This is the twenty-ninth 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 June 1997 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

In this discussion, their fourth on the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, they discuss the doctrine of the Ten Worlds in terms of human life and civilization, drawing on a wide range of concrete examples.

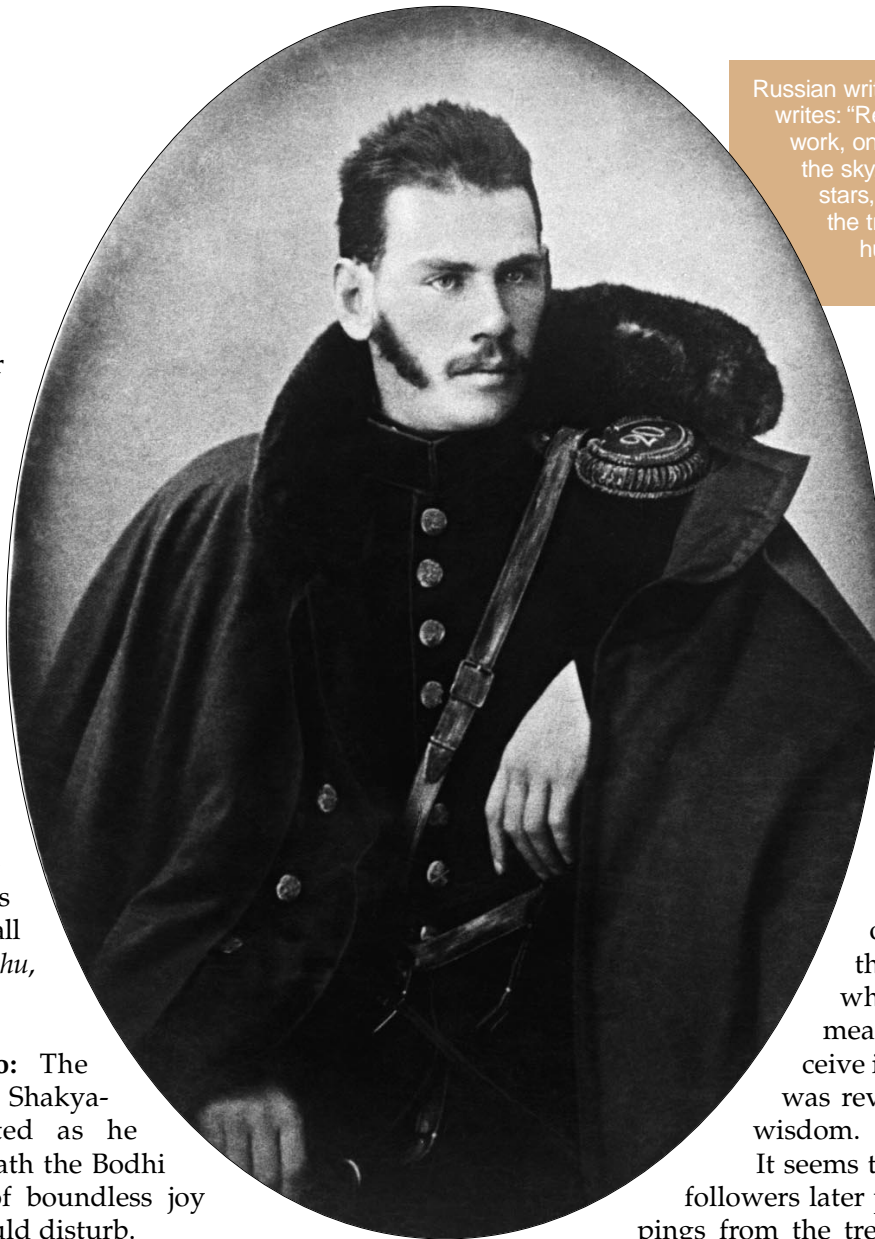
29 The Pursuit of Happiness: The Doctrine of the Ten Worlds

Katsuji Saito: Last time we talked about the revelation in the “Life Span” chapter of the “True Cause” and “True Effect” of Shakyamuni’s enlightenment.

From letters received by our editorial office, it seems that our dialogue has renewed many of our readers’ sense of the profundity and grandeur of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism of the Sun and just how wonderful it is to be able to live with an awareness of life’s eternity.

Daisaku Ikeda: We are following the supreme path in life. Whether we can truly elevate our lives totally depends on whether we realize this solemn fact.

What is the purpose of Buddhism? It is to enable all people to become happy and cultivate lives of supreme joy. Tolstoy writes: “Rejoice! Rejoice! One’s life’s work, one’s mission is a joy. Toward the sky, toward the sun, toward the stars, toward the grasses, toward the trees, toward animals, toward human beings—you may as well



Russian writer Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910) writes: “Rejoice! Rejoice! One’s life’s work, one’s mission is a joy. Toward the sky, toward the sun, toward the stars, toward the grasses, toward the trees, toward animals, toward human beings—you may as well rejoice.”

rejoice.”¹ Our mission in life is to experience joy! This was one conclusion that Tolstoy had reached.

We who embrace the Mystic Law understand the true meaning of these words, for the Lotus Sutra enables us to cultivate in our lives “the greatest of all joys” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788).

Takanori Endo: The state of life that Shakyamuni manifested as he meditated beneath the Bodhi tree was one of boundless joy that nothing could disturb.

Ikeda: That’s right. The expression *Shakyamuni’s attaining enlightenment for the first time in India under the Bodhi tree* has a lofty-sounding ring to it. But to put it in plain terms, it means that the sun of supreme joy solemnly rose in Shakyamuni’s heart.

A Fierce Struggle With Negativity

Haruo Suda: I once visited the place where Shakyamuni is said to have attained enlightenment, a location one sutra describes as “not far from the city of Gaya” (LS15, 221).² In fact, it is ten kilometers south of the present-day city of Gaya (located in the state of Bihar in northeast India). Because Shakyamuni attained enlightenment there, the spot was

later named “Gaya of the Buddha” or Bodh Gaya.

Endo: In like fashion, the tree at the spot came to be called the Bodhi tree in commemoration of Shakyamuni’s having attained enlightenment there. It was originally called the Asvattha Tree, which reportedly means “place to perceive immortality,” and was revered as a tree of wisdom.

It seems that the Buddha’s followers later planted root-clippings from the tree beneath which Shakyamuni sat in meditation. They were planted across the country. So, for example, the tree standing at Bodh Gaya grew from a root-clipping taken from a tree in Sri Lanka, far to the south, that had grown from a clipping of the original tree. Further complicating things, there are some indications that the tree in Sri Lanka may not have been the original tree planted there, but a transplant grown from the original Sri Lanka clipping. That would make the present tree at Bodh Gaya the great-grandchild, as it were, of the tree under which Shakyamuni sat.

Ikeda: I, too, have visited Bodh Gaya. Shortly after becoming president of the Soka Gakkai, I made a trip to the birthplace of Buddhism (in 1961). Vowing to accomplish the “westward

transmission"³ of Nichiren Daishonin's teaching, I buried a capsule containing a copy of the Gosho "On the Three Great Secret Laws" and a stone marker at the site.

Saito: True to the vow you made then, the "Buddhism of the Sun" has today spread not only across India, but throughout Asia and other countries of the world. Considering that it took many hundreds or even a thousand years for the Buddhism of Shakyamuni to spread through Asia, this accomplishment in the course of just thirty or forty years will no doubt impress future historians as truly remarkable.

Ikeda: You, the members of the younger generation, need to follow in my footsteps. It is essential that people carry on this work.

At any rate, it was from Bodh Gaya that Shakyamuni began his struggle to lead all people to enlightenment. What do you suppose Shakyamuni's spiritual struggle at Bodh Gaya was like?

Endo: Well, let's see. Prior to that, Shakyamuni is said to have completely eradicated desires as a result of carrying out grueling ascetic practices. However, realizing that such practices could not lead to true happiness, he abandoned them.

Suda: He had discarded both the world of desire and ascetic practices. What, then, was Shakyamuni seeking? And to what did he awaken?

Ikeda: This is very significant.

What Shakyamuni was seeking was happiness for all. "Where does the path of true happiness for all people lie?" he asked himself. He understood that people could become happy neither by simply allowing their lives to be consumed in the flames of desire; nor by causing pain to their bodies through asceticism.

He was seeking the path of the Middle Way that would allow people's lives to shine brilliantly. And it was with the aim of finding such a path that he diligently applied himself to his practice.

Suda: Shakyamuni is said to have spent a period of seven days sitting cross-legged in meditation beneath the Bodhi tree.

Ikeda: "Meditation" sounds calm and peaceful, but it is by no means an "easy" path. It is a fierce struggle against the pull of negativity and darkness. Shakyamuni squarely confronted, fought and defeated the "destroyer of life," a function pervading the universe. In so doing, he was able to conquer the darkness that is called unhappiness.

Saito: Buddhist texts describe how the devilish forces cunningly tried to capture Shakyamuni's mind. A devil by the name of Namuci approached Shakyamuni and whispered to him: "You are thin and emaciated, and your color is bad. Clearly you are on the brink of death. If you go on meditating in this fashion, you don't have even one chance in a thousand of surviving."⁴

Shakyamuni certainly had no guarantee that at the end of his practice he would find enlightenment. Because his was the path of a pioneer, no one knew what lay ahead. And if he were to die, that would definitely spell an end to his efforts to pursue the goal of human happiness.

Ikeda: But at the last minute, Shakyamuni recognized the devil for what it was, and loudly proclaimed: "Devil, a coward might be defeated by you, but a courageous person will win. I will fight. I would rather fight you and lose my life than be defeated and live on!"⁵ At these words, the devil immediately retreated.

