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

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH by Gary Murie. Water tower on the grounds of the Victor Hugo House of Literature in Bièvres, France. Hugo used the location to write some of his early works.



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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

HOLDING ON

Eyes in the face of sickness,
they burn like ice blue fire.
It's not infection that ignites
such energy in the tired.
These flames are no sweet fever,
no blind desire for heaven.
Life fights the body for consent
to rise from ashes once again.

ANNE M. CHILD
Houston, Delaware

MY CHARACTER REVOLUTION

My mind of complaint and tribulation
bridles me to a barbed wire fence.
For generations of lifetimes.

I will set me free with
A mind of sunshine and sweetness;
Ever thankful of my strengths.

To practice living, with doubt
And discontent; feels dismal.
I must restrain my volatile mind.

My private war is my fight over my grumblings.
I sense joy and harmony erupting
Deep inside of me!
My biggest enemy is my mind! and,
I am winning over this adversary.

CHERE WOO
San Francisco

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Frequently Cited Sources

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

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

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

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

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Overcoming Hardship Leads to Indestructible Happiness

THIS summer in the United States is being compared to the worst season of sizzling hot weather and drought on record—worse even than the 1930s Oklahoma Dust Bowl chronicled by John Steinbeck in his classic novel *The Grapes of Wrath*. By last August 4, those living in the state of Texas had experienced twenty-nine straight days of triple-digit temperatures, contributing to the death of more than 120 people.

Such extremes in climate and temperature are being experienced not only in America, but in many other countries around the world. Thousands have lost their lives in China due to some of the worst flooding in years. I've heard that Paris, having had the wettest and coldest spring on record, is now suffering 100-degree temperatures, putting

“Struggling with problems is the essence of life. This never changes, no matter how much good fortune we accumulate or how amazing the benefits we receive.”

the lives of the old and the poor at risk. I, in fact, recently returned from Japan where the heat and humidity were unbearable. It's difficult to do anything on days like that.

My thoughts can't help but turn to the extreme conditions Nichiren Daishonin endured during the sixty-one years of his life. Observing the horrible conditions of a frozen, snow-bound Sado Island, he wrote: “The snow fell and piled up, never melting away. At night it hailed and snowed and there were occasional flashes

of lightning. Even in the daytime, the sun hardly shone. It was a wretched place to live” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 184). At the other extreme was the stifling heat and miserable humidity of summer in the forests of Mount Minobu where he spent his last days.

It is human nature to romanticize these anecdotes about his life and admire his dedication to establishing the correct philosophy of life. But how do we, as practitioners of the Daishonin's Buddhism, react to extreme conditions in our own environment? For that matter, even if we live in a comfortable climate we will not be happy if our life-condition is low. How do we stay encouraged, as well as encourage our friends and neighbors? This month I would like to share some thoughts on this subject.

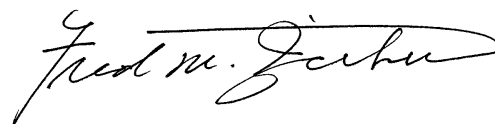
Seven hundred years ago, the Daishonin faced and overcame a very hostile environment. He survived terrible conditions and left a legacy that encourages us to this day. How can we capture that same spirit? We all share the same sufferings, and the root cause of suffering in society, according to the Daishonin, is erroneous beliefs. In our age, in our society, we can take "erroneous beliefs" to mean hopelessness and doubt—the belief that despite our best efforts, our lives and the world will never change for the better. It is our tendency to be influenced by our environment, to become confused and not able to see the correct way to overcome our difficulties. But once we reveal the Mystic Law at the center of our lives, we can instantly dispel the darkness of suffering and embrace hope.

Everything in our environment, the weather, the nation, the planet—everything is subject to the inevitability of birth, old age, illness and death. We will always be disappointed if we base our happiness on our ever-changing surroundings. Nichiren Daishonin strongly admonished us against seeking happiness from external sources that, like the weather, are subject to change. The only absolute is the Law that exists in our lives, as the Daishonin said, "The Gohonzon exists only

within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 213). This is why chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo to the Gohonzon is so amazing—that, through our own efforts, we can establish absolute happiness within us. In this regard, let's renew our conviction in the Daishonin's declaration, "There is no greater happiness for human beings than chanting Nam-myoho-renge-kyo" (MW-1, 161). Through our practice of Buddhism, we can establish indestructible happiness in our lives.

Speaking on the difficulties inherent in life, SGI President Ikeda recently said: "Life is a series of sufferings and problems. Struggling with problems is the essence of life. This never changes, no matter how much good fortune we accumulate or how amazing the benefits we receive. It may seem that a life without problems or conflicts would be ideal, but it would actually be empty. We wouldn't be fully alive" (August 14, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 9).

I sincerely admire the members and friends around the country and around the world who are persevering in their practice and joyful activities despite harsh weather. When we are determined to carry out kosen-rufu regardless of the conditions, sacrificing our own comfort to help others, we have truly captured the spirit of Nichiren Daishonin.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI USA General Director

Study Material for September • October

“A Letter of Condolence”

(The following passage is taken from the book Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda, pp. 154–64.)

The Buddha Shares Others' Sufferings

A STRONG person is gentle. “Birds cry, but never shed tears. I, Nichiren, do not cry, but my tears flow ceaselessly” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 94). Nichiren Daishonin wrote these famous words while in exile on Sado Island. He had great and abounding compassion. He was the perfect embodiment of profound feeling and towering wisdom.

Dostoevsky writes, “Great ideas spring not so much from noble intelligence as from noble feeling.”¹

Buddhism is a religion of compassion and wisdom—these are inseparable. A person of true wisdom has unparalleled compassion. A person of deep compassion embodies the wisdom of Buddhism.

The Japanese word for compassion, *jishi*, includes the meaning of suffering together or crying out in sympathy with others. The Buddha first of all shares others' sufferings.

Take the case of a mother whose child has died, who is sitting in a daze on the roadside. Probably no words can heal her heart. And passersby, unable to do anything, will have no choice but to walk briskly past. Occasionally, a cleric may stop before her and try to instruct her with a look of affected enlightenment. But no one can truly share her grief.

No matter how science advances, even though it can send a human being into outer space, it cannot assuage a mother's sorrow. Maybe only the words of a woman who has been in the

same situation can reach her.

What would the Buddha do in such an instance? He would probably sit down at the mother's side. And he might simply continue sitting there, not saying a word. Even if no words were exchanged, the mother would sense the warm reverberations of the Buddha's concern. She would feel the pulse of the Buddha's life. Eventually, she would lift up her face, and before her eyes would be the face of the Buddha who understands all her sorrows. The Buddha would nod and the mother would nod in reply.

Even without words, there is no greater encouragement than heart-to-heart exchange. On the other hand, even if a million words are spoken, nothing will be communicated in the

absence of heartfelt exchange.

At length the Buddha would stand up, and the mother, as though following his example, would probably also rise. Then, together, they would move forward one step, then another — their way gently illuminated by the light of the moon. The Buddha would tirelessly offer encouragement, until the mother could lift her head high, until she could determine to lead a life of great value for the sake of her deceased child.

The Buddha is sometimes gentle, sometimes stern, sometimes offering bouquets of words and sometimes taking action with those suffering. To the mother, the Buddha is a true ally, for he empathizes with her sufferings and brings her the greatest peace of mind. For this reason, the Buddha's words penetrate her life.

At its roots, compassion is the spirit to suffer alongside and pray with those suffering. The Daishonin possessed such a spirit. He joined Ueno-ama Gozen, the mother of Nanjo Tokimitsu (Lord Ueno),² in her grief and tears when her youngest son, Shichiro Goro, died at the tender age of 16. He continued to offer her encouragement until she regained the will to go on living.

During the first year or so after Shichiro Goro's death, the Daishonin sent approximately ten letters to the Nanjo family. We can imagine how his deep concern must have warmed their grieving hearts.

Starting with this installment, we will begin studying a number of letters sent to the Nanjo family by the Daishonin

—and the human drama that they tell.

Letter to a Bereaved Family

On the matter of the death of Nanjo Shichiro Goro, all people, once born, are certain to die. This is known to all people, both the wise and the foolish, both those of high and low standing. Therefore, when that time comes, one should not lament or be alarmed as though learning this for the first time. I have borne this in mind myself and also taught it to others. But since the time has actually arrived, I cannot help wondering even now whether this [Shichiro Goro's death] is a dream or fantasy. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1567)³

Just as there is the drama of joy upon the birth of a child, there is the drama of grief upon the death of a loved one. In the fall of 1280, these two dramas played out one after the other in the Nanjo family.

The drama of joy was the birth of a son. In a letter dated August 26 of that year, the Daishonin expresses his delight to Nanjo Tokimitsu and his wife on their being blessed with a son in addition to their infant daughter. The Daishonin named the boy Hiwaka Gozen (GZ, 1566).

It must have been deeply moving for the couple that the name he selected contained the Chinese character for the word *sun* (Jpn *hi*), which forms part of the Daishonin's name, Nichiren (i.e., the same character is also pronounced *nichi*). This

was one year after the Atsuhara Persecution,⁴ and they must have felt that the weariness from their difficult struggles had in an instant been swept away. Above all, Tokimitsu's mother, Ueno-ama Gozen, was deeply moved by the birth of a grandson who would succeed as head of the family, and by the Daishonin's congratulatory message.

But only ten days later, on September 5, the Nanjo household was visited by misfortune. Tokimitsu's youngest brother, Shichiro Goro, died suddenly. He was only 16. While the cause of his death is unknown, it must have been very sudden and unexpected. Their celebration of the birth of a son and grandson was overturned, replaced by sorrow at Shichiro Goro's death. The family's grief knew no bounds.

The Daishonin, too, was surprised by this turn of events. As soon as the messenger bearing news of Shichiro Goro's death arrived, the Daishonin immediately wrote a reply to Tokimitsu, the "Letter of Condolence," which we are studying this time, dated September 6.

The impermanence of life is inescapable. In Buddhism, this is a fundamental premise about the nature of existence. Why should death come as a shock? From the standpoint of life's eternity, it could be said that birth and death are occurrences of minuscule significance. That is all well and good in theory, but the human heart cannot fully come to terms with such events through theory alone.

The Daishonin was thoroughly human, a most humane

Someone battling destiny feels like there is a gale raging through his or her heart. When we encounter people in such a state, we should stand with them in the rain, become sopping wet with them, and work with them to find a way out of the storm.

person. Hearing the unexpected report, he was in disbelief. He wondered whether it was “a dream or fantasy.” Further on, he indicates that he is in such turmoil he doesn’t feel up to continuing to write. These words must have expressed the feelings of the bereaved family members as well.

In the letter “Sad News of Lord Goro’s Death,”⁵ which is thought to have been written to Nanjo Tokimitsu about a week later, the Daishonin says:

Until now I have repeatedly thought to myself that the matter of Nanjo Shichiro Goro’s death must have been a dream or a fantasy, or certainly untrue, but it is again mentioned in your letter. And so, for the first time, I have become convinced of its truth. (GZ, 1566)

The Daishonin says that he has had a hard time accepting Shichiro Goro’s death. What compassion the original Buddha shows! He mourns the death of this young follower, just as a parent would.

The Daishonin inscribed his immense compassion for all humankind in the Gohonzon. He says: “Suffer what there is to suffer, enjoy what there is to enjoy. Regard both suffering and joy as facts of life and continue chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo, no matter what happens” (MW-1, 161). Just as he says, in both times of joy and times of sadness, everything will turn out for the best if we continue chanting daimoku.

Someone may expound a fine teaching while abiding in a place of comfort and safety—but that is not Buddhism. A genuine Buddha lives among the people, grieves and suffers with them and shares their hopes and laughter. That’s how the original Buddha, Nichiren Daishonin, conducted himself.

Above all, the Daishonin did not blithely brandish theories of karma. Making condescending pronouncements to suffering people like, “That’s just your karma,” will only add to their misery. Someone battling destiny feels like there is a gale raging through his or her heart.

When we encounter people in such a state, we should stand with them in the rain, become sopping wet with them, and work with them to find a way out of the storm. In the end, that’s probably all another human being can do.

Even if the attempt is not totally successful, through making this effort we forge a bond between ourselves and the other person. This is not mere sympathy or sentimentality. The effort to regard someone else’s suffering as our own and thus offer prayer for its resolution creates a life-to-life bond. Through this bond one person touches another’s life.

‘Eternal Family’ of the Mystic Law

Above all, how your mother [Ueno-ama Gozen] must be grieving. She was preceded in death both by her parents and siblings, and she was bereaved of her beloved husband. Still, her many children must have been a comfort to her.

The Daishonin teaches that someone who embraces the Mystic Law, even though his or her life may be short, is a Buddha in both life and death.

[Shichiro Goro] was a charming child and, moreover, a boy. He was very handsome and brave and had a trustworthy look. He made others feel refreshed. His having died so young, however, while defying reason, is like the buds of a flower being withered by the wind, or the full moon suddenly waning.

It doesn't seem real to me [that he has died], and so I do not feel inclined to continue. I will write you again.

With my deep respect,

Nichiren

The sixth day of the ninth month of 1280

Postscript: When I met him on June 15, he struck me as a lad of splendid spirit and as very gallant. I am most sad that I will not be able to see him again.

Still, since he believed deeply in Shakyamuni Buddha and the Lotus Sutra, in his last moment he was

splendidly composed. He certainly went to the pure land of Eagle Peak where his father dwells. They must have had a joyful reunion. How wonderful! How wonderful! (GZ, 1567–68)

Ueno-ama Gozen had experienced a great deal of suffering. Her husband, Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, died in 1265. He was still in the prime of his life and ought to have had many years ahead of him. He was survived by five sons and four daughters, all still young when he died; Tokimitsu, the second son, was only 7. Shichiro Goro, the youngest child and fifth son, was still in his mother's womb when his father died. In another Gosho, Nichiren Daishonin writes to Ueno-ama Gozen:

When your husband, the late Lord Ueno, preceded you in death, he was still in the prime of life and your grief on that occasion was no shallow matter. Had you not been pregnant with his child, I know you would have followed him through fire and water. Yet when this son was safely born, you felt that it would be unthinkable to entrust his

upbringing to another so that you could put an end to your life. Thus you encouraged yourself and spent the following fourteen or fifteen years raising your children. (MW-7, 247–48)

The child to whom he refers is Shichiro Goro, who had now suddenly died. The mother looked forward to the growth of Tokimitsu and Shichiro Goro with high hopes. Shichiro Goro was handsome, intelligent and well liked by others. It also appears that he was very dutiful toward his mother.

