

## PUBLISHER'S COMMENTARY A TEXTBOOK OF FAITH

One of my most treasured possessions is the first copy of the compiled writings of Nichiren Daishonin, the Goshō, which I bought as a new member of the Soka Gakkai. I purchased it for 2000 yen (about half the cost the rent on my apartment at the time) in June 1962, three months after taking faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. It is worn and has the notes from many, many lectures in the margins. Like the growth rings in a tree, these markings correspond to my own growth in faith.

I mention this because on November 18, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, a one-volume English version of the Goshō, was published. Previously, SGI-USA members had to rely on seven volumes to cover the same material. It is my hope that this English Goshō will become as loved and valuable to all of our members as the one I cherish.

While it contains no new translations, this new volume is not just a compilation of the previous seven volumes however. A dedicated team of translators, editors and study department representatives from both Japan and the U.S. reviewed the translation of each of the Daishonin's writings contained in the original seven volumes. Many hours of in-depth discussion on key points yielded an unprecedented cooperative process.

As one example, the translation of the word honzon (of Gohonzon) was changed to object of devotion rather than object of worship. In fact, we do not worship the Gohonzon. We are devoted in our practice to it. We deeply respect the life condition of Buddhahood it manifests. But we do not worship it as one would an external force or deity. This type of subtle yet important implication was one of the challenges the translation team faced. I believe this will have a profound impact on the spread of Buddhism in the Judeo-Christian West.

I appreciate the incredible efforts of all those who contributed to the translation, editing and production of this great book. In the history of Buddhism, the greatest translator of all was China's Kumarajiva (344–413) who translated the Lotus Sutra into Chinese from the Indian Sanskrit. The names of those who worked on *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* will certainly be remembered in history as the Kumarajivas of this era.

### *The Soka Gakkai made the Goshō Available to Ordinary People*

It was the second president of the Soka Gakkai, Josei Toda, who was responsible for the compilation of the Daishonin's writings into a single volume, the *Goshō Zenshu* (Complete Collected Writings). Prior to 1952, Gakkai members had little or no access to most of the Daishonin's writings.

To commemorate the seven-hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Daishonin's Buddhism on April 28, 1952, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood planned to publish only selected passages from the ten major writings of the Daishonin and from the Lotus Sutra. In the meantime, the Minobu Nichiren school was preparing a new compilation of the Daishonin's writings. When Mr. Toda heard that, he said, "Nichiren Shoshu is going to let Minobu best them once again!" At the time, Nichiren Shoshu did not have its own complete edition of the Daishonin's writings.

When Mr. Toda proposed that Nichiren Shoshu publish a volume of the complete writings of the Daishonin, the priesthood rejected the idea. Mr. Toda's passion for such a proj-

ect was based on his wartime experience. It was a lack of study and understanding of Buddhism that caused so many of his peers to falter under the persecution of the military regime, renounce their faith, and even malign first President Makiguchi. He concluded that the only way to carry out widespread propagation was for each member to become deeply familiar with the teachings of the Gosho.

At the time, of greater concern to the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood was casting a new bell for the head temple. They had donated a previous bell as scrap metal to aid in Japan's war effort. They had also prohibited the publication of the Daishonin's writings during the war out of fear of the militarist government and had in fact deleted certain passages from the texts they thought might offend the Shintoist authorities.

Mr. Toda said at the time that he knew publishing the complete works of the Daishonin would be an enormous undertaking, but when the priesthood rejected his offer, it only steeled his resolve.

While dismayed at the priesthood's lack of interest in publishing the Gosho, Mr. Toda did find an important ally in the retired high priest Nichiko Hori, who was living in Izu. Nichiko was known as an excellent scholar of Buddhism and he traveled extensively, examining documents related to the Daishonin's writings to determine their authenticity. Through the united efforts of Mr. Toda and this scholarly priest, the monumental task was accomplished. On April 28, 1952, the new Soka Gakkai edition of the Gosho was complete. This is the origin of the Gosho we have today.

### *The Daishonin's Writings in English*

The new English volume, *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, contains translations of some one half of the entire Japanese Gosho text. But it includes those writings that are generally used as a foundation of faith, practice and study, and covers most all of the essential principles contained in the Daishonin's teachings. "The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings," which are Nichiren Daishonin's lectures on key passages of the Lotus Sutra as recorded by Nikko Shonin, comprises 96 pages and 205 entries in the Japanese *Gosho Zenshu* (The Complete Writings of Nichiren Daishonin). We expect to see this work published sometime in the near future.

In the meantime, we can study the Lotus Sutra through SGI President Ikeda's "Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra," which has been serialized in *Living Buddhism* for several years and refers frequently to passages from "The Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings." World Tribune Press will soon publish this series in book form. The remainder of the Japanese Gosho contains, for the most part, fragments of writings, writings of primarily scholarly interest, and writings that reiterate principles and points contained in those Gosho already translated. These, too, will eventually be translated and published. In the end, the entirety of the Japanese *Gosho Zenshu* will be made available in English. However, we can take the present volume to represent the complete Gosho for the purposes of our faith and practice. It should become the primary textbook of faith for all SGI members.

When the idea to produce this single-volume work was presented to SGI President Ikeda, he said it was very significant because English is the language of the widespread propagation of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. Translations into many other languages will be made based on this English version.

Addressing a group of young people on another occasion, President Ikeda encouraged them to "read the Gosho regularly! Even just a little is fine. Even a single sentence. Just

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opening the Gosho is a start.... The Gosho is filled with illumination. When we open its pages, we are bathed in the rays of philosophy and the sun of life. The Gosho is Nichiren Daishonin's voice; it is the collection of his golden words and teachings.”

Let's use the publication of *The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* to renew our commitment to the study and understanding of Buddhism and to strengthening our faith.

Fred M. Zaitso  
SGI-USA General Director

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