Dawn was approaching. Just as Venus began shining in the eastern sky, he at last attained enlightenment.

Buddhism is a struggle with all kinds of devilish, negative forces inherent in life. Without struggling against and overcoming such enemies, there is no enlightenment. There is no true joy. There is no human revolution. There is no Buddhism. Unless we struggle with all our might against the forces of darkness and negativity, we cannot become Buddhas.

The Sun of Great Joy Has Arisen!

Saito: During the course of this struggle, Shakyamuni uttered three poems, one at sunset, one in the middle of the night, and one at dawn. As to the content of these poems, the Buddhologist Dr. Koshiro Tamaki of the University of Tokyo describes them as "expres-

sions of the Dharma.”⁶

Dharma means Law. The fundamental Law of the universe became manifest in Shakyamuni himself, permeating his entire being and infusing his life.

Suda: The poem he uttered at sunset goes, “When the Dharma truly manifests in a practitioner who continues to earnestly meditate, at that time all of his doubts and illusions disappear. For he has understood the law of dependent origination.”⁷

The poem in the middle of the night goes: “When the Dharma truly manifests in a practitioner who continues to earnestly meditate, at that time all of his doubts and illusions disappear. For he has realized the eradication of all kinds of karmic relations.”

The final poem, which he spoke at dawn, goes: “When the Dharma truly manifests in a practitioner who continues to earnestly meditate, at that time he has demolished the forces of the devil and abides in peace. He is just like the sun that shines in the sky.”

Endo: “The sun has risen in my heart!” he declares. This is a historic moment.

Ikeda: This is the dawn of the sun of joy that illuminates all humankind. Buddhahood is a state of supreme joy.

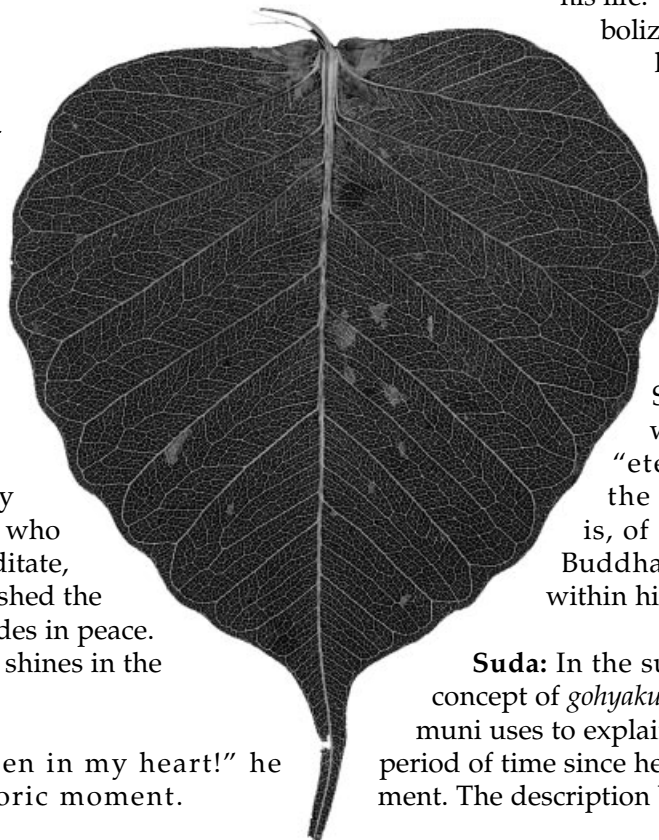
After passing a time in this state of exultation, Shakyamuni resolutely began preaching the Law. However, he found that no matter how he tried to explain the truth to which he had awakened, it was extremely difficult for others to accept the Law that he perceived in his own heart. Therefore, he sought to develop the capacity of the people by expounding expedient teachings that were easy to grasp.

It is in the “Life Span” chapter that he directly

and fully expresses this sun-like state of life. The “Life Span” chapter could therefore be termed the “chapter of great joy.” It is both the climax and summation of Shakyamuni’s entire life.

Symbol of the “Universe of Life”

Saito: In the “Life Span” chapter, Shakyamuni employs an image of the incredibly vast expanse of the universe—described as innumerable “thousand-millionfold worlds” to explain the eternity of his life. This would seem to symbolize the infinite and boundless “life-space” that Shakyamuni has attained.



Bodhi tree leaf.

Ikeda: That may be so. Through the concept of universal space, Shakyamuni comes up with a vivid image of the “eternal Law at one with the eternal Buddha,” that is, of the vast state of life of Buddhahood that he perceives within himself.

Suda: In the sutra, we find this in the concept of *gohyaku-jintengo*, which Shakyamuni uses to explain the inconceivably long period of time since he first attained enlightenment. The description begins:

Suppose a person were to take five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya thousand-millionfold worlds and grind them to dust. Then, moving eastward, each time he passes five hundred, a thousand, ten thousand, a million nayuta asamkhya worlds he drops a particle of dust.... (LS16, 225)

Endo: If he had just said that his life was eternal, it wouldn’t have had nearly the impact. But the description of countless thousand-millionfold worlds ground to dust causes an image to immediately spring to mind. One feels, “What an awe-

some state of life!" From this account, we may imagine racing across the universe in a rocket ship.

Saito: The "life-space" described in the "Life Span" chapter is a state of life of boundless joy. Each moment is joyful. Therefore, Shakyamuni's "life-time," although it is described as virtually "eternal," would seem extremely short.

Ikeda: Simply put, "life-time" may be identified with subjective time.

Endo: Yes. For instance, the state of life of Hell is a state in which there is very little joy—virtually zero. The "life-space" of a person in this state is infinitesimally small, as though confined within a tiny prison cell. The "life-time" of such a person creeps ahead with agonizing slowness.

Suda: Certainly, when you have a toothache, for example, a minute can seem like an hour.

Endo: On the other hand, Buddhahood is characterized by joy so abundant as to be well nigh inexhaustible. The "life-time" of one in this state is therefore extraordinarily fast.

Saito: The rate at which time passes differs depending on our state of life. "Life-time," in other words, is relative.

Ikeda: The greater the energy in a person's life, the more vigorously his or her "life-time" moves ahead.

On another level, it has been proven theoretically that time is relative, as we see, for example, in Einstein's theory of relativity. To illustrate, if you were to travel through the universe on a rocket ship, as your speed of travel increased, the rate of time's passage would change. This is the so-called "Urashima effect" in Japan.

Endo: That's right. What we call the Urashima effect, also known as the "clock paradox" or "twins paradox," is a hypothesis that we arrive at from the theory of relativity. It refers to the phenomenon whereby the time aboard a spaceship traveling at a rate approaching the speed of light passes more slowly than time passes on Earth. To illustrate, you

could have a situation where a number of years had passed on Earth, while aboard the ship it seemed as though only a day had passed. Thus a person traveling through space at such a fantastic speed would, upon returning to Earth, find himself dislocated in time, just as in the Japanese folktale of Urashima Taro.

State of Life Is All Important

Ikeda: That certainly is "relativity."

In any event, the world that we perceive will be different depending on which of the Ten Worlds we presently are in. The way that we receive impressions of the world around us, both spatially and temporally, changes radically. We could call this the mystery of "state of life."

"State of life" is the prime focus of Buddhism. Buddhism does not look at people in terms of ethnicity or race. Neither does it view people in terms of level of schooling or social standing. Its gaze is trained directly on the condition of people's hearts, on the state of their life itself.

Does having a lot of power and influence make someone great? Among powerful people, there are not a few whose lives are ravaged by the worlds of Hunger and Animality. On the other hand, there are ordinary citizens who dwell in the joyous worlds of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.

Does graduating from a prestigious university make someone superior to others? Are people of certain ethnicity or race automatically superior? Are people of certain social classes automatically inferior? Definitely not. And yet, throughout all of human history up to the present, people have been viewed with just such prejudices. How great, indeed, are the tragedies that such thinking has produced!

Suda: The history of the twentieth century—whether we look at Nazism or Japanese militarism or the countless bloody class struggles that have occurred—is a history of tragedies resulting from such discriminatory biases.

Saito: Discrimination is the cruel product of prejudice and bigotry. We find similar discriminatory tendencies in the extreme emphasis that many people in Japan today place on educational background.



Albert Einstein (1879–1955), German-Swiss-American mathematical physicist, and his wife, Elsa.

Ikeda: Buddhism, through the doctrine of the Ten Worlds, views all people in terms of the state of their life. It is therefore wholly impartial. The suffering of someone who is in the state of Hell, for example, is the same, regardless of whether the person is wealthy or poor.

Also, Buddhism recognizes the existence of the world of Buddhahood in all people as a potential. The compassion to strive to help people cultivate and manifest this state is key to the doctrine of the Ten Worlds. And the essence of this doctrine is found in the “Life Span” chapter. Why don’t we discuss the Ten Worlds from the standpoint of the state of life?

Saito: Certainly. As a matter of fact, many members have written requesting a simple and clear explanation of the doctrine of the Ten Worlds that they can use in explaining Buddhism to their friends.

Urashima Taro and the Ten Worlds

Suda: There was a reference to the twins paradox or the Urashima effect with regard to relativity of time a moment ago. The story of Urashima Taro from which “Urashima effect” derives its name might provide a good segue to a discussion of the doctrine of the Ten Worlds.

Ikeda: Indeed. It’s a classic tale that every

Japanese knows. What do we find when we view the story in terms of the doctrine of the Ten Worlds?