It seems as though even the Daishonin was at a loss as to how to encourage the mother. He conveys his feelings openly and candidly. The mother, her heart made sensitive by sadness, must have keenly felt the Daishonin's kindness, which pervades each line of the condolence letter he sent to the Nanjo family via Nanjo Tokimitsu. How the Daishonin's warmth must have consoled her grief-stricken heart! Simply having someone who understands everything can give us the strength to go on living.

In the postscript, the Daishonin reiterates his regret at

For the happiness of all mothers and children, for the creation of a society where they can all look up at blue skies with smiling faces—toward this end, we are striving to develop a great undercurrent of compassion in society. This is the great objective of our movement.

the death of this youth who had such a promising future.

When Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro died, the Daishonin wrote: “While he was in this world, he was a living Buddha, and now, he is a Buddha in death. His Buddhahood transcends both life and death” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 207).

The Daishonin teaches that someone who embraces the Mystic Law, even though his or her life may be short, is a Buddha in both life and death. In the postscript to “A Letter of Condolence,” the Daishonin says that without doubt Shichiro Goro has been reunited with his father at Eagle Peak.

In another letter, he writes to Ueno-ama Gozen:

You must feel that if only
[your son Shichiro Goro] had

left word where you could go to meet him, then without wings, you would soar to the heavens, or without a boat, you would cross over to China. If you heard that he was in the bowels of the earth, then how could you fail to dig through the earth?

And yet there is a way to meet him readily. With Shakyamuni Buddha as your guide, you can go to meet him in the pure land of Eagle Peak. (MW-7, 262)

The Daishonin tells Ueno-ama Gozen that she can definitely meet her son at Eagle Peak. Time and again, the Daishonin offers her warm encouragement.

It is extremely difficult to understand the impact that losing a child has on a mother. Even now, I cannot forget how

my mother looked when she received official notification that my eldest brother had died in the war. She turned away, her shoulders went limp and her body seemed fraught with grief. My mother did not cry in front of us, but I had the clear sense that from that day she aged considerably.

Such is the cruelty of war. I will fight with my life to oppose war, which plunges mothers the world over into sorrow and grief.

For the happiness of all mothers and children, for the creation of a society where they can all look up at blue skies with smiling faces—toward this end, we are striving to develop a great undercurrent of compassion in society. This is the great objective of our movement. □

1. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Eternal Husband*, trans. Constance Garnett (London: William Heineman, 1917), p. 105.
2. Ueno is the name of a village near Mount Fuji of which Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, and later his son Nanjo Tokimitsu, was steward. Lord Ueno refers to the head of the family; at the time of this writing, Nanjo Tokimitsu.
3. “Ueno Dono Gohenji” (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1567–68), written in September 1280

when the Daishonin was 59. It is addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu (Lord Ueno).

4. Atsuhara Persecution: A series of threats and acts of violence against followers of Nichiren Daishonin in Atsuhara Village near Ueno, beginning in 1278. The persecution culminated in 1279 when three farmers were executed for refusing to abandon their faith. Nanjo Tokimitsu used his influence to

protect believers during this time, sheltering some in his home and negotiating for the release of others who had been imprisoned. The government punished him for his role by levying severe taxes on his estate, forcing him to live in poverty.

5. “Nanjo Dono Gohenji” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1566).

Lady Nanjo, A Woman of Strength: Overcoming the Death of Loved Ones

NICHIREN Daishonin wrote "A Letter of Condolence" on September 6, 1280, while living on Mount Minobu when he was 59. The letter was formally addressed to Nanjo Tokimitsu, also known as Lord Ueno, who was the steward of Ueno District, Suruga Province. Tokimitsu is considered an exemplary disciple of the Daishonin. He played a valiant role in protecting peasant believers from government oppression during the Atsuhara Persecution of 1279, when three believers were beheaded. Throughout his life, he provided consistent support to the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin, including donating a tract of land for the establishment of the head temple, Taiseki-ji.

The letter's content, however, clearly indicates that it was meant for Tokimitsu's widowed mother, Lady Nanjo. The Daishonin penned this letter in

response to the sudden death of Lady Nanjo's youngest son Shichiro Goro. The teenager died on September 5. The cause of death is unknown, but his premature passing at 16 brought profound pain and sadness to the Nanjo family as well as to the Daishonin. He wasted no time in sending encouragement to the grief-stricken mother.

Lady Nanjo's father was Lord Matsuno Rokuro Zaemon and her mother was known as Lady Matsuno. The family lived in Matsuno Village in Ihara District, Suruga Province. It is believed that Lord Matsuno took faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism through either his daughter or Nikko Shonin. Lady Nanjo married Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, a retainer of the Kamakura government who was originally based in the Nanjo District, Izu Province, hence the family name. Later he was transferred to Ueno Dis-

trict, Suruga Province, and became a steward there.

It is believed that Lord Nanjo met the Daishonin in Kamakura and took faith in his teaching sometime between February 1263, when the Daishonin returned to Kamakura from his exile in Izu, and the fall of 1264, when the Daishonin went back to his native Awa Province to care for his ailing mother. Encouraged by her husband, Lady Nanjo also took faith. On March 8, 1265, soon after Lady Nanjo started practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism, however, her husband died, leaving her with eight children (four daughters and four sons) and pregnant with the youngest son. Upon hearing of Lord Nanjo's death, the Daishonin traveled from Kamakura to Ueno Village in Suruga Province to pray at his grave. It was probably on this occasion that 7-year-old Tokimitsu first met the Daishonin.

Following the custom of her day, Lady Nanjo became a Buddhist nun to pray for the repose of her husband while continuing in her secular responsibility as the mother of nine. After the death of her husband, Lady Nanjo was also known as Ueno-ama Gozen, which means “the lady nun of Ueno.” It is difficult to imagine today Lady Nanjo’s difficulties in raising nine young children as a single mother in thirteenth-century Japan, when women had no choice but to rely on their husbands or adult sons for survival—neither of which she had.

Even though Lady Nanjo was very young in faith when she lost her husband, she continued in her faith through the turbulent years during which the Daishonin was nearly beheaded and then exiled to the remote northern island of Sado. This was followed by an all-out crackdown on the Daishonin’s followers by the shogunate government. Lady Nanjo’s consistent faith no doubt helped her raise her family despite the hardships and prejudice that she went through as a widowed mother, not to mention the oppression she was subjected to as a follower of the exiled priest.

When news of the Daishonin’s return from Sado and relocation to Mount Minobu reached the Nanjo family, they immediately sent offerings in July 1274. Toward the end of the same month, Tokimitsu, now 16, brought gifts to the Daishonin deep in the mountains. One month later in August, Lady

Nanjo’s eldest son, Shichiro Taro, passed away and her second son, Tokimitsu, became the head of the household and assumed responsibility as a steward of the Ueno area.

For the nine years the Daishonin lived on Mount Minobu, until his death in 1282, the Nanjo family consistently supported him. It is recorded that they sent offerings to him more than forty times during this period. The Daishonin’s life at Mount Minobu was a difficult one, lacking in the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. In a letter dated January 27 of the same year that he wrote “A Letter of Condolence,” the Daishonin describes his life at Minobu:

In the midst of these four mountains and four rivers is a flat area no broader than the palm of a hand, and here I have built a little hut to shield me from the rain. I have peeled bark off trees to make my four walls, and wear a robe made of the hides of deer that died a natural death. In spring I break off ferns to nourish my body, and in autumn I gather fruit to keep myself alive. But since the eleventh month of last year the snow has been piling up, and now, when we are into the first month of the new year, it goes on snowing. My hut is seven feet in height, but the snow is piled up to a depth of ten feet. I am surrounded by four walls of ice, and icicles hang down from the eaves like a necklace of jewels adorning my place of religious practice,

while inside my hut snow is heaped up in place of rice.
(MW-7, 207–08)

In the late 1270s, epidemics and famine swept through Japan so it is not difficult to imagine how appreciative the Daishonin felt toward the Nanjo family’s support when they were experiencing their own economic hardships.

The sudden death of the youngest son, Shichiro Goro, in 1280, in the wake of the Atsuhara Persecution, was devastating to Lady Nanjo. He was especially dear to her since she had raised him by herself. Lady Nanjo must have felt that all her struggles after the death of her husband had been rewarded in the blossoming of her youngest son. As the Daishonin states in the postscript to “A Letter of Condolence,” about three months before his death, on June 15, 1280, Shichiro Goro, accompanied by his elder brother, Tokimitsu, visited the Daishonin at Mount Minobu. With the image of Shichiro Goro fresh in his mind, the Daishonin was greatly pained by the loss of this fine young disciple.

As the Daishonin writes in his letter, Lady Nanjo’s life was not an easy one. She experienced the death of family members one after another. She lost her parents, her siblings, and her husband. Then in the midst of numerous difficulties in raising her nine children as a single parent, she lost her eldest son, Shichiro Taro. After all this came the death of her youngest son.

The Daishonin shows us the importance of developing our humanity and compassion through practice and study. Knowledge of Buddhist principles is most valuable when it serves to develop our compassion.

Lady Nanjo's sorrow was profound. In "A Letter of Condolence," the Daishonin shares the mother's pain and embraces her with the warmth of his humanity. In the letter, the Daishonin honestly expresses his sorrow and empathy over Shichiro Goro's sudden death. Of course, death is natural, and Buddhism expounds on it at great length. As a teacher of Buddhism, the Daishonin could have preached to the mother about Buddhist theories on death. But he did not. The Daishonin, throughout the letter, speaks to the mother as her friend, as an ordinary human being who is equally saddened by the death of Shichiro Goro.

The Daishonin's attitude expressed in "A Letter of Condolence" stands in contrast to that of many Japanese Buddhist priests who would regard the death of their believers as an opportunity to make money from conducting services. When people study Buddhism and its views on death, some may become detached from the reality of death—especially, the sorrow and suffering of those who have lost loved ones. It is not enough to tell people who

are grieving that "It is your karma to lose so-and-so," or "It is a matter of faith to accept so-and-so's death."

In "A Letter of Condolence," the Daishonin shows us the importance of developing our humanity and compassion through practice and study. Knowledge of Buddhist principles is most valuable when it serves to develop our compassion. It is only natural for a mother to grieve over the death of her child. And it is Buddhist compassion to share her suffering and embrace her. What Lady Nanjo needed most was someone to share her feelings, not a lecture on the theory of death. Of course, the Daishonin's intent was not to dwell forever in the hellish state with the mother, but to instill courage in her heart and thereby help her overcome the death of her child. Nevertheless, the Daishonin was deeply aware of what would lessen the burden of sorrow in her heart. It was for her to know that by her side was someone who knew exactly what she was going through.

The Daishonin demonstrates in this letter to Lady Nanjo that

Buddhist philosophy is best defined through our actions. Just reciting Buddhist principles without concern or compassion for others is the antithesis of Buddhist study. In "A Letter of Condolence," we can see that our practice and study of Buddhism must be directed toward the expansion of our humanity.

The Daishonin's encouragement of Lady Nanjo continued despite his poor health. As a result, Lady Nanjo grew stronger in faith. Although she felt great sorrow over Shichiro Goro's death, she did not allow it to break her spirit. Every letter the Daishonin wrote to Lady Nanjo after the death of her youngest son mentioned him. About one year before his own death, the Daishonin wrote to Lady Nanjo: "If I see [your late son at Eagle Peak] before you do, I will tell him how much his mother laments" (GZ, 1584). The Daishonin died on October 13, 1282. About two years later, on May 10, 1284, Lady Nanjo peacefully breathed her last while Tokimitsu and the rest of her family watched over her. Until the end, she maintained her faith in the Daishonin's teachings. □



Shijo Kingo: “My Story”

(Part III)

What follows is a fictionalized first-person account of Shijo Kingo's thoughts. The last time [March 1998 issue] we saw Nichiren Daishonin's steadfast follower, he was awakened by a messenger in the middle of the night on September 12, 1271. The messenger tells him that the Daishonin is being taken to Tatsunokuchi Beach by Hei no Saemon's warriors to be executed. Shijo Kingo hastily leaves his residence without his boots to go to the Daishonin's side. This concludes Fay Hovey's piece on Shijo Kingo.

URGING my horse through the night, his mane streaming in my nostrils, I knew I could not let my mentor, Nichiren, go to his death alone. “Nichigen!” I sent my thoughts back to her. “Pray for us both, wife, and for our children!” The horse under me was damp with sweat as my brothers and I bounded down the road toward Tatsunokuchi, “Dragon’s Mouth,” the place of execution for common criminals on a remote beach. I didn’t know what we would meet out there in the dark that night or whether we were already too

late. If we were too late, there would be nothing to do but retrieve my mentor's body and perhaps his head, if the Deputy Chief of Police Hei no Saemon was too cowardly to claim it. Ordering a surreptitious execution under the cloak of night meant that Hei no Saemon had no reason for pride in this deed. It was likely that a conniving rival priest somewhere paced his veranda, waiting for the death notice.

Reining in abruptly above the worn track to the beach, we sensed them before we spotted them. Heard the steady pace of horses, the clink of metal and creak of leather. Hei no Saemon had brought along a small army to do his dirty work. I wasn't surprised. Nichiren appealed to our rough-and-ready warriors of the Eastern provinces. Hei no Saemon would never attempt such a thing in the bright inquiry of daylight. Nor did he want to encounter some of the most skilled samurai in the region over a meddlesome priest who wouldn't shut up and go away. Without the messenger, I would have awoken in the morning to the news of my mentor's death. Instead, there I was, barefoot with only a sword. It was clear that we wouldn't stand in anyone's way for long!