Endo: Well, let’s see. The story begins talking about how the fisherman Urashima Taro comes upon a couple of children who are pestering a turtle on the beach. In terms of the Ten Worlds, the state of life of the children harassing the turtle would probably be that of Animality. For, as the Daishonin says, “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong” (MW-1, 34).

Suda: Yes. And the turtle that is being toyed with would be in the world of Hell. To get the children to leave the turtle alone, Urashima Taro gives them some money. His actions in doing so would seem to represent one aspect of the world of Bodhisattva. The children who only listen after being given money could now be said to be in world of Hunger.

Endo: Several days later, the turtle, mindful of its debt, pays a visit on Urashima. As a token of gratitude, it offers to take Taro on a tour of the dragon king’s palace.

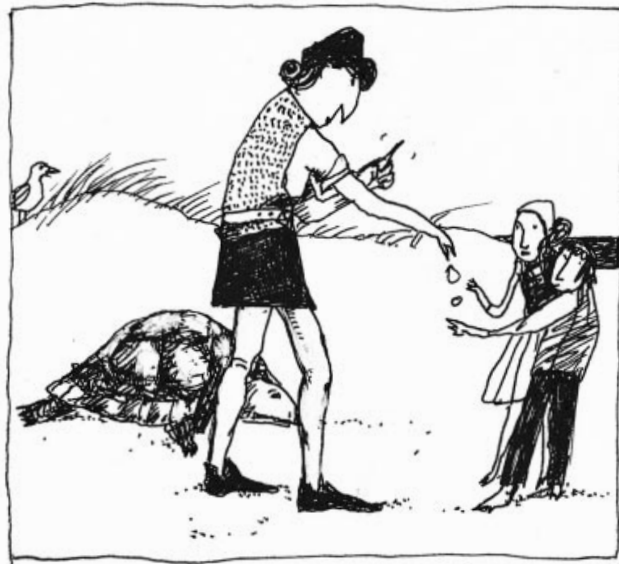
Saito: To remember and repay one’s debts of gratitude—that must be the world of Humanity. To requite one’s obligations is proof of one’s humanity.

Ikeda: Though a turtle, it still has the world of Humanity.

Saito: Yes. By contrast, there are people who, in forgetting their indebtedness to others, descend to the level of animals. In “The Opening of the Eyes,” the Daishonin teaches the importance of requiting one’s debts, saying, “Even these creatures understood how to repay a debt of gratitude” (MW-2, [2nd ed.], 104).⁸

Suda: At the palace of the dragon king, Taro is welcomed by a princess, with whom he spends an enjoyable time drinking and dancing. Here, he is definitely in the world of Rapture or Heaven.

Incidentally, inclusion of the dragon king’s palace is thought to be indicative of the influence of Buddhist texts. The “Devadatta” (twelfth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra, for example, mentions



the “palace of the dragon king Sagara” (LS12, 185) at the bottom of the ocean.

Endo: Taro has such a wonderful time that he forgets all about returning home, and before he knows it three years have gone by. Since he is dwelling in a rapturous world, the time passes in what seems but an instant. At length, Taro informs the princess of his departure, and leaves bearing under his arm a small chest that she has given him as a memento.

When he returns back to the land, Taro is astonished at what he finds: the world is completely different. During the three years he spent in the palace of the dragon king, 300 years had passed on Earth. Earth time had left him behind and gone far ahead. This is what is meant by the Urashima effect in physics.

When he realizes what has happened, Urashima Taro becomes deeply despondent. All of his relatives are gone. He does not have a single friend. And everywhere he turns, he sees things that are strange and unfamiliar.

Ikeda: It might be said that Taro’s state of life at this moment is that of Hell. Everything he sees and hears amounts to an outright denial of his very existence. There is no “place” for him in the world. In the bat of an eye, Taro’s “life-space” has completely vanished.

Suda: At that point, Taro opens the little chest,

which represents his last hope. Smoke comes billowing out, and in an instant Taro’s hair turns white and he is transformed into a tottering old man. He suddenly fades into senility, and in a daze he sits down on the beach. This is a really dramatic last scene.

Ikeda: What world would you say he is in at that point?

Endo: That’s a tough one. I see Taro, who was already in the state of Hell, as having fallen into a state of even deeper despair. But that would make it an extremely sad ending.

Suda: And it would mean that the princess had given him a really cruel gift.

Ikeda: In that light, as one interpretation, this might indicate entrance into the realm of the two vehicles, or the worlds of Learning and Realization. Nichiren Daishonin says: “The fact that all things in this world are transient is perfectly clear to us. Is this not because the worlds of the two vehicles are present in the world of Humanity?” (MW-1, 52–53). While the story itself does not say so, it might be that the aged Taro has glimpsed something of the impermanence of existence that he had not comprehended before.

Saito: The story concludes by telling us, “Those joyous days were gone forever.” That is certainly



not a happy ending. All the same, the ending seems to be trying to suggest that, having wandered through the realm of the six worlds, he has finally arrived at a point where he can perceive the existence of the worlds of Learning and Realization.

Suda: From another perspective, the story invites us to reflect deeply on the meaning of life and human existence.

Ikeda: When we internalize Buddhism’s perspective on life, we can understand the essence of anything we see or hear from a much deeper perspective. This is an important part of the reason for Buddhist study. The question “What is true human happiness?” forms the basis of the doctrine of the Ten Worlds.

Hell—A Groan of Rage

Ikeda: Next, let’s consider each of the Ten Worlds in light of the sutras and the Goshō. As the major premise, we should bear in mind that it is only with the Lotus Sutra’s revelation of the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds that we can talk about the Ten Worlds as conditions of human life. I would like to further delve into the significance of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds on another occasion. Without understanding that each world is endowed with all Ten Worlds, the beings in each

of the Ten Worlds can only be understood as dwelling in distinct and separate realms, and as having absolutely no contact with or relation to one another.

Saito: In other words, because the beings in the world of Humanity—meaning us—have all of the Ten Worlds in our lives, the Ten Worlds can be understood in terms of states or conditions of life. Moreover, it is because of this that we can talk about changes in state of life.

Suda: The names of each of the Ten Worlds appear in the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” (nineteenth) chapter. It states:

[T]hey will gain twelve hundred ear benefits with which to purify their ears so they can hear all the different varieties of words and sounds in the thousand-millionfold world, down as far as the Avichi hell, up to the Summit of Being, and in its inner and outer parts.... [M]en’s voices, women’s voices,...voices of heavenly beings,...asura voices,...voices of hell dwellers, voices of beasts, voices of hungry spirits,...voices of voice-hearers, voices of pratyekabuddhas, voices of bodhisattvas and voices of Buddhas. (LS19, 252–53)

Ikeda: That’s right. We need to help people overcome their sufferings and become happy by using the “voices of bodhisattvas” and the “voices of Buddhas.” We cannot simply remain silent.

Endo: Based on this passage, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai of China formulated the doctrine of the Ten Worlds—namely, Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture (Heaven), Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood—existing in people's lives.

Of the Ten Worlds, the six worlds from Hell to Rapture, known as the "six paths," are based on the worldview of Brahmanism, which was widespread in India in Shakyamuni's time. According to Brahman teaching, all beings dwell in places or realms that belong to one of the six paths, and into which they are born according to their past actions, or karma. The key idea is that of retribution according to the law of cause and effect; people are held to transmigrate through these six paths according to the causes they make.

The worlds from Learning to Buddhahood, known as the "four noble worlds," represent the states of those beings who have freed themselves from this transmigration in the six paths.

Suda: Why don't we consider these states one at a time. First there is the world of Hell. This comes from a Sanskrit term *naraka*, which literally means an underground prison.

Ikeda: A variant of this term *naraku* survives in the modern Japanese expression to *fall into the abyss*. The Japanese equivalent of Hell is composed of two characters meaning "earth" and "prison." "Earth" means the lowest place; and "prison" indicates the state of being bound and shackled and totally immobilized. Hell is the most miserable state, one in which a person is bound hand and foot with suffering.

Endo: In "The True Object of Worship," Nichiren Daishonin says "rage is the world of Hell" (MW-1, 52). Rage corresponds to anger, one of the three poisons—greed, anger and stupidity. I think this is referring to the state of someone who, when things do not go as he has imagined, harbors feelings of resentment and animosity toward whomever or whatever he supposes upset his plan.

Saito: Yes, only this rage does not have the positive energy to be turned toward others directly. On the contrary, it causes a person to be totally

consumed by a sense of deadlock and futility, trapped in emotions that can find no outlet for expression. That's the state of life it indicates.

Ikeda: While there are many gradations even in the world of Hell, in general Hell indicates a state in which to live is itself painful; where anything you see only makes you feel miserable. A person in this state has an extremely weak life force, and in fact approaches the condition of death. We could describe this "rage" as the groan of a life that has exhausted every possible avenue.

Endo: One can hear such a despairing groan in the tortured voices of youth who try to commit suicide or among delinquents. "Life is just too painful," they may say. "There is no place for me in this world."

When their "life-space" approaches absolute zero, people may come to the conclusion that they have no alternative but to die. This truly is the state of Hell. It breaks my heart just thinking of people in such a state.

Ikeda: Such people need someone—anyone—to be at their side. They need someone who will be with them and listen to what they have to say; someone who will offer even just a few words of encouragement. That's all it may take for the flame of "life" to spring up anew in the heart of someone who is suffering deeply. Just knowing that someone cares about them causes their "life-space" to expand.

When people have a genuine sense that, no matter how difficult their present circumstances, they are not alone, but are vitally connected with others and with the world, they will be able to stand up without fail. This is the power inherent in life. It is important, therefore, that we form "good relations," that we develop bonds with people who can have a positive influence on our lives and our Buddhist practice, or "good friends."