Then, I saw him as he rode surrounded by sol-

diers. His confident voice floating up over the ridge and dense foliage was compelling. I heard him tell them not to feel badly because they were taking him to his death. At the sound of his voice, I dug my heels sharply into my horse's flanks and we crashed through the brush, making our presence clearly evident. The escort halted with a swift snicker of drawn swords and bows. "Master!" I cried, and felt a great surging emotion in my chest. "I cannot let you go to your death alone! Let me go with you!" Across the space between us, our eyes locked. "You don't have to do this, Yori-moto," they seemed to say. "Don't do this."

The escort scowled at me, ill-tempered at having

to be out in the middle of the night on such an unsavory mission. "Let them come along," Hei no Saemon said. "Let them watch this fellow die like a common thief." I grabbed the reins of my mentor's horse and glared back at them until they allowed me to take my place beside him. The escort closed in around us and continued warily on. I couldn't stop the tears that flowed down my cheeks. I had trained all my life for death. I was a hardened man. Yet this man knew me like no other, this master of life sitting astride his horse next to me. "I cannot believe this is happening, that these are your last moments!" I choked, overwhelmed with grief. I didn't care who saw me! A part of me was going to





die and I felt the irresistible impulse to send the rest of me along with him!

"Yorimoto, this is the happiest of days for me. Do not suffer so! Tonight I go to be beheaded and for me, this is the greatest honor," he told me gruffly. It was true that when I peered at his face in the gloom, his eyes were bright with anticipation

and he was smiling. "Besides," he said, "do you not remember the vow you made long ago?" I couldn't think straight. "What vow?" I groped. I felt such pain and frustration that there was nothing I could do. I was outmanned and helpless as a newborn with feet as naked.

"If you must die to-

night, I will die with you!" I blurted. "My mind is made up!"

His eyes blazed at me. "No one has been as loyal as you. You are like my own son. Think of your family! There is more to life than you can see just now, Yorimoto! This is not your time!"

"You cannot stop me. This is my wish! I cannot

think of life without you and if I must die one day, let it be now!"

"You are as intemperate and rash as ever!" He shook his head and staring straight ahead with resolve, he dismounted without aid of his escort. Those harsh men stepped back with respect at the sight of his fearlessness. It was a chill autumn night and the horses stomped restlessly in the sand. The men were eager to get on with such business and be home in their beds before anyone knew they had been a part of it. Hei no Saemon proudly sat in a chair brought along for him, glad to be finally getting rid of this priest.

A straw mat was spread quickly upon the sand as Nichiren warmly greeted the executioner, telling him that he would cooperate fully. Looking around at the soldiers and directly into Hei no Saemon's eyes, he slowly knelt. "Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo," he intoned in a full, deep voice. He stretched his neck forth so the executioner would have a clear aim and said, "Go ahead, sir, I am ready to give my life for the Lotus Sutra!"

It was as if all movement and life were frozen at that moment. The dark beach, the sound of the waves breaking, the

breathing and jostling of horses. I knelt and opened my robe as one of my brothers handed me a small dagger. My life distilled into this one moment as I chanted for the protection of my country and family. I closed my eyes and sensed the executioner shifting his weight as he raised his sword. The time had come. "Oh, no, this is it!" I cried.

Suddenly, behind my closed lids, I saw the brilliant flash of light, like lightning! This accompanied by the startled neighs of the horses. Opening my eyes, I saw a white orb shooting across the sky, illuminating the beach as if it were day. Horses bolted away in fear. Men hid their faces in their hands. I ventured a quick look at the executioner who had fallen face down in the sand. Snarling, Hei no Saemon tried to restore order and my mentor shouted: "Come now, kill me, are you all afraid? Why do you shrink from this miserable prisoner? Come closer!" Soon, the light disappeared over the horizon northwest of us and everything around us was falling apart. I was stunned. How could this have happened? The turn of events happened so suddenly I hadn't had time to think!

Most of the escort

hastily regrouped and we were pulled along as fast as they could ride away from Tatsunokuchi. "We're not going to kill him tonight!" I heard them shout. "Let some other fool do this work, I'm done with it!" another gasped. We dashed along toward the dawn to the estate of Homma Rokuro Zaemon where retainers threw open the gates.

I hadn't had the chance to look at my mentor after I had helped him onto his horse at Tatsunokuchi. In the lighted courtyard, some of the men fell to their knees in front of him, casting down their Nembutsu beads. He walked slowly among them, touching a shoulder here and there, telling them he did not hold them responsible. At the entrance to the mansion, he bowed deeply to his host, apologizing for the disturbance. I looked closely at him and saw a new set of his shoulders and a light in his face. He was the same man, yet somehow different. There was a great assurance and something more I couldn't guess. Before passing through the door, he paused and respectfully requested sake for all the men, such a night it had been. □

Illustrations by Ed Lee

The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue (7)

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 previous installment detailed the introduction of formalities and corruption resulting from the government-instituted parish system and the transfer of the office of high priest to priests of Yobo-ji temple, an unorthodox offshoot of the Fuji School.

Chapter 7: The Establishment of Shakyamuni's Statue As an Object of Devotion by the High Priest

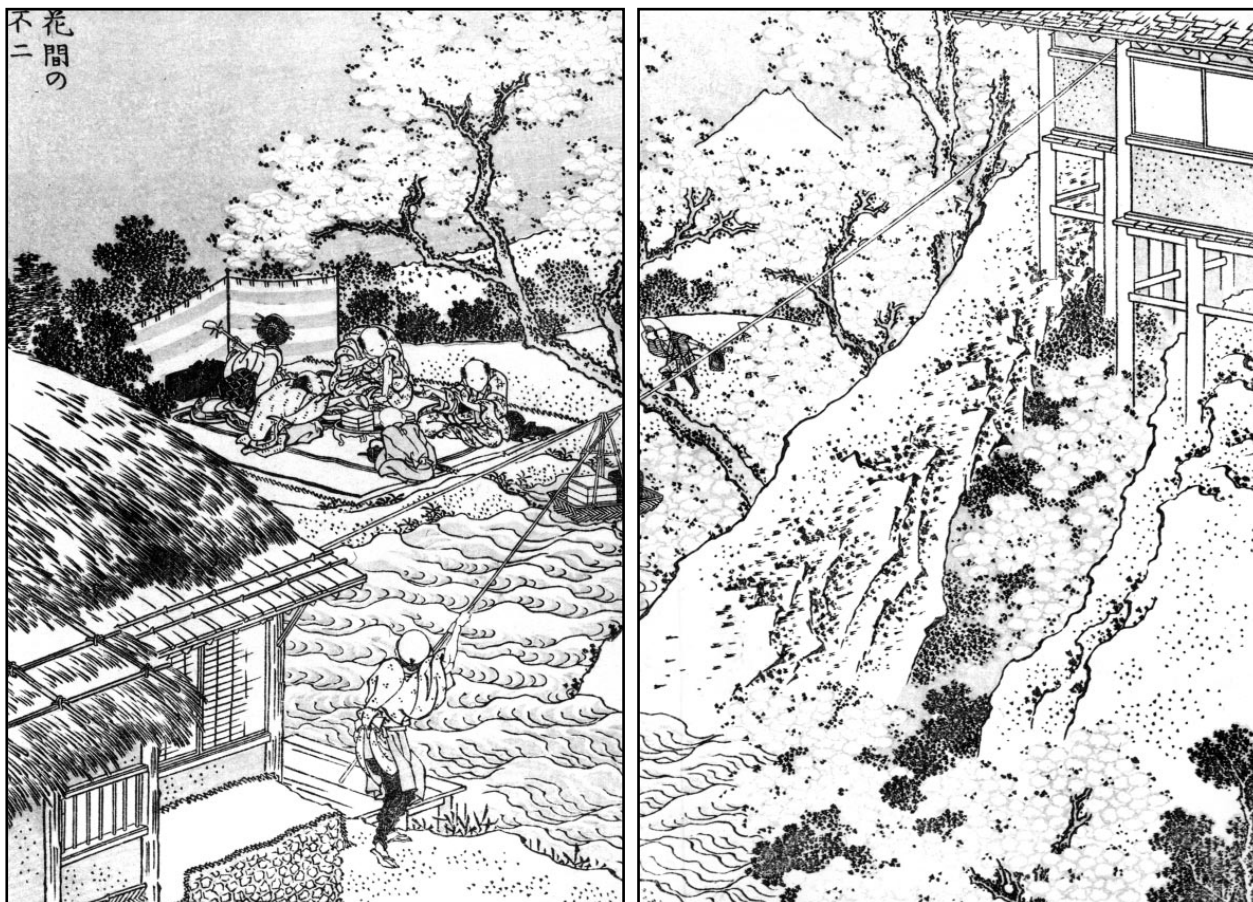


(1) Seventeenth high priest, Nissei, enshrines Shakyamuni's statue at more than ten branch temples

THE seventeenth high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nissei, is known for two major doctrinal errors attributed to him that are contrary to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. One was the establishment of a statue of Shakyamuni as an object of worship, and the other was mandating that all twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra

be recited for gongyo. Nissei originally came from a temple that splintered from the Fuji School, Yobo-ji. He became a disciple of Nichiju, the sixteenth high priest, who had also been a Yobo-ji priest. As mentioned in the previous installment, nine high priests came from outside the head temple, Taiseki-ji, from Yobo-ji. In 1632, Nichiju transferred his office to Nissei. The following year, Nissei transferred the office to Nichiei, the eighteenth high priest, who had been his senior at Yobo-ji.

But in 1637, due to Nichiei's illness, Nissei returned to Taiseki-ji to assume

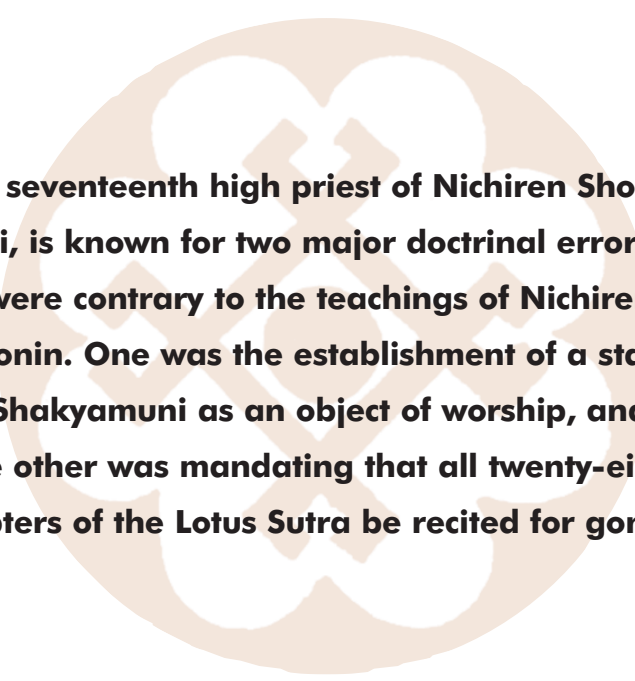


A nineteenth-century print of Mount Fuji and the area around the head temple, Taiseki-ji.

the office of high priest once again. In the same year, Nissei received government permission to ride in a litter to the shogun's castle in Edo¹ for an official audience with the shogun. This was a rare privilege, especially for a priest. The source of such privilege, as well as Nissei's increasing influence and rise to the office of high priest at Taiseki-ji, was the powerful patronage of Kyodai'in, the widow of Hachisuka Yoshishige, an influential governor of Awa Province in Shikoku Island.²

Nissei formed a close relationship with Kyodai'in, eight years his elder, considering her his "adopted mother." Kyodai'in built Hoshō-ji in Edo in honor

of her husband, who died in 1620. In 1623, through the recommendation of Kyodai'in, Nissei became the chief priest of Hoshō-ji. There he enshrined a statue of Shakyamuni as an object of devotion as well as encouraging recitation of the entire Lotus Sutra. In 1633, one year after he became high priest, he wrote a thesis later known as "Zuigi Ron" in an attempt to justify his unorthodox practices and silence the criticism brought against him. He writes at the end of the "Zuigi Ron": "A year after the completion of Hoshō-ji, I had a statue of the Buddha made. Priests and lay believers of this school then brought up questions and criticism. To dispel the mist of their



The seventeenth high priest of Nichiren Shoshu, Nissei, is known for two major doctrinal errors that were contrary to the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin. One was the establishment of a statue of Shakyamuni as an object of worship, and the other was mandating that all twenty-eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra be recited for gongyo.

delusion and to avoid sinking into oblivion, I took up the writing brush to put down this one volume of writing" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 9, p. 69).

In his thesis, Nissei explains that Nichiren Daishonin did not establish Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion simply because he had to move from one place to another constantly and that it was never his intent not to establish Shakyamuni's statue. Later Nichiin, the thirty-first high priest, added his commentary at the end of the thesis, stating that Nissei's doctrines "differ greatly from the essential teachings of this school."

Regarding Nissei's errors, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest and noted scholar and historian of the Fuji School, states: "As Nissei established the foundation in Edo and started to build branch temples there to increase the sect's influence, he at last began propounding the worship of the Buddha's statue and the recitation of the entire Lotus Sutra, thus bringing into [this school] the doctrine that Yobo-

ji was then propounding" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 9, p. 69). Shakyamuni's statues were enshrined at many branch temples—including Hosho-ji, Josen-ji, Seiryu-ji, Myokyo-ji, Honjo-ji, Kujo-ji (in Akasaka, Tokyo), Choan-ji, Kujo-ji (in Izu) and Hongen-ji (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 9, pp. 69–70). Among these only Josen-ji and Myokyo-ji exist today. Another record shows that Shakyamuni's statues were enshrined at one point at Jozai-ji and Jitsujo-ji. Nissei erected Shakyamuni's statue at more than ten branch temples over which he had influence.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Nikko Shonin left Mount Minobu because of the doctrinal errors committed by Hakiri Sanenaga, the steward of the Minobu area, including Hakiri's fundamental deviation of establishing Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion. Nikko Shonin strongly criticized the five senior priests for encouraging him in this unorthodox practice. As the Daishonin taught, Nikko Shonin maintained that only the Gohonzon

Nikko Shonin foresaw the appearance of such aberrant high priests in the future as Nissei and wrote: “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” (Gosho Zenshu, p. 1618).

should be the object of devotion in the Daishonin’s Buddhism. Nikko Shonin foresaw the appearance of aberrant high priests such as Nissei in the future and wrote: “Do not follow even the high priest if he goes against the Buddha’s Law and propounds his own views” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1618).

Some priests and lay believers raised concerns over the high priest’s new practices, but no one followed Nikko Shonin’s injunction by refusing to follow Nissei. In fact, since Taiseki-ji was increasing its branch temples and adding many buildings on the head temple grounds through the efforts of Kyodai’in, Nissei was later regarded as a “restorer” of the Fuji School.

through the patronage of Kyodai’in, his status fell just as fast when he later had a conflict with his powerful patron. In 1638, Nissei and Kyodai’in had a falling out, so he left Taiseki-ji suddenly and moved to Jozai-ji at Shitaya in Edo. Taiseki-ji was without a high priest for three years from 1638 to 1641 until Nisshun, the nineteenth high priest, arrived to assume the office. (Nichiei, the eighteenth high priest, left Taiseki-ji due to illness in 1637 and died in 1638. So Nissei returned to the head temple in 1637 to assume the office once again.) The biographical account of Nisshun states:

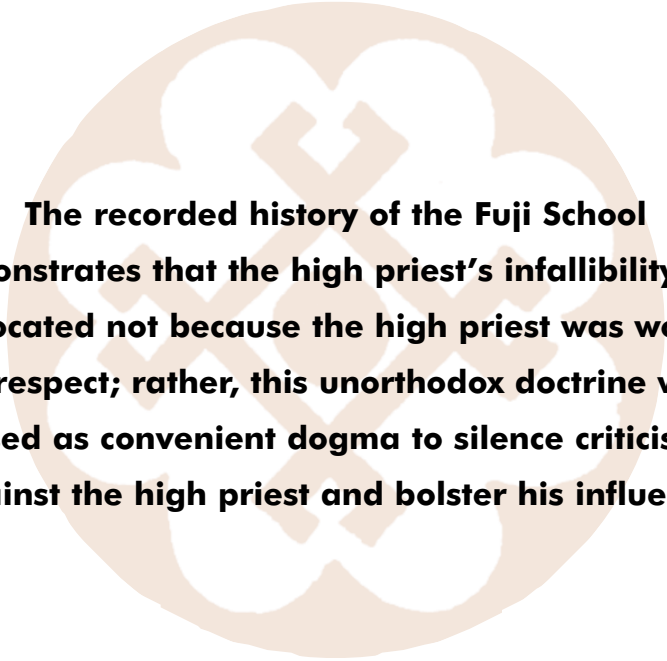
Because of his discord with the Venerable Priestess Nissho [Kyodai’in], a great patron, Teacher Nissei of the head temple left Mount Fuji and moved to Jozai-ji at Shitaya in Edo, thus leaving the head temple without its chief priest.

At that time, with the appointment of a new shogun, the government had to reissue the deed [of the head temple’s property], yet there was no chief priest, so the head temple was about to be condemned.



(2) The high priest appointed by a powerful lay patron

AS quickly as Nissei had risen to the office of high priest and enjoyed rare privileges in the shogun’s court



The recorded history of the Fuji School demonstrates that the high priest's infallibility was advocated not because the high priest was worthy of respect; rather, this unorthodox doctrine was used as convenient dogma to silence criticism against the high priest and bolster his influence.

Distressed by this, priests and lay believers entreated Venerable Priestess Nissho for her help regarding the appointment of the next chief priest. So the venerable priestess was to choose one.

Nikkan, then chief priest of Hosho-ji temple, told her that there was no one like Nisshun. Thus the venerable priestess invited Teacher [Nisshun] to the head temple. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 5, p. 269)

With the strong support of Kyodai'in, Nisshun went to Taiseki-ji to assume the office of high priest in 1641. Put simply, this powerful lay patron in effect appointed the high priest. The head temple could then renew the deed to its property from the newly appointed third shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu, and thus maintain its status as a head temple. If Taiseki-ji remained without a high priest, the Fuji School would have lost its independent status and become a branch temple of some other sect.

The transfer of the office of high priest from Nissei to Nisshun, however, did not take place until October 27,

1645. The biographical account of Nisshun states:

Later a reconciliation between Teacher Nissei and the venerable priestess [Kyodai'in] was realized, and the trust and respect between them were restored as it was before. So in the second year of Shoho [1645], Teacher Nissei went to the head temple, and on the twenty-seventh day of the tenth month of the same year, [Teacher Nisshun] received from Teacher Nissei the great transmission of the golden utterance of the Buddha and thus officially became the nineteenth high priest. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 5, p. 270)

As mentioned here, Nisshun was a "high priest without the lineage" for about four years. It is also recorded that Nisshun transcribed Gohonzon in January and February of 1645. So it is noteworthy that without the formal transfer of the lineage of high priest, one could assume the office and conduct its various administrative responsibilities, including transcription of the Gohonzon. This is yet another historical

fact that contradicts the current Nichiren Shoshu priesthood's assertion that only a legitimate high priest can transcribe Gohonzon and confer them upon believers because of the mystical spiritual property called "the Living Essence" that he received from his predecessor through the transfer ceremony (*The Liturgy of Nichiren Shoshu*, Nichiren Shoshu Head Temple Taiseki-ji ed., English version, p. 35).

Because of the unusual circumstances surrounding Nisshun's appointment, some criticism and opposition were expected. So when Nisshun was invited to Taiseki-ji, Nikkan, then chief priest of Hoshō-ji in Edo, who recommended Nisshun to Kyodai'in, sent to the parish leader the following letter:

At Taiseki-ji, the heritage of the Law is transmitted through the golden utterance of the Buddha. One who receives this transmission—whether he is learned or unlearned—is a living person of Shakyamuni and Nichiren. Only through putting faith in this can people of the Latter Day sow the seed of Buddhahood.... Whoever becomes high priest, as long as he received the transmission of the heritage of the Law, should be known as a living person of Shakyamuni and Nichiren. This is the true intent of the founder [of Taiseki-ji, Nikko Shonin], and the basis for the school's believers. (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 5, p. 271)

To solidify support for Nisshun, the

absolute authority of high priest was once again invoked by equating the successive high priests with the Daishonin. The recorded history of the Fuji School demonstrates that the high priest's infallibility was advocated not because the high priest was worthy of respect; rather, this unorthodox doctrine was used as convenient dogma to silence criticism against the high priest and bolster his influence.

Even after he relinquished his office, Nissei continued to enjoy some influence in the Fuji School. Many branch temples continued to enshrine Shakyamuni's statue. Only after Nissei's death in 1683 could Nisshun, the twenty-second high priest [a different person from the nineteenth high priest, whose name is pronounced the same yet spelled with different Chinese characters], and Nikkei, the twenty-third high priest, both of whom originally came from Yobo-ji, remove Shakyamuni's statues from Taiseki-ji's branch temples.

Shakyamuni's statues were enshrined as objects of devotion for nearly fifty years at some branch temples and even sixty years at others. Even after the removal of those statues, however, Yobo-ji's influence continued to be felt in the Fuji School until Nichikan, the twenty-sixth high priest, thoroughly refuted its erroneous teachings.

To be continued

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1. Present-day Tokyo.
 2. Present-day Tokushima.



DIALOGUE

on the *Lotus Sutra*

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

This is the thirty-first 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 August 1997 issue of the Daibyakureng, the Soka Gakkai study journal.

This is the third part of their discussion on the doctrine of the Ten Worlds and their sixth on the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” (sixteenth) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. Here they investigate the worlds of Heaven, or Rapture, and the two vehicles of Learning and Realization. They also take up such issues as how to elevate one’s state of life while living in a society filled with greed and selfishness, and the meaning of true fulfillment and joy.

31 The “Life Span” Chapter—The Six Paths to the Four Noble Worlds

Takanori Endo: Today let’s discuss the world of Heaven and the worlds that we’ve come to know as the two vehicles of Learning and Realization.

The word *heaven* evokes an image of a realm that is bathed in cheerful rosy hues. But I’m not sure what color I would associate with the worlds of Learning and Realization.

Daisaku Ikeda: How about gray?

Katsuji Saito: Yes, gray would be it. Such a realm, as I imagine it, would be rather dark and gloomy.

Haruo Suda: That’s probably because in the Goshō there are many descriptions of people of the two vehicles being severely reprimanded by Shakyamuni Buddha.

Endo: Still, the two vehicles, or two paths, are included among the four noble worlds.¹ That’s because those in these states have gone beyond endless transmigration through the six paths.² As

“It probably goes without saying that everyone desires the bliss of a heavenly existence ... circumstances I hope and pray everyone will enjoy. Unfortunately, however, no rose can bloom forever. With the passing of time, its color is certain to fade and its petals to scatter as it experiences the four seasons or sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death that are an integral part of all life.”

a matter of fact, their state of life is really quite high. And, to that extent, they should be happier than those dwelling in the six paths.

Ikeda: Why, then, do you suppose the progression is from rosy to gray? Wouldn't it be better to simply remain in the world of Heaven? I expect our discussion will hinge on this point.

Ultimately, there is certainly nothing wrong with the world of Heaven. Problems arise, however, when filled with self-satisfaction and complacency, we become attached to or are held back by this state of life.

It probably goes without saying that everyone desires the bliss of a heavenly existence—good health, abundance, a happy home, a joyful life—circumstances I hope and pray everyone will enjoy. Unfortunately, however, no rose can bloom forever. With the passing of time, its color is certain to fade and its petals to scatter as it experiences the four seasons or sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death that are an integral part of all life.

Saito: It has been said that as the joy of Heaven fades, its inhabitants experience the five types of decay.³ Buddhist texts use the image of flowers wilting to convey this.

Ikeda: The joy of Heaven is ephemeral like a mirage or a dream. A life spent in pursuit of a mirage is itself a mirage.

The purpose of Buddhist practice is to establish an eternally indestructible state of happiness; not a fleeting happiness that perishes like a flower, but an internal palace of happiness that will last throughout all time. This diamond palace, this treasure tower soaring to magnificent heights is built through faith.



Heavenly flowers of joy blossom within that palace according to the season. Because in this state we actualize the principle that earthly desires are enlightenment, the more worries we have, the greater the sense of fulfillment we feel. The true purpose of the four noble worlds lies in constructing such a “diamond-like heart.”

In other words, it is our human revolution—changing from someone who is buffeted about by

the environment, to someone who can positively influence their surroundings—that enables us to construct an unshakable palace within. The seeking mind represented by the two vehicles could be said to constitute the foundation on which this eternal palace within is built.

Suda: Perhaps rather than the color gray, a more appropriate simile would be a subdued silver.

Endo: The state of the world today could be likened to a bubble that has burst. The ephemeral prosperity we have enjoyed has taken a heavy toll. When you think about it, any society that would encourage its people to play out their desires to the hilt does nothing but engender suffering. That is certainly the state of affairs in Japanese society today. I think it is also why Japan today so clearly illustrates the teaching about transmigration in the six paths.

Ikeda: That's what is commonly called the devilish power of desire. What happiness has the pursuit of such desires brought?

If you can imagine a "heaven of desire" produced from having all of your desires fulfilled, you will find at its summit the Devil King of the Sixth Heaven. A life or a society devoted solely to the pursuit of desire is ruled by this devil king. No condition is more horrid and miserable.

Saito: It's true that in modern civilization the unbridled pursuit of desires is generally regarded as something "good." And that the goal of society is nothing more than to reach the world of Heaven. But the fact is, modern civilization has reached a deadlock. That should be clear to anyone.

Ikeda: The fundamental cause for this deadlock is that people are focused entirely on the external, material world, and fail to direct their gaze within. Above all, they avert their eyes from the universal sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death that constitute the fundamental problems of human existence.

It is the Lotus Sutra, and particularly the "Life Span" (sixteenth) chapter, that can open people's closed eyes. Only when we fix our gaze on grap-

pling with questions of life and death do we awaken to the true meaning of existence. When we squarely face the profound reality of life and death, we realize how shallow are our concerns for momentary satisfaction. This is a very common experience.

The Brilliance of Life As Perceived From the Abyss of Death

He sees living beings seared and consumed by birth, old age, sickness and death, care and suffering, sees them undergo many kinds of pain because of the five desires and the desire for wealth and profit. Again, because of their greed and attachment and striving they undergo numerous pains in their present existence, and later they undergo the pain of being reborn in hell or as beasts or hungry spirits. Even if they are reborn in the heavenly realm or the realm of human beings, they undergo the pain of poverty and want, the pain of parting from loved ones, the pain of encountering those they detest—all these many different kinds of pain.

Yet living beings, drowned in the midst of all this, delight and amuse themselves, unaware, unknowing, without alarm or fear. They feel no sense of loathing and make no attempt to escape. In this burning house which is the threefold world, they race about to east and west, and though they encounter great pain, they are not distressed by it. (LS3, 59)⁴

Suda: To be able to look death in the eye can change the way we live, as many SGI members can attest. I would like to introduce the experience of Makoto Sato, who was head of the Soka Gakkai organization in Toyama Prefecture. In June 1979, Mr. Sato was diagnosed as having terminal cancer of the upper jaw. He transferred from a hospital in Toyama Prefecture to one in Tokyo. It was on that day that he learned the truth of his condition.

Saito: Did he hear it from the doctor?

Suda: No, Mr. Sato heard the news from his wife, who had been informed by the doctor a little earlier. She broke it to him as the two of them were strolling through the bustling Shinjuku district.