"He Carried Within Himself His Own Little Hell"

Suda: Devadatta represents the world of Hell. Even though he was a disciple of Shakyamuni, Devadatta was a person of great evil who out of

envy went so far as to try to kill his mentor.

Saito: In light of the law of cause and effect, since Devadatta persecuted the Buddha, we can say that he was in the world of Hell. But looking at him as an individual, we must also conclude that he must have been suffering in the most miserable state of Hell.

Ikeda: Devadatta probably felt that as long as Shakyamuni was around, nothing would go as he wished. Try though he might in his small-minded way to gain status and recognition, Shakyamuni was always there towering impossibly far above him like the Himalayas. Devadatta, far from being able to respect someone of higher attainment than himself, could not even tolerate such a person's existence. This is the ugliness of male jealousy.

Such hatred and resentment caused Devadatta's heart to close and freeze over like ice. This is what the mind of someone in the world of Hell is like. The feeling would be akin to that of being bound hand and foot, totally helpless to change one's frame of mind on one's own. This truly is none other than the state of Hell.

Saito: According to a biography of Joseph Stalin, whenever the Soviet dictator met someone who was more outstanding than him, or who possessed some remarkable ability, he was filled with violent jealousy and envy, and stung with hatred.

The author describes Stalin in these terms, "while maintaining an air of calm, he would be panic-stricken"; and, "on the outside he wore the impression of a hard smile, while inside he was full of foreboding, carrying within himself his own little hell."⁹

Ikeda: "He carried within himself his own little hell." That's a magnificent way of putting it.

Unable to trust anyone, Stalin was constantly filled with fear and trepidation. He believed he might be betrayed at any moment. Such doubt and suspicion can in itself reduce one to a state of desperate agony. The sense of self of one writhing in the "hell of mistrust" becomes incredibly small, leaving one feeling as if their life was bottled up in a tiny space.

Of course, we can also view the jealousy dis-

played by Devadatta and Stalin as characteristic of the world of Anger; as well as of the world of Heaven, inasmuch as the desire to willfully manipulate others is emblematic of the devil of the sixth heaven, representing the corrupting and exploitative nature of power that is the negative side of the world of Heaven.

The world of Hell indicates a weakness and a profound inner suffering that a person feels totally powerless to change. Hell is sometimes said to exist under the ground; but in fact it is a state in which one's life under its own weight sinks further and further down.

**A person who is suffering—
whether due to family discord, sick-
ness or the flames of jealousy—
and whose heart is swirling with
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tainly not be able to recognize that
the actual cause for the suffering
exists in his or her life.**

A person who is suffering—whether due to family discord, sickness or the flames of jealousy—and whose heart is swirling with rage at whatever it is that has brought on that suffering, will certainly not be able to recognize that the actual cause for the suffering exists in his or her life. That person lacks the life force to be able to perceive it in those terms, and, consequently, feels resentment and anger toward others.

Also, there are instances where someone may direct the flames of rage at themselves and their inability to do anything about the suffering they are experiencing. In that case, the person does not have the strength to take responsibility for their misery and resolve the situation. Instead, he feels only an unassignable resentment at his own impotence, a groan of despair.

Endo: To be without freedom—that is certainly the condition of someone who is in prison.

Ikeda: By contrast, if someone believes in the sanctity of life and believes in people, then his or her mind will be as broad and expansive as the sky—even if the person is incarcerated. This was of course true of Nichiren Daishonin, as it was of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda, the first and second Soka Gakkai presidents.

President Nelson Mandela of South Africa spent 10,000 days (twenty-seven years) living under conditions in prison that can only be described as hellish. It was his dauntless conviction that he would ultimately realize a victory for human dignity that supported him during that time.

“An hour felt like a year,” he says. Unless you have experienced life behind bars, you cannot truly understand these words. And yet, President Mandela did not lose the warmth of his gaze. This is proof of his triumph as a human being.

Saito: When people are faced with trying circumstances or beset by difficulties, they tend to think that they alone are miserable. As a result, they often will feel resentment toward others and society in general, and close off into their own shell.

The world of Hell that Buddhism describes does not indicate a set of external circumstances or an environment that one is presented with. Rather, I think it indicates the weak life force to be buffeted about and controlled by one’s surroundings, and unable to take a single step to extricate oneself.

Ikeda: That’s right. It doesn’t refer to anything external.

Nichiren Daishonin says:

First of all, as to the question of where exactly hell and the Buddha exist, one sutra states that hell exists underground and another sutra says that the Buddha is in the west. However, closer examination reveals that both exist in our five-foot body. The reason I think so is that hell is in the heart of a man who inwardly despises his father and disregards his mother.... (MW-1, 271)

The Ten Worlds exist within our lives. That’s why apart from changing ourselves from within,

there is no other way to realize true happiness.

Hunger—Enslavement to Greed

Endo: Next is the world of Hunger.

Hunger derives from the Sanskrit word *preta*, which originally meant “corpse.” In Buddhism, the term came to be used to signify a realm of misery, like that of Hell or Animality, into which dead people might fall. *Preta* also means “ancestral spirit.” In India, it was thought that many ancestral spirits were hungry and desirous of food. It seems that that’s why the dead came to be referred to as “hungry spirits.”

Suda: The Japanese Bon (or Urabon, Skt. *ullambana*) Festival, a ceremony to appease the souls of deceased ancestors who have fallen into the realm of Hunger, is sometimes referred to as “giving alms to hungry spirits (Jp. *segaki*).”

Saito: The Daishonin says that the world of Hunger is characterized by greed (MW-1, 52), another one of the three poisons. T’ien-t’ai says, “This state of life is full of hunger and thirst; that’s why they are called hungry spirits.”¹⁰ It is the state of beings who are tormented by a hunger that nothing can assuage.

Ikeda: Those in the world of Hunger are pulled this way and that by desires. Such a tendency prevents one from feeling inner freedom and produces suffering. A person becomes a slave to his or her desires.

Endo: Yes. But it seems that compared to the world of Hell, the person’s “life-space” is somewhat larger, even if only slightly. The person has escaped from a state of complete captivity and hopelessness and is at least living in pursuit of something.

Suda: Desire is, after all, also a manifestation of vital energy. Only, being unable to quench their desires, people in Hunger invariably experience severe frustration. Not having enough to eat, or lacking adequate clothing or shelter—such hunger and privation is a dire issue of the modern age.

Saito: Yet, there is hunger even in so-called afflu-



Nelson Mandela advocated nonviolent resistance and the establishment of a nonracial state. However, after the 1960 Sharpeville massacre, in which sixty-nine unarmed black protesters were killed by the police, Mandela headed a paramilitary group that carried out sabotage against targets symbolizing apartheid. Acquitted of treason in an epic mass trial in 1961, he was subsequently convicted of sabotage in 1964 and sentenced to life imprisonment. In 1990, he was released from prison, and became South Africa's president in 1994 after a peaceful election campaign.

ent societies. Last year [1996], the American magazine *Newsweek* said of modern American society, "The paradox of our time is that we are feeling bad about doing well."¹¹

Ikeda: People's desires are limitless. There is the fundamental desire to live. There is also the instinctive desire for food, the materialistic desire for possessions, and the psychological desire to have attention, for example.

Suda: There is also the desire for power, the desire for fame, and the desire to control. People also desire to be respected and loved.

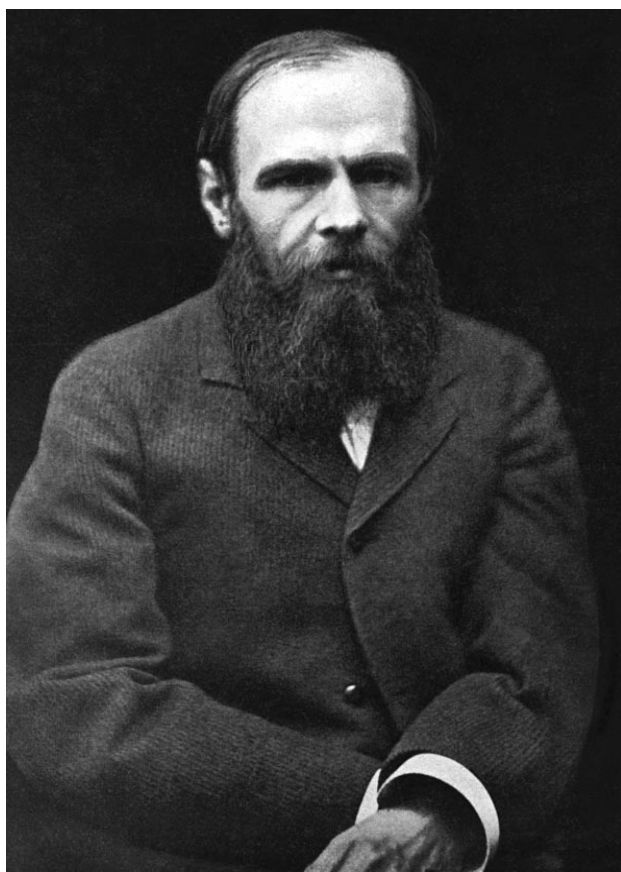
Ikeda: It's a fact that we could not live without desires. In many cases, these desires become the energy that enables us to advance and realize self-improvement. That's why it is said of the world of Hunger, "This path is connected with other paths

and leads to both good and evil."¹²

The real issue, therefore, is how we use desire. Those in the world of Hunger do not use their desire to create value; rather, they become its slave. On account of desire, they themselves suffer and cause injury to others. That's why the world of Hunger is called an "evil path."