Endo: When he heard it, it must have come as quite a shock.

Suda: Mr. Sato had had some inkling as to the gravity of his condition, but still he was stunned. Yet, for some reason, he was not overcome with fear. On the contrary, he described how at the moment he heard the news, everything around seemed to take on a kind of glow. The asphalt streets seemed to shine in the rays of sunlight that broke through the overcast skies of the rainy season. He thought that he had never seen the trees so green or the streets so lovely. He described feeling the urge to speak out to passersbys and embrace everyone.

Endo: That sounds remarkable.

Suda: At the same time, he said, he felt a shudder as though he were about to mount the gallows. But Mr. Sato did not run away from the reality of his life. With his entire being, he began waging an all-out struggle against the “devil of death.”

His surgery, which was supposed to last eight hours, took only two-and-a-half hours, and was highly successful. His teeth, gums and upper jaw were surgically removed, and the replacement of the gauze in his mouth every day caused him such excruciating pain that he almost fainted.

Still, he read the Goshō with his fading eyesight, engraving one passage after another in the depths of his life. After the operation, he was afraid that his speech would be impeded, but it turned out that talking was to be part of his rehabilitation. Mr. Sato remarked, “Speaking at Gakkai activities was the greatest aid to my recovery.”

Even in his circumstances, he was anxious about his fellow members of Toyama Prefecture. Since coming to the hospital in Tokyo, he had not had a single chance to return. Aware that he had not been back for some time, President Ikeda, you invited him to go on a guidance trip with you through Toyama and the Hokuriku region. When you arrived, the first thing you did was introduce him to everyone, saying, “I’ve brought Mr. Sato with me today.” I hear Mr. Sato was overcome with tears.

After that, Mr. Sato officially transferred to Tokyo, and began devoting himself in earnest to speaking at seminars, giving individual guid-

ance and doing other activities in his new community west of Tokyo.

Ikeda: I met him many times at the Tachikawa Culture Center. I will always remember his spirited, animated gait. One could sense that he felt immense joy to be alive.

Suda: Mr. Sato himself once remarked: “Before experiencing what it is like to be on the very border between life and death, I could not understand the true profundity of the Buddhism or President Ikeda’s guidance. To live, Buddhism

If you can imagine a “heaven of desire” produced from having all of your desires fulfilled, you will find at its summit the Devil King of the Sixth Heaven. A life or a society devoted solely to the pursuit of desire is ruled by this devil.

teaches, is a formidable struggle. But all too many people fail to realize this. I still have a lot of work that I need to do for kosen-rufu. Therefore, I cannot waste my time.”

Saito: For many people, certainly, it is only when death is staring them in the face that they ask themselves: “What has the purpose of my life been?” “Why didn’t I live and practice faith more earnestly while I was healthy?”

Ikeda: That’s it exactly. Unless we practice faith with the attitude “now is the last moment of my life,” we will have cause for regret. Unless we

thoroughly exert ourselves for kosen-rufu while we are healthy and can take action, we will regret it for countless eons to come.

Suda: Mr. Sato died in 1992. But until his death, he put all his energy into giving individual guidance. Describing his attitude, he said, “When I meet someone, the thought that I may never have the chance to meet the person again in this life fills me with the ardent desire to teach the person as many Goshō passages as possible.”

In particular, if he learned that someone was in the final stage of terminal cancer, Mr. Sato would encourage the person passionately as if it were his own affair. Those who received his encouragement and were revitalized have now fanned out throughout the entire country.

He would give people passages from Nichiren Daishonin’s writings that he had copied onto memo stationary: “The fact that you have survived until now was in order that you might meet this opportunity” (MW-6, 235); “This illness of your husband’s may be due to the Buddha’s design” (MW-5, 280); “Life is limited, and we must not begrudge it” (MW-5, 132). Those receiving these pages often reported that while they had been familiar with the passages, when they received them in this form, individually handwritten, it struck a fresh chord in their hearts.

Saito: That’s a wonderful account.

Ikeda: It illustrates what it means to live a truly noble life. When one gazes into the chasm between life and death, status, fame and wealth count for absolutely nothing. All that remains is one’s bare self stripped of all external adornment. Only through Buddhism can we change our lives on this essential level.

Religion Is Born Out of Fear of “Heaven”

Ikeda: First of all, why don’t we consider the basic meaning of “heaven”?

Endo: Okay. The term *heaven* is the translation of the Sanskrit term *deva*, a realm in which heavenly beings dwell. The same term is also translated as “deity.” It originally means “shine,” in the sense of radiating light.

Saito: Whether we call it “heaven” or “deity,” when we think of it as the place where the Buddhist gods might dwell, that makes a lot of sense. The *deva* or the Buddhist gods, which include the god of the sun and god of the moon, must have been conceived as beings with a power transcending that of people on the earth.

Suda: In India, from ancient times it was believed that those who performed good acts in the present life would in future existences be reborn in heaven.

Endo: Brahman and Indra were representative Indian gods believed to dwell in the world of Heaven. These deities were in a sense adopted and given new identities by Buddhism as Bonten and Taishaku, respectively.

Ikeda: “Heaven” or “deity” could be literally thought of not as a place, but as a universal force. People, gazing up at the skies, have always been captivated by the awesome grandeur of the heavens. And they have prayed to make the power of the universe their ally. Also, fearful of the destructive power that nature sometimes shows, they have prayed to avoid disaster.

People feared and worshipped the great power of nature. Sensing the existence of a destiny that they were powerless to change through their own efforts, they prayed to their gods for their lot to improve. From such prayer religion was born. Prayer was not born of religion; rather, religion was born of prayer. In other words, the concept of “heaven” suggests a perception on people’s part of a great existence transcending human beings.

Many animals live on four limbs with their eyes turned to the ground. Human beings stood up on their legs and directed their gaze out into the universe. They aspired toward “heaven.” Metaphorically speaking, I think we can characterize the evolutionary advance of human beings in these terms. In that sense, the shining “heavens” must have become a kind of ideal.

Suda: Certainly, many new thinkers who lived around the same time as Shakyamuni—for example, the six non-Buddhist teachers⁵—generally put forward the view that the purpose of practice was to gain rebirth in heaven.



GARY MAJURE

Ruins of Mayan astronomical observatory at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico. President Ikeda explains that
 “People, gazing up at the skies, have always been captivated by the awesome grandeur of the heavens.
 And they have prayed to make the power of the universe their ally.”

Ikeda: In Buddhism, “heaven” is not seen as a place to which one goes after death, but rather as a state of life that we may experience from moment to moment. Also, Buddhism designates the life-conditions attained through the practices of the six non-Buddhist teachers as belonging to the world of Heaven.

Endo: You are referring to the six heavens of the world of desire (a realm swirling with desire), the eighteen heavens of the world of form (a realm in which one has overcome domination by desire, but is still bound by physical restrictions), and the four heavens of the world of formlessness (a realm in which one is still subject to spiritual restrictions). Together these make up the twenty-eight heavens.

Suda: The Lotus Sutra says of the threefold world of desire, form and formlessness, “There is no safety in the threefold world; it is like a burning house” (LS3, 69). Since the six paths are included within the threefold world, the two terms are identical in meaning.

Saito: Of these, the world of desire is a realm swirling with the desire to live, instinctive desire, material desire and desire for social advance.

The world of Heaven is primarily a state of rapturous joy experienced through the fulfillment of such desires. For example, when one is in a state of satisfaction after a good meal, he is in the world of Heaven.

Suda: Nichiren Daishonin says, “Joy is that [the world] of Rapture [or Heaven]” (MW-1, 52).

Ikeda: Different kinds of joy accompany the fulfillment of different desires. There is, for example, pure intellectual desire that transcends the desires of the “world of desire”; there is desire for beauty; and there is spiritual desire to attain a sublime state of life.

Endo: The pursuit and fulfillment of such lofty desires must be found in the worlds of form and formlessness.

Saito: This could be described as a state in which one seeks the truth and that desire is fulfilled. This is still within the world of Heaven.

Suda: How is that different from the life-condition of the two vehicles of Learning and Realization? In particular, it seems that the world of formlessness and the two vehicles are similar in that they both indicate conditions of spiritual attainment.

Two Different Views of Attainment

Ikeda: People of the two vehicles with their higher life-condition do not view the state of life they have attained as an absolute goal. They do not become attached to it.

While those in the world of formlessness view their state as a condition of final attainment, those in the worlds of Learning and Realization view their state as an “intermediate path” that they have taken in seeking to advance further toward the state of Buddhahood. They are not captive or shackled to what they have attained thus far. They perceive the principles of non-substantiality and dependent origination operating in all phenomena.

Suda: Viewing all things from the standpoint of dependent origination means viewing them as coming into being through a synergy of internal causes and external relations, and as mutually interdependent.

Saito: When a new cause or relation is involved, the situation immediately changes. Therefore, they perceive each and every thing as existing through the temporary interaction of internal causes and relations. This is termed the “temporary fusion of internal cause and relation.”

Ikeda: That’s certainly true of human beings. The features that we think of as constituting our “self” are really no more than a temporal aspect that we assume. No one can escape change. A healthy person will someday become sick and die. A young person, in what seems but an instant, becomes old.

We may ask ourselves, “Just who am I?” But the person we were ten years ago is not the same as the person we are today. There is no such thing as

an “unchanging self.” Buddhism therefore teaches that we should discard attachment to the self.

Suda: That’s the doctrine of “selflessness.”

Ikeda: Selflessness means being without self. This concept reflects the point of view that there is no fixed self that is eternally unchanging. Rather, there is continual change. This position views the self as essentially non-substantial, or empty.

Saito: But unenlightened beings, supposing the self to be unchanging, become attached to the self and to their possessions. In other words, they perceive all things as “substantial.” This is the state of life of beings in the six paths.

Ikeda: The same is also true of people’s attachment to wealth, status, fame and the like: nothing is more empty; they are as ephemeral as bubbles on the water. Yet, beings in the six paths become attached to them, and live under the illusion that such things will belong to them in perpetuity.

To sum things up, those in the six worlds perceive all phenomena as substantial. Those in the worlds of Learning and Realization perceive all phenomena as essentially empty; that is to say, in light of the truth of non-substantiality. Those in the world of Bodhisattva perceive phenomena as provisional; that is, in light of the truth of temporary existence. And those in the world of Buddhahood perceive phenomena in light of the truth of the Middle Way, which integrates the truths of non-substantiality and temporary existence. I expect that we will have the chance to discuss this later in greater detail.

Endo: To illustrate what is meant by the statement that those in the six paths perceive phenomena as substantial, a baseball pitcher who, while young, makes a name for himself for having a very powerful fastball, will gradually lose his strength as he ages. Nevertheless, the person will most likely continue to maintain an image of himself as always having the same strong fastball. Then years later, when he’s much older, he pitches at a crucial moment what he imagines to be his usual fastball. But it isn’t. It is a decidedly weak pitch that leads his team to defeat. This is something you see from time to time.

Ikeda: There are people who, even after they retire, are unable to shake their sense of themselves or their pride as, say, a manager, or as an employee of a leading company—all in all making such people rather difficult to get along with. It is not unusual in Japan to find people whose entire identity is so bound up with the company they work for that, after they retire, all that remains is an impoverished sense of identity. In many cases, such people cannot begin a new phase in life because they are unable to examine this self with clear eyes, leaving them frustrated and miserable.

People have the tendency to view not only themselves but others as well in such static terms. No matter how another person might have grown and changed, they tend to always see the person as he or she was in the past. It is the insight of the two vehicles, that is, the wisdom of the truth of non-substantiality, that refutes such a static view. The true enlightenment of the two vehicles lies in the perception that there is nothing at all in the world that does not undergo change; and that, as a result, it is incumbent upon one to forever strive to advance and improve.

Saito: So when people of the two vehicles suppose the state they have attained to be an end in itself and grow complacent, ironically they no longer can be said to belong to the two vehicles.

Ikeda: That's right. At that point, they revert to the six paths. This is similar to how once beings of the world of formlessness believe that they have arrived at the highest summit of the world of Heaven, they begin to descend.

Endo: I guess we had better not enjoy ourselves too much!

Suda: Nichiren Daishonin says in "The Opening of the Eyes":

The devout followers of the non-Buddhist teachings ... ascending to the worlds of form and formlessness, believe they have attained nirvana when they reach the highest level of heavens. But although they make their way upward bit by bit like an inchworm, they fall back from the heaven

where there is neither thought nor no thought, and descend instead into the three evil paths. Not a single one succeeds in remaining on the level of heavens.... (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 63)⁶

Ikeda: Although they have carried out difficult practices, earnestly ascending step by step, in the end they fall down head over heels. Why do you suppose that is?

There are many different perspectives. But simply put, there is probably something unnatural or forced in the state of life that they have attained as

The true enlightenment of the two vehicles lies in the perception that there is nothing at all in the world that does not undergo change; and that, as a result, it is incumbent upon one to forever strive to advance and improve.

a result of carrying out such arduous practices. And because it is forced, they are unable to long remain in that state. To illustrate, if someone who doesn't have much money manages to stay at a first-rate hotel by resorting to unreasonable measures, then even though the person may be able to enjoy fine living there for a time, eventually the truth will come out and he will have to return to his "shabby home." Using the same analogy, it could be said that the purpose of Buddhist practice, rather than being to check into a nice hotel, is to securely rebuild one's home. Through our practice we develop a self that is like a splendid palace. In order to do so, we must first understand the fundamental causes of our suffering—



K. FRAMINGTON

“It can be said that the state of joy one experiences upon achieving a target to which one has dedicated one’s life is that of Heaven. For instance, a child may have the goal of achieving the best grades in the class, or of mastering a difficult physical challenge, such as the horizontal bar in gymnastics. Musicians in an orchestra may attain the state of Heaven through thoroughly polishing their musical sensitivity and skill, performing in wonderful harmony and attaining a high level of musical expertise.”

the places where the roof leaks, or where there are drafts—and fundamentally repair these areas, and so create a comfortable and “homey” state of life.