Saito: Modern civilization could be described as a civilization of the affirmation or liberation of desire. The result is the perverse situation in which desire, having swollen to gargantuan proportions, reigns like a master to which people are enslaved.

Endo: Incidentally, Nichiren Daishonin says regarding the causality of the world of Hunger, "Those who expound teachings with impure motives will receive this retribution" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 429). In other words, he is saying that



CORIS BETTMANN

The most dangerous bestiality dwells within human beings. Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–81) writes, “People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel.”

those who preach with impure motives because they are consumed by desire for fame or profit will fall into the world of Hunger. This well describes the priests of the Nikken sect.

Suda: In the same Goshō, the Daishonin also says, “Those who in the past cut down the soothing trees and who razed the gardens and groves for the preachers will receive this retribution” (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 429). This passage also seems apropos to Nikken, who rashly cut down some 280 cherry trees on the head temple grounds.

Saito: The Daishonin condemns priests who are consumed by the desire for wealth, calling them “Law-devouring hungry spirits” (MW-4, 93). The

Nikken sect, which preys on lay people while wallowing in decadence, is truly an order of hungry spirits.

Animality—The Stupidity to Be Caught Up in One’s Immediate Circumstances

Suda: What kind of state, then, is Animality?

Saito: Originally, of course, the term refers to the state of animals such as birds or beasts. In “The True Object of Worship,” the Daishonin says, “Foolishness is the world of Animality” (MW-1, 52). Of the three poisons, it corresponds to stupidity. In human terms, those in this state are in essence so caught up in their immediate circumstances that they lose sight of the underlying principles that govern all things.

Endo: As the Daishonin indicates when he says, “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong” (MW-1, 34), Animality is the state of someone who lives instinctively, unable to make judgments as to true and false, good and evil. While it would seem that the “life-space” of those in this state is somewhat more expansive than that of those in the world of Hell or Hunger, they are still caught in an evil path.

Ikeda: They lack a sound standard for judging good and evil, a firm moral or ethical foundation. As a result, they act instinctively and without any sense of shame.

To “threaten the weak and fear the strong” is certainly part and parcel of the logic of power. It’s a psychology of survival of the fittest. It could be said that those in this state, while human, have lost their humanity.

Suda: The barbarity of war is the ultimate manifestation of the “logic of power.” Facing combat, soldiers may initially experience pangs of conscience as the consequences of injuring or even killing another person looms before them. But, such feelings are often subordinated to a fear of their superior officers. This allows them to justify the barbarous acts they may commit on the basis of orders from a superior. Their conscience becomes anesthetized. Through the institutional-

ization of such bestiality, forces such as the Nazis and Japan's wartime military have gone so far as to commit large-scale atrocities—far beyond what any animal would ever be capable of.

Ikeda: The most dangerous bestiality dwells within human beings. Dostoevsky writes, "People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that's a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel."¹³

Endo: I think that's certainly the case. Animals will fight and kill to protect themselves and survive. But they also have a social side, in that they will care for another; although I suppose that this is probably instinctive.

There was an interesting case involving a flock of ordinary starling. It seems there was a group of these birds in which one member had an injured leg. Observers noted that when the group discovered a large store of food, the others in the group all waited at the site until the bird with the bad leg arrived, and only then did they began eating.¹⁴

Ikeda: From time to time we hear about cases of people who have grown up entirely in the wild.

Suda: Yes. I recall the case of a French boy who had been abandoned by his parents and grew up in the jungle. Apart from searching for food and nests, he did not show the slightest interest in the world around him. His hearing was normal, but he reportedly did not display any interest in sounds that did not have any relation to food. Also, it is said that he did not show affection or any particular attachment toward anyone.

Ikeda: People only become human if they are educated as human beings. It is not birth that makes us such. Only when one is raised as a human being does one become human. That's why education is so important.

The Japanese writer Yuyu Kiryu (1873–1941) described the world as "the path of animality." Because there are all too few truly "human" beings, people start wars simply to prove who is strongest. We find ourselves tossed about in a society that is locked in the grip of animality.

To ensure that such are never again repeated,

we have to produce a steady stream of humane people, of people overflowing with humanity. That is my conviction and my heartfelt prayer. Kosen-rufu is in a sense a great movement of human education—on the success of which the fate of humankind depends.

Suda: Those in the world of Animality are called "foolish" because, by living according to instinct, happiness forever eludes them.

Ikeda: Even though they imagine that they are moving toward happiness, in the final analysis they are heading in precisely the opposite direction. They only see what is right before their eyes, and they get lost easily and ultimately come to grief.

In the Goshō "Letter from Sado," the Daishonin says: "Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond's shallowness and dig holes to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares" (MW-1, 34). Because they fly toward the bait that is in front of their eyes, in the end they are destroyed and undone. This is what is meant by "foolishness."

Suda: It is certainly true that there are many people who live in just this manner.

Endo: Regarding the causes and effects of the world of Animality, the Daishonin proclaims: "Foolish and lacking a spirit to reflect on themselves, even though they [certain priests] receive offerings from believers, they do not do anything in return. Such people undergo this retribution [of the world of Animality]" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 430). This exactly describes the corrupt priests of the Nikken sect.

People Who Willingly Enter the Sea of Suffering

Ikeda: The Daishonin says, "warfare [occurs] as a result of anger" (MW-7, 187). The spirit of the world of Hell gives rise to war. Even with the end of World War II, Japan remained a cruel society of the three paths—Hell, Hunger and Animality.

It was President Toda who stood up alone on

the scorched earth of the three evil paths and declared, "I want to eradicate poverty and sickness from the face of the Earth!" "I want to eliminate the word *misery*!" He went out among the people proclaiming: "Human revolution is the only way!" "The only way is for people to revolutionize their state of life!" And he succeeded in fundamentally pointing society in the direction of peace and prosperity.

I have followed in President Toda's footsteps. All along, I have fought with the spirit that my life and the life of President Toda are one and inseparable. And in so doing, I have put aside every selfish concern.

The Drama of Encouraging a Mother and Daughter

Endo: I once heard the following experience. It is a bit lengthy, but I would like to introduce it for the sake of our readers.

In the winter of 1957, there was a woman by the name of Tamiko Hayashi who was so worn out by the difficulty of her life that she had decided to commit suicide. Wanting to see her mother one last time before she died, she boarded a train with her last 100-yen bill in hand. This was, of course, before she took faith.

The train was bound for Ogori Station from Nagoya. Mrs. Hayashi, wearing trousers and an apron, felt ashamed of her shabby appearance and shrank from the eyes of others. With her she had her 2-year-old daughter.

Every time the train stopped at a station, vendors selling box lunches would come around. Although the mother and daughter were famished, they did not have any money to buy food.

A young man boarded the train at Maibara or at Kyoto. He was not by any means well dressed. The youth sat down directly opposite Mrs. Hayashi and her daughter. The young man opened up a thick book with a black leather binding (she later learned that it was the *Gosho*) and began intently writing something.

Whenever Mrs. Hayashi's young daughter saw someone selling box lunches, she would say, "Mommy, I'm hungry." Each time they arrived at a station, she asked for the impossible. Feeling wretched and helpless, the mother scolded her, telling her firmly, "No!"

After a while, the youth signaled a vendor and bought two box lunches. "Lucky him," thought the mother. "He can buy not just one but two. Isn't he fortunate!" The young man then handed her one and said, "Please feed this to your child." For a moment Mrs. Hayashi was speechless. What was happening seemed totally incomprehensible.

Around them there were many people wearing fine clothes. But they had all regarded her and her daughter with complete indifference. She thought: "But this young man, even though he is not well off himself, gave a box lunch to us, a couple of miserable strangers. It's a wonder that there could be such a person in the world." Mrs. Hayashi still vividly recalls the sense of surprise and appreciation she felt then.

It was all she could manage to say, "Thank you very much." Ashamed of her appearance, she found it impossible to say anything further. To this day she remembers what was in the box lunch. It was two-thirds rice, with the remainder side dishes and fried fish.

Also, she retained an indelible memory of the look in the eyes of the young man. "They were beautiful eyes that beamed with gentleness." The young man got off the train at Osaka. As he alighted, he told her, "Good luck!" A feeling of inexpressible warmth filled her heart. The sound of his voice, too, was unforgettable. Mrs. Hayashi looked again at the youth's eyes. "How warm they are," she thought. At that instant, her resolve to take her own life disappeared.

At Ube she met her mother and spent a month together with her. And then she returned to Nagoya. Shortly thereafter, Mrs. Hayashi heard about Buddhism from a Soka Gakkai member and decided to begin practicing. At the time, it was a rule that an offering of 500 yen had to be made to receive the *Gohonzon*. But Mrs. Hayashi didn't even have that much money. She worked and prayed and worked, and was finally able to receive the *Gohonzon* in January 1958.

The following year, on March 22, 1959, a *Gosho* lecture was held at the Matsuba Elementary School in Toyohashi. The lecturer was President Ikeda (who was then the general administrator of the Soka Gakkai).

Mrs. Hayashi was pregnant with her second child, and was already quite large when she went

to Toyohashi. The podium was far away and she could not make out the faces of the leaders. But the moment she heard you begin speaking, President Ikeda, she felt a rush of joy: "Ah, that's the young man I met on the train! There's no doubt about it!"

The voice of the youth she heard on the train that had prompted her to give up thoughts of suicide was unforgettable to her. At that moment she made her lifelong resolve, her lifelong vow: "Even if I should be the last member of the Soka Gakkai in the world, I will always continue following Mr. Ikeda."

The daughter who received the box lunch (Misako Okada) is also practicing today and is a block leader. And the son whom Mrs. Hayashi was carrying at the time of the Goshō lecture in Toyohashi (Masami Hayakawa) is a district leader.