In other words, Buddhist practice lies in perceiving that the cause of suffering in life is none other than one’s own illusions, and then struggling to transform the self so as to conquer these illusions. Those in the world of formlessness are people who strive in their own way to change their state of life, but who lack the wisdom of the true “law of life.” For that reason, there is something unnatural or forced about their efforts. They stand up as straight as they can; but because they lack firm footing, they tumble down again to their former state.

Saito: The “law of life” enabling one to change the self into a “palace” is the Mystic Law.

Ikeda: That is indeed the conclusion we reach.

Suda: This is the meaning of the Daishonin’s statement to the effect that, without the Lotus Sutra, one could never escape from transmigration in the six paths (GZ, 418). It is through the Mystic Law that people of the two vehicles, too, are for the first time able to move beyond the six paths.

The “First Step” in the Birth of Buddhism

Ikeda: In any event, desires and pleasures are of many different kinds. Consequently, the states of life that accompany their fulfillment also differ widely. It can be said that the state of joy one experiences upon achieving a target to which one has dedicated one’s



KIRK CONYLES

life is that of Heaven. For instance, a child may have the goal of achieving the best grades in the class, or of mastering a difficult physical challenge, such as the horizontal bar in gymnastics. Musicians in an orchestra may attain the state of Heaven through thoroughly polishing their musical sensitivity and skill, performing in wonderful harmony and attaining a high level of musical expertise.

Saito: While these are certainly on different levels, in a sense they are alike in that each is a kind of self-actualization.

Suda: To dedicate one's life to achieving some target—we can say that this itself is a part of what it means to lead a humane existence.

Endo: Last time, we said that those in the world of Anger strive to “win over others,” while those in Humanity, Heaven and the four noble paths aim to

“win over themselves.” It could be said that the world of Heaven is the effect produced through a tenacious struggle to win over the self.

Since it is a state of inner fulfillment reached in the course of achieving one's own goals, the “life-space” is broader than that of the world of Humanity. Even so, those in this state have not transcended the six paths.

Ikeda: Let's try to recapitulate what has been said thus far. In Shakyamuni's time, attaining the state of Heaven was a widely held ideal. And this state was above all understood as signifying fulfillment of the “world of desire.”

Saito: Toward that end, adherents of traditional Brahmanism carried out various prayers and practices.

Ikeda: In terms of secular desire, the palace where



GARY MURIE

Ruins of an ancient Roman water distribution system in Nîmes, France. English novelist and essayist Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) (right) stated, “If the men of the Middle Ages and early modern epoch lived in filth and discomfort, it was not for any lack or ability to change their mode of life; it was because they chose to live in this way, because filth and discomfort fitted in with their principles and prejudices, political, moral, and religious....”

Shakyamuni grew up must have seemed to the people of the time as akin to a heavenly realm. But when he ventured from the gates of the palace, Shakyamuni saw people suffering from old age and sickness. He also saw a corpse. Confronted by the reality of the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death, Shakyamuni understood the emptiness of desire. In other words, he perceived that everything is subject to change. Thereupon, he renounced the “heavenly” lifestyle in which he had grown up, and embarked upon his religious quest.

At the time, there were new thinkers who aspired to attain a lofty state of life transcending secular desire. These were the six non-Buddhist teachers. It is said that after renouncing the world, Shakyamuni received instruction from two of these individuals. But at length he discerned that the teachings they espoused did not ultimately offer a solution to the sufferings of life and death.

Endo: The world of desire had proved to offer no

solution. Nor did the worlds of form and formlessness.

Ikeda: “Where, then, does true human happiness lie?” From this inquiry, the great teaching that is Buddhism was born.

Suda: The birth of Buddhism, then, lay in Shakyamuni’s progression from the world of Heaven to the realm of the two vehicles.

Ikeda: Yes, in the transition from the six paths to the four noble paths.

Endo: Could the first step in that direction have been Shakyamuni’s perception of life’s impermanence, as indicated by the account of his early life? 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).



Ikeda: As was true in Shakyamuni’s case, fixing one’s gaze on death is probably the first step to be taken in seeking the “eternal.”

We live in a civilization dedicated to the pursuit of desire, of attachment to the world of desire. For instance, people take it for granted these days that life ought to become increasingly comfortable and easy. And in the event that they are unable to lead a peaceful and easy existence, it is certainly not for wanting to do so.

Difficult as it may be for people today to imagine, there have in fact been times in which people sought not an easy life, but another kind of existence. Making this point, the late author and social critic Aldous Huxley (1894–1963) writes:

The first thing that strikes one about the discomfort in which our ancestors lived is that it was mainly voluntary.... Men could have made sofas and smoking-room chairs, could have installed bathrooms and central heating and sanitary plumbing any time during the last three or four thousand years. And as a matter of fact, at certain periods they did indulge themselves in these comforts. Two thousand years before Christ, the inhabitants of Cnossos were familiar with sanitary plumbing. The Romans had invented an elaborate system of hot-air heating, and the bathing facilities in a smart Roman villa were luxurious and complete beyond the dreams of the

modern man.... If the men of the Middle Ages and early modern epoch lived in filth and discomfort, it was not for any lack or ability to change their mode of life; it was because they chose to live in this way, because filth and discomfort fitted in with their principles and prejudices, political, moral, and religious....

One can never have something for nothing, and the achievement of comfort has been accompanied by a compensating loss of other equally, or perhaps more, valuable things....

The modern world seems to regard it [comfort] as an end in itself, an absolute good. One day, perhaps, the earth will have been turned into one vast feather-bed, with man’s body dozing on top of it and his mind underneath, like Desdemona,⁷ smothered.⁸

Saito: I recall that Huxley’s wife highly commended your activities,⁹ President Ikeda.

Suda: His point is that to simply seek an easy life kills the spirit.

Modern Society Tries to Conceal Death

Ikeda: In that connection, what is problematic about the world of Heaven is that it functions to conceal the reality of the four sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death. Because the state of Heaven is accompanied by momentary joy, it has the propensity to cause one to divert one’s eyes from the great problems lying at the heart of existence. In fact, it is often the case that the world of Hell is more effective in opening one’s eyes to the reality of life and enabling one to quickly comprehend the path leading to the four noble worlds.

Suda: Certainly, those whose lives on the surface appear very happy may have considerable difficulty embracing faith.

Saito: Material abundance and spiritual joy are important. But the question is whether simply possessing such happiness is enough to enable one to

overcome the sufferings of life and death. Sadly, the answer is “No.”

Endo: A religious scholar once asserted that in creating a work of art, a master painter can attain a transcendent state in which he or she can sense the eternity of life. He said: “Attachment to life cannot disrupt the artist’s frame of mind in such sublime state of life. Nor does fear of death occupy any quarter... The problem of life and death melts away of its own.”¹⁰

This scholar himself was later diagnosed as having cancer, and was told that he had only six months to live. At that point, he later recounted, he was swept by feelings and emotions that he had never imagined.

Ikeda: That’s the case of Hideo Kishimoto.¹¹ It’s quite famous.

Endo: He writes:

I then understood the strength of my attachment to life. When one’s life is exposed to direct danger, how the heart seethes and rages! The entire body wages a desperate resistance, which extends to the cells at the very tips of one’s hands and feet.¹²

And so he began a ten-year struggle against illness.

At first, the only way I could find to help myself cope with the shock that I had cancer and sustain myself spiritually was by frantically throwing myself into my work. I pushed myself relentlessly like a wounded boar. By living vigorously and keeping busy with my work, with the sense of fulfillment it brought me, I tried to resist the fear of death that assailed me. The desire to live well—that was my sole source of sustenance. I thought that, insofar as possible, I would thereby try to distract myself from my fear of death.... But the more I tried to avoid thinking about the darkness of death, the larger the prospect of death, like a gaping portal, loomed before me.¹³

Dr. Kishimoto’s son relates that a year before his father died the latter was so busy that to talk with his father, he had to make an appointment two days in advance to get ten minutes of his time.

Several months before he died, Dr. Kishimoto

wrote: “As a result of this cancer, a disease that I never thought I would contract, I was overwhelmed by the sense of hunger for life and I found myself standing before the implacable darkness of death.”¹⁴ He also said: “For the ten-year period during which I continued to battle the recurrence of cancer, I came to understand with my entire being the horror of this state of hunger.”¹⁵

Ikeda: A “hunger for life” that no amount of working or thinking can assuage—these are the sentiments of someone who has squarely faced the reality of his own death.

Suda: People are rarely able to muster the extraordinary courage to face death directly.

Ikeda: Dr. Kishimoto also offers insightful comments about various trappings of the modern age that, as he puts it, “try to conceal death.”

Endo: That’s right. One of these, according to Dr. Kishimoto, is an improved standard of living. Through hard work, we can attain lives of comfort and convenience, and enjoy an agreeable environment. With the advance of medical technology, the average life span has increased. As a result, he says, death has become further and further removed from the reality of people’s daily lives.

Ikeda: In a broad sense, I think it could be said that such boons of civilization represent the aspect of Heaven in society. Dr. Kishimoto argues that such things that prompt one to avert one’s eyes from death are deceptions that, while entirely free of malice, are at the same time the most dangerously misleading.

Endo: Yes. He suggests that modern civilization deceives people into believing that there is no need to come to terms with death.

Ikeda: But the roots of this “society of deception” are clearly in decay, and suffering people are on the increase. For instance, while each year in Japan approximately ten thousand people die in traffic accidents, twice that number annually commit suicide.

Also, there is a frightening degree of apathy or indifference about matters of life and death in our society. And it is only becoming more pro-

nounced and widespread, not only in youth, but in the older generation as well. And we hear about many appalling incidents evidencing a cold-blooded apathy toward other human beings.

Saito: It seems to me that “death of the spirit” and “death of sensitivity” afflict growing numbers of people.

Ikeda: I have the feeling that it is becoming increasingly apparent that our modern civilization is paying the price for having paved over life’s fundamental issues.

Conquering the Fear of Cancer’s “Recurrence”

Endo: At the start of our discussion, the experience of Mr. Sato of Toyama was introduced. I keenly feel that “facing death” is much easier said than done. Probably it was because Mr. Sato had lived out his life in the Soka Gakkai that he was able to conclude his life so vigorously.

Saito: It is likely that no one else could understand the pain and shock people feel at the time they are told that they have cancer. There are many SGI members who have fought and overcome cancer through faith. In such a struggle, the encouragement of family members and friends becomes a great source of support.

Ikeda: Encouragement is very important; it is a source of untold strength. Probably there isn’t anyone who could remain perfectly calm when faced with the prospect of imminent death. Death makes anyone uneasy and anxious. It is frightening. That’s normal and natural.

Someone who says, “I am not afraid of death” is usually simply striking a pose. On the other hand, if one cowers in fear at the prospect of death, then one cannot defeat the “demons” of illness and death. Only through faith can we truly overcome our fear of death.

But even if someone who is ill intends to chant daimoku, anxiety will often stand in their way. At such times, having someone who will pray together with them or offer heartfelt encouragement will go a long way toward alleviating their worries and filling them with courage.

Endo: That’s really true. For someone who has had cancer, the greatest concern is that the cancer will recur. It seems that the shock people feel when they learn that their cancer has returned, is even greater than the shock they felt when learning for the first time of their condition.

Yoshinobu Matsuura of Toyohira Ward, Sapporo, whose experience has been introduced in the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper, was operated on for cancer of the liver. In just four months’ time the cancer had recurred. At that time, he was reportedly frozen in shock. Even though he made

There is a frightening degree of apathy or indifference about matters of life and death in our society. And it is only becoming more pronounced and widespread, not only in youth, but in the older generation as well.

struggling against the disease the focus of his life, he found that he simply could not muster the energy to chant daimoku. And the pessimistic sense that he had no chance of recovery grew only stronger.

It was the words of a senior in faith that finally aroused Mr. Matsuura’s spirits: “If you take it easy like this, the cancer will also feel comfortable, and will be content to remain inside your body indefinitely. You should fight for kosen-rufu and thereby drive the cancer away!”

He understood then that he had been defeated by himself—by the weak part of his nature that had decided that his condition was incurable. In the end, he realized that by winning over himself, he would

But even if someone who is ill intends to chant daimoku, anxiety will often stand in their way. At such times, having someone who will pray together with them or offer heartfelt encouragement will go a long way toward alleviating their worries.

be able to defeat the “devil” of illness. From that point on, he reportedly began exerting himself in kosen-rufu activities like a new person.

Ikeda: He showed splendid victory. When we stand up to battle the devil of illness, we are winning over the self.

Endo: He had the attitude that with every daimoku he chanted, he was driving out the cancer cells. And he exerted himself with the same spirit in introducing other people to the Daishonin’s Buddhism and promoting subscriptions to Gakkai publications. Each day he waged an earnest struggle, and was in the end able to realize a splendid recovery.

A Single Day of Life Is More Precious Than All the Treasures in the Universe

Ikeda: For someone who has once come to the brink of death, each day takes on immeasurable worth and importance. This is something that those who avoid facing death wholly fail to grasp. Nichiren Daishonin says, “One day of life is more valuable than all the treasures of the universe” (MW-1, 231). Therefore, it is important that we make the most of each and every day.

A Buddhist text says, “Each day we should earnestly set about accomplishing everything that we need to do that day, since for all we know our death may come tomorrow.”¹⁶

Saito: It is to live with the awareness that the present moment is the last moment of our lives, and, therefore, is infinitely valuable.

Ikeda: Life changes constantly, and flashes by

in an instant. We should carefully reflect on these words of the Daishonin:

How long does a lifetime last? If one stops to consider, it is like a single night’s lodging at a wayside inn. Should one forget that fact and seek some measure of worldly fame and profit? Though you may gain them, they will be mere prosperity in a dream, a delight scarcely to be prized. You would do better simply to leave such matters to the karma formed in your previous existences.