**Unless You Go All Out,
You Cannot Transform
Your State of Life**

Saito: That's a wonderful account. I found myself deeply moved. It is truly awesome the way you have given profound encouragement to so many people, President Ikeda. I, too, am determined to earnestly take on the challenge of transforming

my state of life.

Suda: This anecdote well illustrates how a momentary encounter can change a person's heart and even their state of life.

Ikeda: I'm really glad that Mrs. Hayashi and her daughter have found happiness. I find that I simply cannot help but try to encourage people whom I meet. That is the Soka Gakkai spirit.

At any rate, if you truly want to transform your state of life, then you have to put every ounce of strength you've got into it. There's no way you can transform your state of life if your practice is half-hearted. Painful though it may be, it is only by struggling to thoroughly polish and temper your life that you can attain a state of life of great joy. I hope that young people, in particular, will diligently strive to cultivate themselves, with the attitude: "If I don't develop myself now while I am young, then when will I do so?"

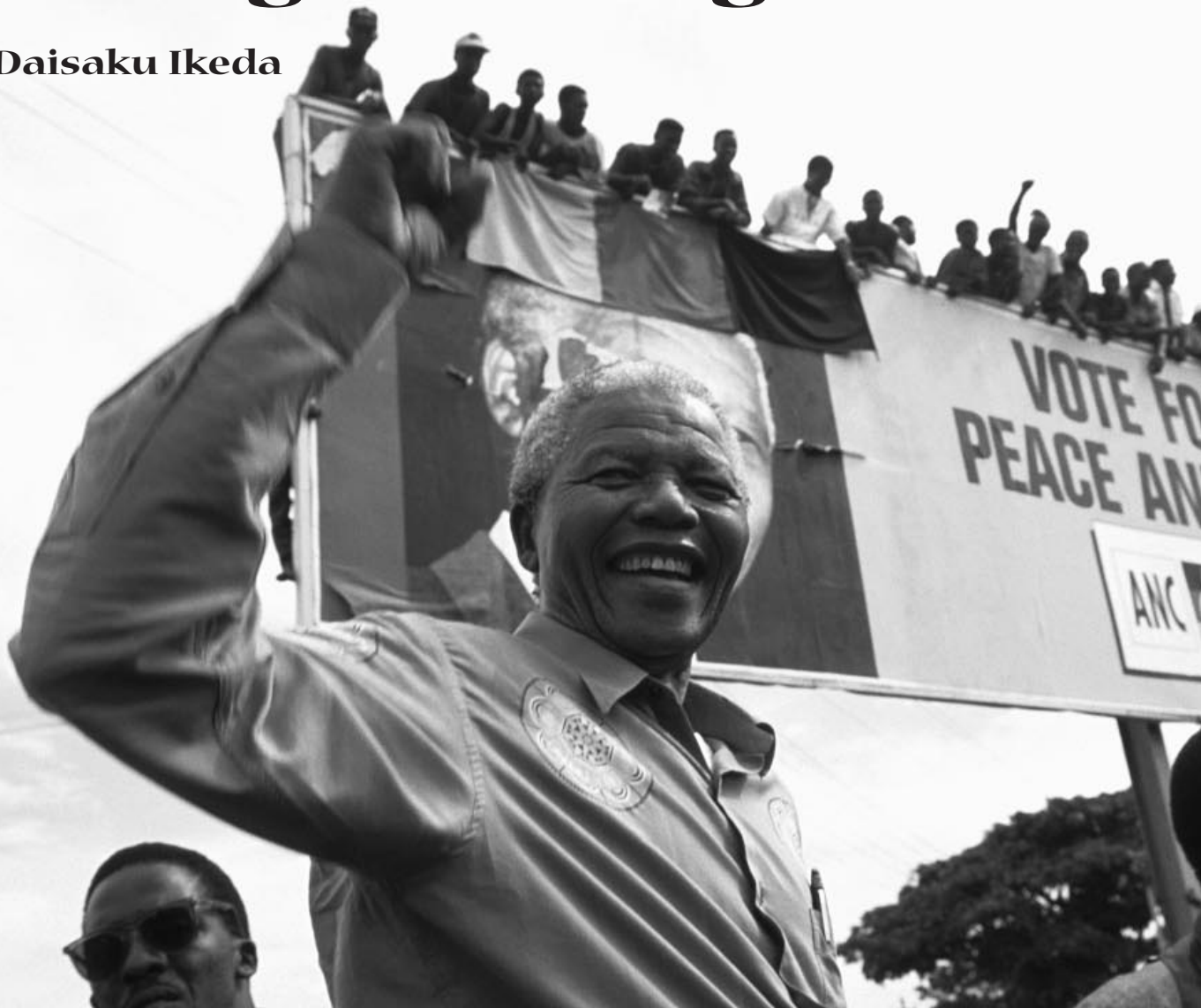
We need to strenuously exert ourselves for kosen-rufu with the spirit, "I will elevate my state of life without fail." It is by carrying out such a practice that we can come to truly understand the doctrine of the Ten Worlds.

(The discussion on the Ten Worlds will be continued in subsequent installments.)

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1. Translated from the Japanese: *Leo Tolstoy, Torusutoi no Kotoba* (Words of Tolstoy), trans. Fumihiko Konuma (Tokyo: Yayoi Shobo, 1993), p. 94.
 2. Editor's note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number, and then the page number.
 3. Buddhism spread after Shakyamuni's death from India to eastern regions gradually through China, Korea and Japan. Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in the Latter Day of the Law in turn spreads from Japan to western regions as if Buddhism is returning to its home in India (MW-1, 114, *Goshō Zenshu*, p. 589).
 4. Translated from Japanese. *Nanden Daizokyo*, ed. Junjiro Takakusu (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanko-kai, 1971), vol. 24, p. 154. The Group of Discourses (Sutta-Nipata), vol. 2, trans. K. R. Norman (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1992), pp. 45-46.
 5. *Ibid.*, pp. 157-58.
 6. Here and below, the source is: *Koshiro Tamaki, Bukkyo no Kontei ni Aru Mono* (That Which Lies at the Foundation of Buddhism) (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1986), p. 22.
 7. Law of dependent origination (*engi*): The interdependence of things. It teaches that all beings and phenomena exist or occur only because of their relationship with other beings or phenomena.
 8. Editor's note: Quotes from volume 2 of *The Major Writings* are from the revised edition; the page number for the earlier edition is given in brackets.
 9. Translated from French: *Victor Serge, Portrait de Staline* (Paris: Editions Bernard Grasset, 1940), pp. 180-83.
 10. *Hokke Mongu* (Words and Phrases of the Lotus Sutra), vol. 4.
 11. *Newsweek* (U. S. version), January 8, 1996, p. 24.
 12. *Kokuyaku Issaikyo Indo Senjutsubu Ronshubu*, vol. 1, ed. Shinyu Iwano (Tokyo: Daito Shuppansha, 1977), p. 114.
 13. Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* (New York: Random House, 1943, 1945), p. 283.
 14. Maurice Burton, *Just Like an Animal* (London: Dent, 1978), p. 26.

Recollections With Leading World Figures

By Daisaku Ikeda



Nelson Mandela, President of South Africa— An Indomitable Fighter Whose Struggle Brought an End to Apartheid

PRESIDENT Nelson Mandela's smile is something quite special. It has the purity of an honest cultivator of the earth and the gentleness of a

true champion who has led the people toward freedom with the unwavering strength of his convictions. It wouldn't be possible for a cold-hearted, power-hun-

gry ruler to have such a smile. In fact, there is not a single harsh line in the president's face.

We met for the first time in five years on July 5, during his second visit to Japan. He was brimming with confidence and seemed to have grown stronger and wiser with each passing year, like a mighty, deep-rooted tree. It was a little over a year since he assumed the presidency

(Left) Nelson Mandela's victorious campaign for the presidency of South Africa in May 1994. Mandela, born in 1918 in Transkei, South Africa, renounced a hereditary Tembu chieftainship in order to become a lawyer. He joined the African National Congress in 1944, cofounded the Congress Youth League, and led a defiance campaign against discriminatory apartheid laws, orchestrating a three-day national strike in 1961. Despite his memorable four-hour defense speech at his trial in 1964, he was sentenced to life imprisonment for political offenses. He continued to be such a potent symbol of black resistance that a coordinated international campaign for his release was launched. In 1990, he was released to worldwide rejoicing and, at the age of 71, made a dignified return to the political arena.



enth birthday later that month.

President Mandela seemed to share my joy at our reunion. Our talk leapt from topic to topic, including plans for exchange between South Africa and Japan and points he has in common with the late Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi. Mr. Mandela also spoke optimistically about the issue of whom his successor might be, a subject that had been attracting a great deal of public interest.

Throughout our conversation, his humor and his smile never waned. It has been said that he was an expert at using humor to cheer up his comrades while he was in prison. I am reminded of someone remarking to me once that the smile must have been discovered by someone in the midst of the greatest suffering. President Mandela's life has been so hard that he had to learn to smile just to survive.

He was imprisoned for more than 10,000 days—twenty-seven-and-a-half years. The mind reels trying to comprehend his struggle in prison. President Mandela once said, "South Africa's prisons are intended to cripple us so that we should never again have the strength and courage to pursue our ideals." Uniforms, for example, were especially

designed to rob the prisoners of their dignity by making them appear ridiculous. Some were given oversize, baggy clothing, while others had to wear clothes so small that they were made to look like children. Even the food was not fit for human consumption. Many prisoners were deprived of beds for a long time, and the two blankets that they were given to cover themselves with during the cold nights were as thin as paper. They were awakened before dawn to begin hard labor, which on occasion included being forced to build their own cells. Sometimes they were placed in solitary confinement, without access to reading or writing materials, or anyone to talk to, where, Mr. Mandela said, "An hour was like a year."

Each summer during the eighteen years of President Mandela's imprisonment on Robben Island, South Africa's maximum security prison for black political prisoners, he was forced to quarry limestone. Led to the quarry in chains, he cut stones from the hard lime cliffs under the burning sun. The stone, however, remained impervious to the blows of the pick, even when he struck it so hard his hands went numb. Nonetheless, his guards continuously shouted at him to work

of South Africa. He is living proof of the saying that high positions make great people greater and small people smaller. The indomitable fighter for human rights was hale and hearty, and I was glad to see that. Who could be more precious than this warrior who fought against oppression and won? As we spoke, I prayed in my heart for the long life of President Mandela, who would celebrate his seventy-sev-



Waiting to vote in the May 1994 South African presidential election.

harder. One guard even had a Nazi swastika tattooed on his wrist. Over time, the dust from the limestone damaged President Mandela's eyes.

The prison regulations, down to those governing the most basic requirements of prisoners, were deplorable, and even their observance was left to the whim of the guards. But the born fighter Mandela rose up to demand improved conditions for the prisoners. He was severely punished for his protests, but he would not be defeated.

It was also Mandela's nature to share whatever he had with others, including his knowl-

edge—so much so that people began to call Robben Island, Mandela University. Despite his hellish circumstances, President Mandela devoted himself to befriending all those around him. Even the guards gradually came to respect his indomitable spirit. But the cruelest torture he had to endure was his inability to do anything to help his family or save them from persecution. The authorities were determined to destroy the entire Mandela family. Their home was attacked and his wife was repeatedly arrested, abused and prevented from working. The laws of South Africa allowed

the government authorities to arbitrarily arrest and imprison anyone they chose. This policy claimed uncountable victims. Many children had one, or both, of their parents taken away from them in this way.

It was in prison that President Mandela learned that his mother had died of a heart attack. As her only son, he was deeply grieved by her death. From the early days of his youth, he had been engaged in the struggle for human rights. It filled him with immense pain and sorrow to think that his mother should have died still worrying about whether he was safe. Shortly

thereafter, he was told that his eldest son was killed in a car accident. This was nearly too much, even for President Mandela. He mourned alone all through the night.

How cruel can human beings be to each other? South Africa had become a laboratory where the depths of human cruelty were being tested. Indeed, human depravity went so far that black men and women were not even regarded as human beings.

When President Mandela and I met five years ago, I proposed holding an antiapartheid exhibition, a South African photography exhibition, lectures and symposiums on human rights, and various cultural exchange programs. This has since happened. I wanted to support the people of South Africa, not merely with words, but with actions. President Mandela accepted my suggestions with genuine joy. And the words of his secretary, Mr. Meer, resonated deeply in my heart with their poignancy. He said that our offer of cultural exchange was a gratifying recognition of his people as human beings—a recognition, he says, that had been denied them in South Africa, where they were subjected to the indignity of having to register as “blacks.” How horrible this is, and how terribly our friends in South Africa have suffered!

To refuse to regard others as fellow human beings and, instead, view them according to some label is a tendency that, unfortunately, is not restricted to South Africa. This delusion is always at the root of



Several women perform traditional dances at a rally for Nelson Mandela's 1994 presidential campaign.

the suppression of human rights. The same is true in Japan.

When we simply lump people into collective categories such as “Korean” or “Chinese” or “Communists,” our ability to imagine their thoughts and feelings stops functioning. We can no longer perform the perfectly natural act of putting ourselves in their shoes. We stop seeing them as individuals. They are there before us, but we do not see them. For the same reason, when we adults forget that children are people in their own rights and merely categorize them under the collective label of “children,” we can no longer understand what’s in their hearts.

The South African oppressors turned their attack on the African National Congress (ANC), which commanded a vast organization fighting for Black African liberation. The white authorities were firmly committed to their belief that blacks were a mass of ignorant

people unable to think for themselves—a belief that underscored their contempt and disdain for the people. The authorities did not regard the black population as people of flesh and blood, but as automatons who would blindly do whatever they were told. It never even occurred to them to see the prayers, the hopes and the anger that were behind the movement for liberation.

“The struggle is my life”—true to this pivotal conviction, President Mandela even transformed the court in which he was tried into a battleground of courageously articulated ideals and eloquent appeal for justice. Standing before the judge, he demanded that the universal right to vote be extended to all people, including Black South Africans. He declared, “I consider myself neither legally nor morally bound to obey laws made by a parliament in which I have no representation.” Of course, no one could legitimately dispute him.



KRISTICORRIS

The seaport city of Cape Town, South Africa, with Table Mountain in the background.

In my peace proposal commemorating SGI Day on January 26, last year [1994], I called for voting rights to be extended to North and South Korean permanent residents of Japan. Over 700,000 men and women with permanent residency in Japan fall within this category. They pay the same taxes as ethnic Japanese citizens, but they have no right to vote. They have many obligations, but are denied comparable rights. I am aware that there are many sides to this issue, and that the situation is a complicated one. But if we allow it to continue, if we fail to recognize the basic human

rights of these people who have endured unspeakable discrimination in many areas of their lives, including employment opportunities, this negative legacy, this failure of the past, will be perpetuated into the twenty-first century and passed on to the next generation.

A half-century has gone by since the end of World War II. Now is the time for Japan to embark on a course of courageous reform. Unless it does, how can it avoid having the reputation of a nation that is backward as far as human rights are concerned?

From his prison cell, Presi-

dent Mandela continued to inspire the people of South Africa. Though he couldn't communicate with them, his very existence was a source of hope. The sun still shone brightly, no matter how some tried to obscure it with clouds. The rest of the world supported his opposition to apartheid by leveling economic sanctions against South Africa and other measures. Impatient, the government offered him compromise plans several times. But President Mandela refused to compromise, choosing to remain in prison. He declared, "I cannot and will not give any

undertaking at a time when I and you, the people, are not free. Your freedom and mine cannot be separated." In his eyes, all of South Africa was a prison.

At last the day of his release arrived. It was February 11, 1990—the birthday of my beloved mentor, second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda, who spent two years in prison for his adamant opposition to the wartime militarist government. As I rejoiced at this new dawn of hope and freedom for South Africa, I could not help but recall Mr. Toda, who was also an indefatigable fighter for human rights.

On the day of his release, President Mandela addressed a rally in Cape Town. Responding to the joy and the enthusiasm of the people, he said:

I stand here before you, not as a prophet, but as a humble servant of you, the people. Your tireless and heroic sacrifices have made it possible for me to be here today. I therefore place the remaining years of my life in your hands.

President Mandela is motivated neither by the desire for popularity nor concern for his own interests. It is his boundless love for the people, his devotion to his comrades, who had finally won out over so much suffering and hardship. He wanted to praise and embrace each one. The selfless way he has dedicated himself to the people reminds me of the late Chinese premier Zhou Enlai.

President Mandela dreams of a land ruled neither by blacks nor whites, but of a rain-



SEIKYO PRESS

SGI President Ikeda visited South African President Mandela at the State Guest House in Tokyo, July 5, 1995, and took the opportunity to confer an honorary doctorate from Soka University upon him. It was their second meeting since October 31, 1990, when 500 Soka Gakkai youth welcomed Mr. Mandela, then deputy president of the African National Congress. President Mandela has received honorary degrees from more than fifty universities, and was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

bow land in which people of all colors are equal. He says: "It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if need be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die."

Do any of our national leaders in Japan today cherish an ideal in their hearts for which they are prepared to die, or for which they would endure 10,000 days in prison? Do any of our leaders have the ability to give unlimited hope to the people? President Mandela told me during our meeting that he has never forgotten the warm greeting he received on his last visit from our youth, with their "sparkling eyes," as he put it. That expression struck me. "Ah," I said to myself. "That was the president's dream. To bring a

sparkle back to the eyes of the South Africa's youth who had been robbed of all hope."

The human race is one giant living organism. That is why none of us can be truly happy as long as there are people who are suffering somewhere on this planet. Since we are all one, let us stand together—with the people of South Africa, with youth around the world, with all oppressed peoples. With this unity, we can construct a world filled with hope in the twenty-first century.

Ah, toward such a brilliant future, I want to call out at the top of my voice: "Tomorrow!—eternal promise shines on your horizon." □

(First published September 4, 1995, in the Seikyo Shimbun.)

GLOBAL FRIENDSHIPS FOR PEACE

Thai-Cambodian New Year's Festival

By Nipant Thongsrisook, Arleta, California

MORE than 600 Thai and Cambodian members and their friends—from elementary-aged to senior citizens—gathered April 4 at the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium in Santa Monica, California, to celebrate their traditional New Year's Day (April 13). The event was the first Thai-Cambodian joint general meeting for the greater Los Angeles area. About sixty members from Las Vegas also participated.

In his message to the participants, SGI President Ikeda quoted Nichiren Daishonin: "Nam-myoho-rence-kyo is the greatest of all joys" (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 788). He went on to say: "A society that values culture is a society that values human

happiness. Happiness lies in the pursuit of beauty, benefit and virtue. The power of culture may be hard to detect at times, but it is a fundamental force, since it transforms the human heart. Political and economic developments may be flashier but culture and education are the forces that shape any age."