Once you awaken to the uncertainty and transience of this world, you will find endless examples confronting your eyes and filling your ears. Vanished like clouds or rain, the people of past ages have left nothing but their names. Fading away like dew, drifting far off like smoke, our friends of today too disappear from sight. And should one suppose that he alone can somehow remain forever like the clouds over Mount Mikasa?¹⁷

The spring blossoms depart with the wind; the maple leaves turn red in the autumn showers. All are proof that no living being can stay for long in this world. Therefore, the Lotus Sutra counsels us: “Nothing in this world is firm or secure; all is like foam on the water or a wisp of flame.” (MW-5, 34–35)

Saito: This means that we must not become attached to the world of Heaven, which is as evanescent as foam on the water.

Ikeda: The Daishonin also states:

Outside the city of Tranquil Light, everywhere is a realm of suffering. Once you leave the haven of inherent enlightenment, what is there that can bring you joy? I pray you will embrace the Mystic Law,

which guarantees that one “will enjoy peace and security in this life and good circumstances in the next.” This is the only glory that you need seek in your present lifetime, and is the action that will draw you toward Buddhahood in your next existence. Single-mindedly chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and urge others to do the same; that will remain as the only memory of your present life in this human world. (MW-5, 38)

Develop Inner Affluence

Ikeda: Those in the world of Heaven could be thought of, in the words of the Lotus Sutra, as “millionaires” who enjoy both material and spiritual abundance.

Nichiren Daishonin, citing the words of the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China, explains that there are three kinds of “millionaires.” These are the “secular millionaires,” “world-renouncing millionaires” and “mind-observing millionaires.”

I will not go into a detailed explanation here, but “secular millionaires” could be thought of as millionaires who dwell in the world of Heaven. For example, they may be people of outstanding character, great wealth, or tremendous knowledge. “World-renouncing millionaires” means millionaires of Buddhism—Buddhas. Their lives are endowed with all manner of benefit and good fortune. “Mind-observing millionaires” are ordinary people who realize that, just as they

are, they can become such Buddhas.

Endo: In other words, those who uphold and practice to the “true object of worship” or the Gohonzon, receive all the immeasurable practices and benefits of Buddhas.

Ikeda: Our aim is to become “mind-observing millionaires” whose lives shine over the three existences of past, present and future; individuals who observe their own minds and perceive the world of Buddhahood, which is an inexhaustible ocean of good fortune. In other words, we are millionaires in the depth of our lives through the power of the Lotus Sutra.

Suda: I think that this points to the fundamental path for transcending the deadlock at which the present “society of desire” has arrived.

Ikeda: Next time we will be discussing the worlds of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. I propose that we base our discussion on the doctrine of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.

Saito: We are at long last going to embark on an essential journey in pursuit of the doctrine of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds, which is the *sine qua non* of the Lotus Sutra.

(To be continued)

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1. Four noble worlds: The four worlds of Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood.
 2. Six paths: The six worlds of Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity and Heaven.
 3. Five types of decay: Their (those in the world of Heaven) robes become dirty, the flowers in their hair wither, their bodies smell bad, they sweat under their arms, and they lose their sense of security.
 4. 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.
 5. Six non-Buddhist teachers: Influential thinkers in India during Shakyamuni’s lifetime who openly broke with the old Vedic tradition and challenged Brahman authority in the Indian social order.
 6. Editor’s note: Quotes from the second edition [2nd ed.] of volume 2 of *The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* are taken from the 1995 hard-bound edition, (Tokyo: N.S.I.C., 1995).
 7. Desdemona: Wife of Othello in the Shakespeare tragedy of the same name, she is smothered by her husband who wrongly suspects her of infidelity.
 8. Aldous Huxley, *Proper Studies: The Proper Study of Mankind Is Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1957), pp. 283–99.
 9. Interview with Laura Huxley. *Seikyo Shimbun*, July 19, 1994, p. 3.
 10. “Sei to Shi” (Life and Death), *Hideo Kishimoto Shu* (Works of Hideo Kishimoto) (Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1976), vol. 6, pp. 252–53.
 11. Hideo Kishimoto (1903–64): Professor of the University of Tokyo.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 215.
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 208.
 16. Translated from Japanese. *Nanden Daizokyo*, ed. Junjiro Takakusu (Tokyo: Taisho Shinshu Daizokyo Kanko-kai, 1971), vol. 11, part 2, p. 247. cf. *The Middle Length Sayings* (Majjhima-Nikaya), vol. 3, trans. I. B. Horner (Oxford: The Pali Text Society, 1993), p. 233.
 17. Mikasa: A mountain located in Japanese ancient capital Nara. A place of great scenic beauty, it is a frequent theme in traditional poetry.

Recollections With Leading World Figures

By Daisaku Ikeda



MICHAEL S. YAMASHITA/CORBIS

Jorge A. H. Rangel—Striving for the Creation of a Macau for the Coming Century

THE trip from Hong Kong to the Portuguese territory of Macau takes an hour by boat. The day I made my visit on January 30, 1991, the breeze was warm and the island cast a soft shadow on the blue sea as we approached.

In days long past, brave adventurers set sail from distant shores, crossing the seas to link two worlds—East and West—together. These were the Portuguese sailors of the Age of Great Voyages (from the late fifteenth through seventeenth centuries). Dr. Jorge A. H. Rangel, Secretary

for Public Administration, Education and Youth Affairs of the Government of Macau and chairman of the Standing Committee of the University of Macau (formerly the University of East Asia, Macau), has described the Portuguese spirit as a combination of love, adventure and challenge.

Before the Age of Great Voyages, the Europeans feared the sea. All oceans except the familiar Mediterranean were thought to be populated by monsters. But the Portuguese were not afraid; they boldly

Macau citizens walk through Leal Senado Square, which features a tiled plaza and colonial Portuguese architecture.

sailed off into the unknown. My beloved teacher, Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president, too, remarked on the extraordinary courage of the Portuguese.

The Silk Road's land route had become increasingly inaccessible owing to warfare and local disturbances. With an indomitable will, the Portuguese went ahead and forged a new, ocean-faring Silk Road. The great Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões (1524–80) writes: "Count nothing impossible: he who willed always found a



SGI President Ikeda meets with Dr. Rangel at the Seikyo Shimbun Building in Tokyo, April 14, 1990. At the Fourth Soka University Pacific Basin Symposium in 1994, Dr. Rangel said of his native Macau, "We are the actors of this enormous interchange between the two parts of the planet [East and West]."

SEIKYO PRESS

way."¹ With this passionate spirit—which also pulses in Dr. Rangel's veins—the Portuguese opened up vast new horizons and changed the world. Macau was the base that the first Portuguese navigators established in Asia; and from Macau, they brought the latest developments of Western culture to the East, including Japan.

The culture introduced by the Portuguese stimulated a renaissance in Japan during its warring period in the sixteenth century. Western science, art and technology—medicine, printing, music, painting, shipbuilding, navigation and geocentric astronomy—bewitched the Japanese and transformed the nation. The traces of this influence can be found in words that came into Japanese from Portuguese and are still used today: *botan* (botão; button), *pan* (pão; bread), *tabako* (tabaco; tobacco), *birodo* (veludo; velvet), *karuta* (carta; playing cards), *kompeito* (confeito; sweets), *beranda* (varanda; veranda), *manto*

(manto; mantle), *meriyasu* (meias; knitting), *kappa* (capa; cape). Even *tempura* (tempero), the batter-fried dish that is widely regarded as typically Japanese, comes from Portugal.

In the century before Japan severed its relations with the West by placing a ban on Christianity, Macau was Japan's window on the world. Today, in advance of its scheduled reversion to China in 1999, Macau is searching to define its role in the twenty-first century and constructing the necessary framework to support it. Dr. Rangel is one of the youthful leaders overseeing this task.

The boat docked at the pier. I was surprised and touched that Dr. Rangel should have come to meet me personally. Knowing how extraordinarily busy he is, I was humbled by his kind gesture. Whenever we meet, he is always very gracious and courteous. His unaffected good-naturedness complements his handsome ap-

pearance well. Dr. Rangel was born in Macau in 1943. His academic brilliance was noted at an early age. Later, he attended the University of Lisbon in Portugal, Cambridge University in the United Kingdom and the University of Bonn in Germany. He is an excellent speaker. A journalist once said that his extemporaneous remarks are like a finished manuscript ready for publication. From his student days, he has represented Portugal at international conferences around the world, and he has also won first prize in Spain's international debating contest.

We first met a year before my visit to Macau [in Tokyo in April 1990]. I was astonished to learn that he had read all of my works in both Portuguese and English translation. Leaders of nations other than Japan are really so well read. On that occasion, he shared his belief that the message I have been working so hard to bring to the world



Buildings and ships at Macau's inner harbor. Mainland China is visible across the water.

through my activities is steadily reaching people's hearts. That message is that humankind must overcome differences of nationality and race and come together as citizens of the world.

Macau is a tiny territory, but it pulses with great energy. The exchange between East and West is distilled in its history. Its streets, too, reveal this combination of Chinese energy and the tranquil fragrance of Portugal. With its red, blue, green and yellow panes of stained glass, and flowers of all kinds spilling over the projecting window balconies, Macau's atmosphere is warm and embracing. Many have come to the territory for refuge and acceptance: Japanese Christians fleeing persecution, Western traders driven out of other nations and Chinese escaping famine and flood.

The Macau spirit welcomed all, without regard to nationality or religion. And that spirit shines with even greater bril-

liance today. The focus of a speech I delivered at the University of East Asia (now the University of Macau), following my conferral of an honorary professorship from the university [in January 1991], was to use this spirit to its greatest potential. How can we broaden narrow nationalism or ethnocentrism into an awareness of our shared humanity? The only way, I concluded, is through a new, humanistic education.

I gave this address at the height of the Gulf War. In introducing me, Dr. Rangel observed that unless we devote ourselves to education that places utmost value on the individual human being, we would be left with a truly ugly world. Dr. Rangel is dedicated to education, and he has himself taught. He has poured his energies into educational reform, based on his beliefs that the development of society starts with the development of the individual, and that

human resources are our greatest asset.

In the past, few young people in Macau were able to receive a higher education. The doors to Chinese universities were closed to students from a Portuguese territory. Scholarships were also scarce. Dr. Rangel knew this wouldn't do, so he set about changing it, bringing into play that Portuguese spirit of love, adventure and challenge. The University of Macau had formerly been a private university, but in 1988 it was taken over by the government-funded Macau Foundation. Thereafter, it was opened to all qualified local students. Previously, because the cost of tuition was so high, most of the students had come from Hong Kong. But now a new policy has been introduced under which local students are eligible for a more than fifty-percent reduction in tuition.

Dr. Rangel also worked to introduce compulsory elemen-



A seated statue of the artist and architect Luis de Camoes (1524–80) stands outside the Cafe A Brasileira in Lisbon, Portugal.

HANS GEORG BUCHHEIMER

tary school education, and added new programs in vocational and adult education, as well as correspondence courses. It is his belief that developing human resources should be given the highest priority. He also stressed this in his lecture at the Fourth Soka University Pacific Basin Symposium, held at the University of Macau in August 1994. He said:

Culture should have a higher priority over politics, because the former is the reign of essence and the latter the reign of accidents. There is no way to universal political understanding without one's prior knowledge and acceptance of the other. Only a profound cultural awareness is able to provide this....

We should reject that tomorrow's world is to be simply animated by strictly market rules and the "ethic" of material enrichment at all costs.

The entire Orient will be negating itself if it does not

proclaim the superior excellence of the spirit.²

Scholars from thirty universities and academic institutions, representing sixteen nations and territories, participated in the symposium. The very fact that the gathering was held and with such great success is proof of Dr. Rangel's enthusiasm and commitment. He is a man of action, as the words of the great Portuguese artist Jose Sobral de Almada Negreiros (1893–1970), which he quoted in his speech, testify: "The words to save Humanity were all told, only one thing remains: to save Humanity."³

Though I was only there for a short and very hectic visit, Macau's beauty will always stay with me. Macau proved eloquently that different cultures can coexist, and it is a gift of hope for all humanity as we advance toward an increasingly integrated and unified world and a new Age of Great Voyages.

As I made my way back by

boat to Hong Kong, I thought: In the wide ocean, all ships of different shapes and colors can sail gaily and freely. A small river or lake cannot possibly hold such a diverse variety of vessels and their passengers. The wide ocean corresponds to the awareness of being a world citizen, and bringing that awareness to each harbor and bay across the globe is the basic task we are faced with today. Cultural exchange and humanistic education are the tools we have for spreading that awareness.

Dr. Rangel declared, "We are the actors of this enormous interchange between the two parts of the planet [East and West]."⁴ It is an interchange that will lead us to the great ocean of possibilities and limitless potential. The courage and indomitable spirit of his seafaring ancestors shone in Dr. Rangel's gentle features. □

1. Luís Vas de Camões, *The Lusíads*, trans. William C. Atkinson (London, Penguin Books, 1952), p. 217.

2. Dr. Jorge A.H. Rangel, "East and West Co-existence and Harmony With a View to the 21st Century," delivered as the keynote address at the Fourth Soka University Pacific Basin Symposium, held at the University of Macau on August 22, 1994.

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid.

VICTOR HUGO House of LITERATURE



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*“Light that makes whole. Light that enlightens.
All fruitful social impulses spring from knowl-
edge, letters, the arts and teaching. We must
make whole men, whole men, by bringing light
to them.”*

VICTOR HUGO, Les Misérables

By Stephanie Celano
Staff Writer

THESE enduring words sum up Victor Hugo’s relentless struggle to inspire, educate and empower people during the turbulent times of the French Revolution. Born the son of a general, in Besançon in 1802, Hugo began writing at a very young age and never ceased. He published his first volume of



THE Victor Hugo House of Literature was opened on June 21, 1991. There were more than 100 guests in attendance, including several French dignitaries and representatives from twelve countries. A special guest among them was Pierre Hugo, Victor Hugo's great-great-grandson (above).