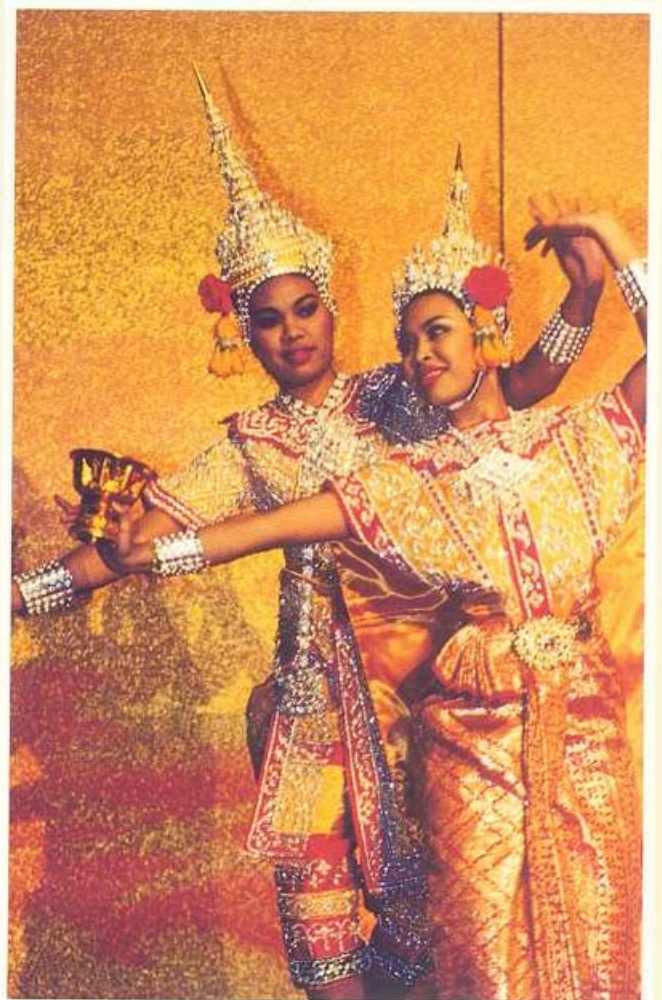
He also said: "I ask that each of you chant daimoku to make each day victorious. Please have confidence that your steady efforts will lead you on a brilliant course toward eternal happiness and triumph."

The celebration featured experiences by Molly Rangsiyanondha and Vuthi Feng, an inspiring original song by a chorus, a skit and various native

dances including enchanting performances by children.

The gathering was a dream come true since the Thai members held an outdoors potluck meeting five years previously and talked about staging a general meeting at the World Peace Ikeda Auditorium. In the beginning of the preparations that took place over an eight-month period for the joint New Year's celebration—from planning to rehearsals—a Cambodian member suggested having a joint exchange meeting.

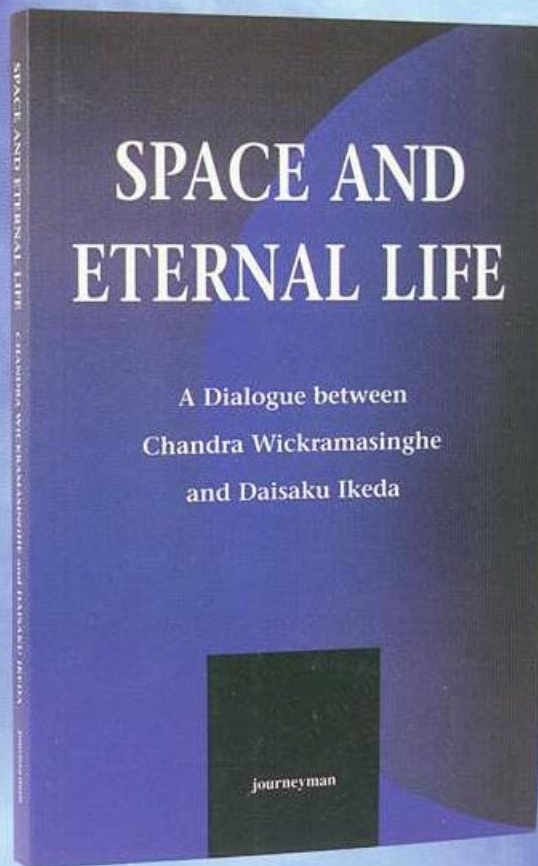
Professional dance teachers who are friends of the SGI committed many weekends helping the performers, most of whom had never danced before.



(Top, left) Cambodian coconut dance "Rabum Ta Lao";
 (top, middle) Thai umbrella dance "Fon Jong Sri Mueng";
 (top, right) Cambodian children's dance "Bird Song";
 (middle, left) Thai children's dance "Fon Ngeaw";
 (far right) Thai blessing dance "Krisada Apiniharn";
 (right) Thai drum dance "Terd Tueng."

Photos by Gregory Nakasuji
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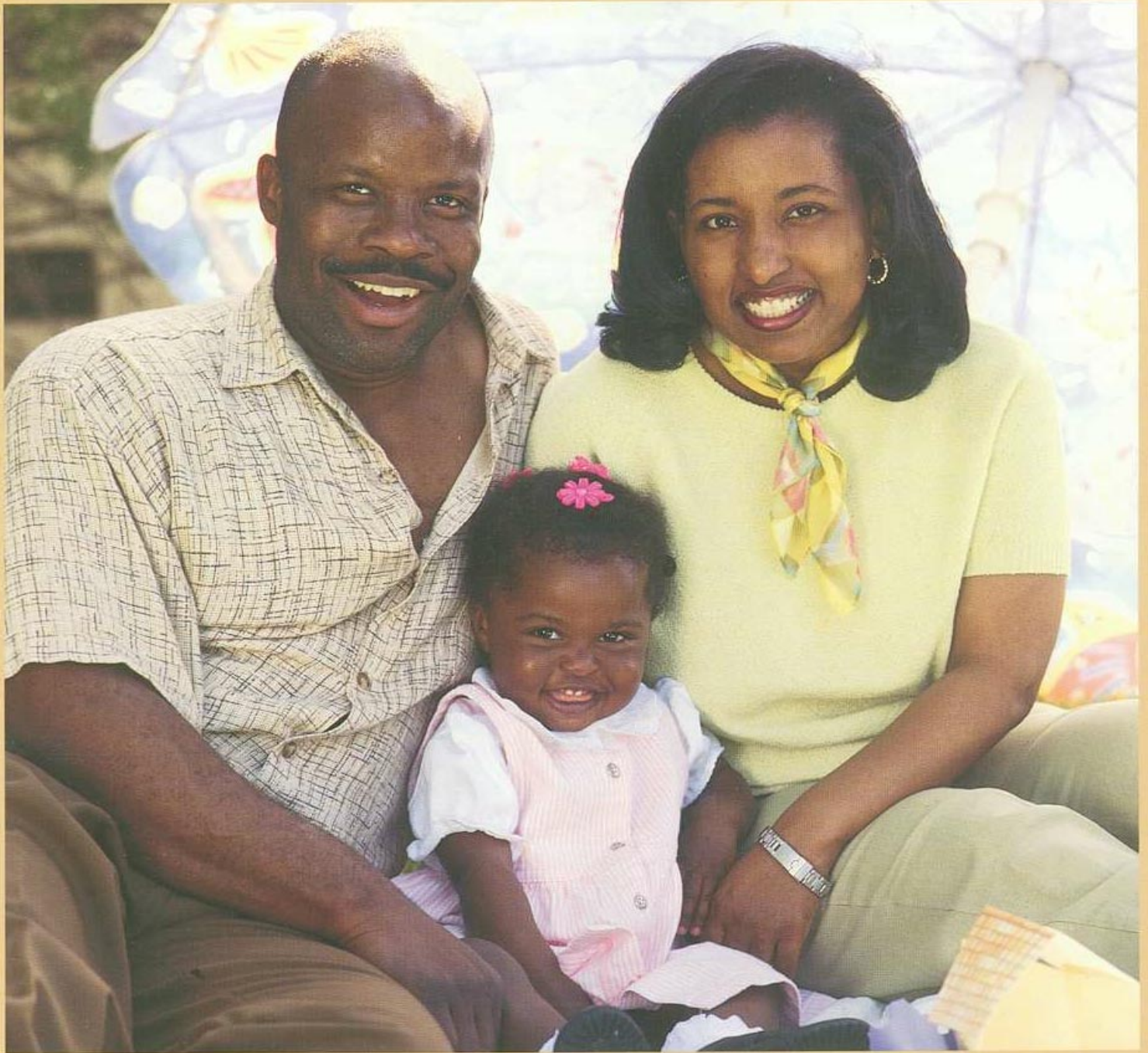
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JUNE 1998



THE HEART OF A HAPPY FAMILY: A DIALOGUE
THE WOMAN WITH SUNSHINE EYES: NICHIGEN-NYO

THAILAND CULTURE CENTER

SITUATED on the Chao Phraya river, in Bangkok, the Thailand Culture Center was opened in November 1993. The opening ceremony was attended by many guests, including the private secretary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand and vice rectors of Thailand's most prominent universities. The upper part of the semicircular entrance symbolizes the globe, and the roof was designed in a distinctively Thai style. The three-story building in a tile setting has prayer rooms, conference rooms and an office.

The first Soka Gakkai of Thailand meeting was held at the center in February 1994. The joyful dancing and singing of members from around the country welcomed SGI President Ikeda, symbolizing the bright future of Thailand. The Thai members continue to work diligently to promote peace in their country and throughout Asia through art and education. In February 1994, "The Boys' and Girls' Art Exhibition: Wonderful Dreams" was held at Thammasat University, and in January 1998, the exhibit "Nuclear Arms: Threat to Our World" was held at Chulalongkorn University, both in Bangkok.



Thailand is often described as the "land of gentle smiles."