SGI President Daisaku Ikeda stated in his commemorative address:

The great spiritual light that the nineteenth-century author Victor Hugo shone over this great nation of France continues to emit a

vibrant brilliance to the world transcending time and place. For a long time, it has been my dream to pay tribute to the dazzling depth of Hugo's writings in some concrete form.... Two years ago [1989], the plans were announced that the establishment of the Victor Hugo House of Literature, at this house, the Château des Roches, which Hugo loved deeply during his lifetime. My wish was that it would serve as a rainbow of hope for the new century.... I am overjoyed that this castle of literature has been given a new lease on life in this way,

wrapped in the warm embrace of the hearts of Hugo lovers around the world. (July 8, 1991, *World Tribune*, p. 8)

Located in Bièvres, a small village just southeast of Versailles, the Château des Roches belonged to Louis-François Bertin (1776–1841) during the French Romantic era. Between 1815 and 1841, as a patron of the arts and publisher of the activist magazine the *Journal des Débats*, Bertin's home became a literary center of sorts, attracting the company of some of the foremost thinkers in the world of politics and arts including Chateaubriand, Berlioz, Ingres, Liszt—Victor Hugo being the most renowned guest.

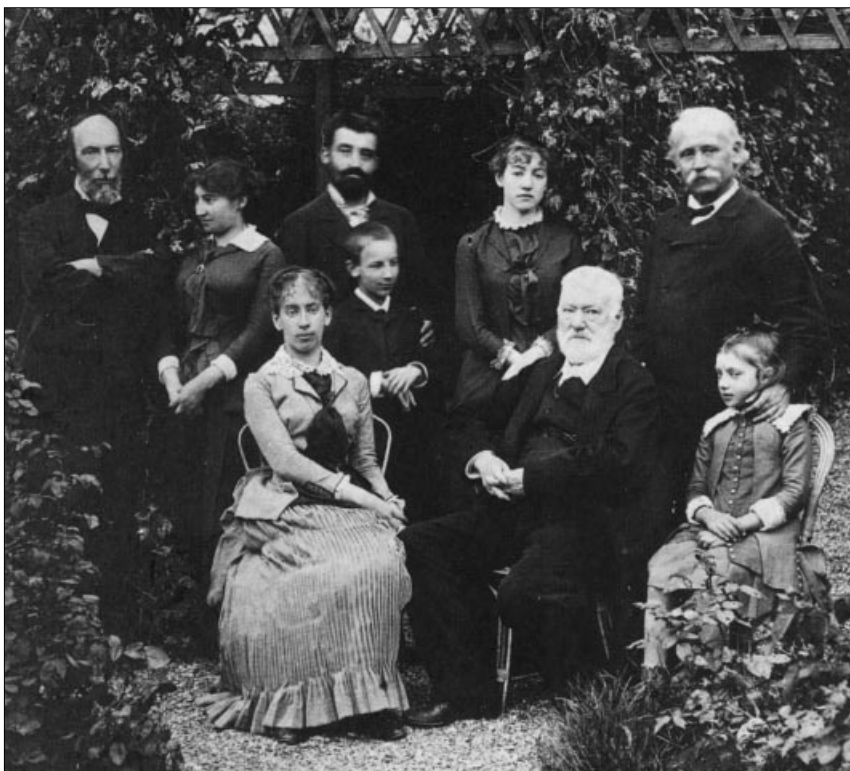
Victor Hugo, along with his wife and children, frequently vacationed at the château. The poet, greatly inspired by the ambiance and nearby parks, would go off alone to write or to walk in the valley of Bièvres. Several of his poems written during his visits were published in *Les Rayons et les Ombres*, *Les Feuilles d'Automne*, and *Les Chants du Crépuscule*. □

poetry, *Miscellaneous Odes and Poems*, at age 20. His prodigious talents earned him the respect he deserved. The leader of the Romantic Movement, he was undoubtedly the most prominent literary figure of the nineteenth century, and his poems, plays, novels and criticisms continue to influence the

whole of humanity in the twentieth century.

Vowing to uphold and protect the liberties of the French people, Hugo entered the political arena in the 1840s, and was eventually elected to the National Assembly. Both publicly and in the daily newspaper that he founded, *L'Événement*, he denounced the

tyranny of Prince Louis-Napoleon—soon to be Napoleon III—urging the people to do their part: "Tyranny will continue to exist, in whatever guise it chooses to manifest itself, for as long as the citizens who live under its burden select to carry their chains without complaint. Those who truly hate tyranny



Hugo seated among family and friends, 1883.

fight it, either from within or without, depending on their personal circumstances" (*Victor Hugo A Tumultuous Life*, Edwards, p. 235). Hugo also spoke out vehemently against issues such as the death penalty, laws banning freedom of education and freedom of the press.

After a coup d'état, in 1851, by official decree from Napoleon III, Hugo was banished from France and fled to Belgium. In 1855, he began a fifteen-year exile on the island of Guernsey in the Channel Islands. It was during his exile that he produced the majority of his writings including *Les Châtiments*, *Napoléon le petit* and *Les Contemplations*, as well as *La Légende des siècles*. Hugo also completed *Les Misérables*, his longest and most

famous work, a novel depicting the social injustice of nineteenth-century France.

Known as "a poet of the people," Hugo's undying love for the common people was unparalleled. Their love, in turn, was perhaps best exemplified at the time of his funeral. After lying in state beneath the Arc de Triomphe, on May 31, 1885, nearly 2 million mourning Frenchmen accompanied Hugo's coffin through the streets from the Étoile to the Panthéon, bearing placards displaying the names of his most well-loved works. In the words of one critic, Hugo was "the last, and perhaps the only one, of our great poets, who succeeded in being both a wonderful artist for the delight of the discerning, and a bard understood

and loved by the masses" (*Victor Hugo*, Richardson, p. x).

In honor of the universal and humanistic influence of Victor Hugo's life and works, the Victor Hugo House of Literature was established by the SGI at the Château des Roches, in Bièvres, France, on June 21, 1991. Restored to its full glory, the château is now used as a museum and conference center dedicated to researching and presenting Hugo's works and memorabilia. It is an effort to "resurrect the soul" of Victor Hugo, so that people from around the world may continue to experience his immortal spirit.

At the opening, founder SGI President Daisaku Ikeda stated: "Hugo lived with an energy and intense emotion that people today have lost. The force of will that exists in *Les Misérables*, solid as a rock, a force that the writer always directed toward good, shakes my soul still today. For this strong will that never gave in to attack encouraged me so many times, as did his determination and love for the people.... Hugo is my eternal companion."

Revolving exhibits are sponsored relating to the influence of Hugo's works, as well as featuring the works of other great authors and artists. Last year SGI's exhibit, "Victor Hugo and the 21st Century," reflected how accurately the poet understood the time in which he lived. One might even describe Hugo as a visionary, because he foresaw changes in the world that would materialize in the following century. In a

**“Love
is
action.”**

*—Victor Hugo’s last
written words a few
days before his death*



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“His mind could do without faith but his heart could not do without friendship: a profound contradiction, for affection in itself is faith.”

—Les Misérables

“Liberty is the most precious possession of all mankind. Food and water are nothing; clothing and shelter are luxuries. He who is free stands with his head held high, even if hungry, naked and homeless.”

—From a speech on the Isle of Jersey, 1860

“A stand can be made against invasion by an army; no stand can be made against invasion by an idea.”

—Histoire d’un Crime

“Liberty, equality, fraternity; these are the dogmas of peace and harmony.”

—Quatrevingt-treize

“I shall close my earthly eyes, but my spiritual ones will remain open, wider than ever. I decline the prayers of all Churches. I ask for a prayer from every soul.”

—From Victor Hugo’s will



GARY ALDRIE

Looking out from the water tower on the estate of the Victor Hugo House of Literature (opposing view as shown on cover).



ORIS/BETTANN

The Arc de Triomphe where Hugo lay in state on May 31, 1885.

text that was written and read for the Congress of Peace in 1848, Hugo spoke of the "United States of Europe." In his book *Paris Guide*, Hugo depicted a nation sharing a common language and currency, one without borders. "This nation will be called Europe in the twentieth century and in the following centuries, after the next transformation it will be called Humanity."

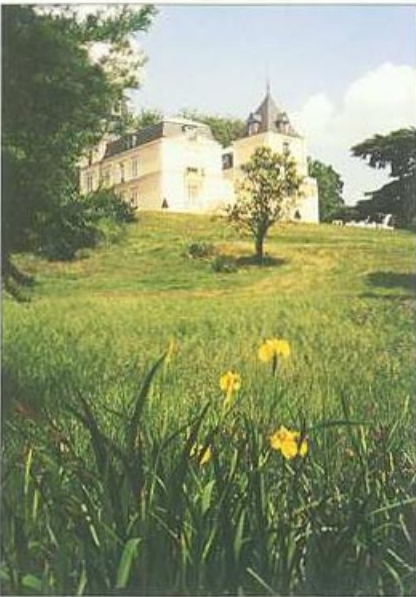
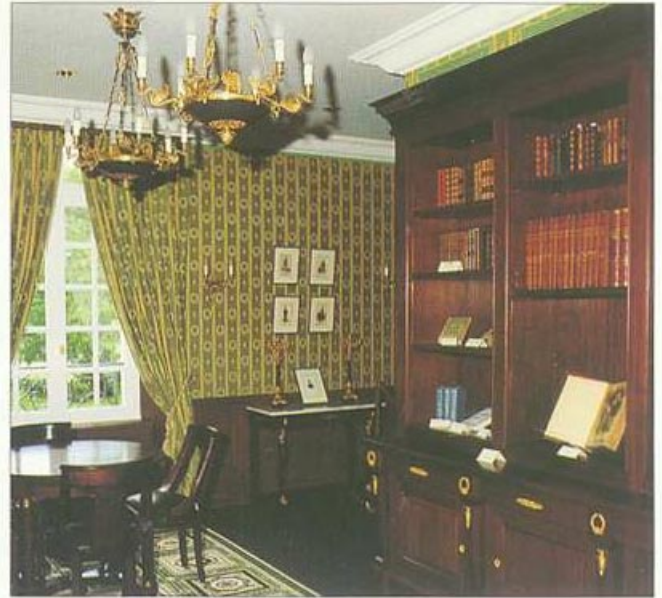
Original notes of Hugo's acclaimed work *Quatrevingt-treize* (Ninety-Three) were also on display at the exhibit. Excerpted from the novel about the French

Revolution, it is permeated by his own revolutionary spirit and humanism: "I want liberty in the mind, equality in the heart and fraternity in the soul. No! No more bondage! Man was made, not to drag chains, but to spread his wings" (*Quatrevingt-treize*, Valjean edition, P.F. Collier).

A similar sentiment is expressed in his writing "*Le droit et la loi*" (Your right and the law), where he explains: "All forms of progress are revolution. Revolution is what we do, what we think, what we speak, what we have on our tongues, in our stomach and our soul..."

According to Philippe Moine, director of the Victor Hugo House of Literature, hundreds of original works, handwritten manuscripts and documents of all sorts concerning Hugo's youth, his loves, his years in exile and his political evolution have been gathered.

He writes: "These works, many of which were discovered outside of France, have found their place once again in our national heritage. The Victor Hugo House of Literature hopes to become an international meeting place for literature and the arts." □



Dedicated to the memory of Victor Hugo (1802-1885), the museum displays a priceless collection of Hugo's handwritten manuscripts, letters, and diaries as well as portraits and photographs of the great French writer.

(Top, left) The Blue Room

(Top, right) Library

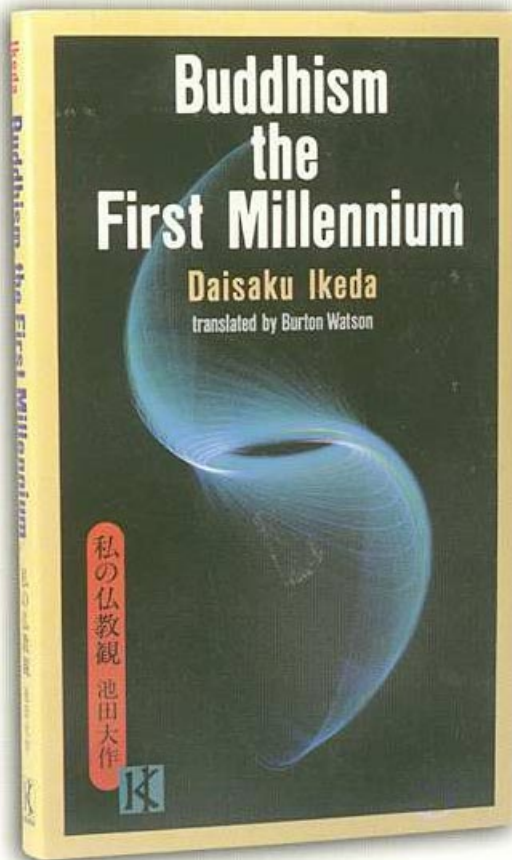
(Middle, left) The Victor Hugo House of Literature and surroundings

(Middle, right) The Victor Hugo Room

(Bottom) The Bertin Room



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The cover of the journal 'Living Buddhism' features a serene landscape photograph. In the center, a stone tower with arched windows sits atop a grassy hill, surrounded by lush green trees. The scene is reflected in a calm body of water in the foreground. The sky is bright with some clouds. The title 'Living' is in a large, red, lowercase sans-serif font, while 'BUDDHISM' is in a smaller, black, uppercase sans-serif font below it.

Living BUDDHISM

JOURNAL FOR PEACE, CULTURE AND EDUCATION

SEPTEMBER 1998

STUDY MATERIAL FOR SEPTEMBER • OCTOBER
FEATURE: VICTOR HUGO HOUSE OF LITERATURE

THE CULTURE CENTER OF CHARTRETTES, FRANCE



THE Culture Center of Chartrettes was originally the manor house of a grand French chateau several centuries old. It was officially opened on June 22, 1991. The center is located in the small village of Chartrettes that borders the Seine River.

French members use the center for weekend activities and for marriage ceremonies. Since 1991, it has been opened to the residents of Chartrettes for guided tours.



Young men gather for a seminar in Paris at the Sceaux Community Center.