

living BUDDHISM

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COVER PHOTO: by SGI-USA member Michael Goodman of New York: "Reflection in Glass," taken in Las Vegas. See photo essay, p. 44.



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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, 606 Wilshire Boulevard, Santa Monica, CA 90401 or e-mail: LivingB1@aol.com

LOOKING GOOD!

HAPPY New Year in 1999 and CONGRATULATIONS for making such improvements in 1998!!! All the covers are great—especially the last one (December issue)—great pictures, great colors, excellent layout, amazing articles, serious look and still fun and easy to read. Keep up the good work. Greetings from Brooklyn and my family.

ALEXANDER, JUNE
AND VIRGIL ALEXANDER
BARRETO-EAMES
Brooklyn, N.Y.

FUJI SCHOOL STRIKES DEEP

HOORAH! for “The Untold History of the Fuji School” (December issue)...invigorating, exhilarating and titillating when suddenly enlightened to an obvious resolution you already know. He (Nikken) is so wrong!

I was struck most deeply by the depth of faith exhibited by Nichiko Hori in the face of such degenerating conditions surrounding his office of high priest. Under Presi-

dent Toda, Soka Gakkai members, with limited resources, united with the retired high priest to produce the first ever complete *Gosho* [writings of Nichiren Daishonin]—thus accomplishing his dream to codify the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin.

STEVE RANGLES
Seattle

THANK you so much for your coverage of “The Untold History of the Fuji School,” in particular the chapter (11) appearing in the December 1998 issue. Now when I offer the third prayer [in gongyo] I feel so fortunate and feel it is my right as a true practitioner of this Buddhism to be able to call Nichiren Daishonin the true Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law. This right did not occur to me until I read that priests in the past asked the government to give the Daishonin merely the title of “great teacher.” It is important to know the difference. My respect has also deepened for Nikko Shonin, as well. Thank you again for your detailed work.

TONYA PLUMMER
Brooklyn, N.Y.

CORRECTION

In the December 1998 issue, the caption on p. 49 should have read: Mayor Francis N. Tolentino confers an honorary citizenship award from Tagaytay City, the Philippines, at Tokyo Makiguchi Memorial Hall, October 10, 1998.

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.

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.

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

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

The SGI-USA applies Buddhist principles through a nationwide network of grass-roots activities centering primarily on neighborhood discussion groups. Learn more about the SGI-USA, or find a discussion group in your area by calling our national office in Santa Monica, CA: (310) 260-8900. Check out our Web page at: <http://www.sgi-usa.org>

BEYOND THE BASICS

BACK to the basics. The phrase means different things depending on the context, but it always implies simplicity—a reduction of the complicated into something manageable, something learnable. In that sense, the idea of going back to the basics gives us a sense of hope, of possibility. If we can just improve on the basics, we can start making fresh progress in everything.

And of course, in our Buddhist practice, which provides a basis for all of life's activities, "faith, practice and study" constitutes the basics. As the Daishonin states, "Exert yourself in the two ways of practice and study.... Both practice and study arise from faith" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 94–95).

I recently had a chance to go see the popular comedy *Patch Adams*, which I feel, contains a message that resonates deeply with the true spirit of Buddhism. This movie's great popularity in spite of many critical reviews is encouraging, I think, because it suggests that people are looking for something more humane and more applicable to their lives than the stream of violence that characterizes many of today's movies.

It's about a medical student, Hunter "Patch" Adams, who defies conservative medical authority to employ humor and dialogue in treating sick patients.

Medicine, while generally directed toward helping people, contains some rather cold elements. And many people feel, with the increasingly business-driven orientation

**The qualities of
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and courage were
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for his faith, practice
and study of
Buddhism.**

of the medical field, those cold parts are getting colder. As Patch becomes aware, much of medical training encourages a removal, an aloofness, from the patient. And while diligent and intensive study is encouraged, medical students have no opportunity before their third year to interact with patients.

At the beginning of the movie, Patch, on the verge of suicide, has voluntarily checked himself into the mental ward of a hospital. There, he discovers a treasure in his own life that was previously hidden. That treasure is his desire to help people, to serve and relieve those who are suffering. It is this new passion that motivates him to apply to medical school where he devotes himself to his

studies. But there he finds administrators warning of the dangers of "transference"—becoming emotionally involved with a patient's suffering or needs—and stressing the need for doctors to develop "superhuman" qualities. Through rigid training and discipline, students are expected to overcome the human aspect of judgment and come to rely on pure reason and logic. They are warned not to "come down to the level" of patients.

Patch, however, believes that reaching the hearts of patients is just as important as the scientific treatment of disease. Humor and dialogue are the tools he feels most comfortable with, and are most important in reaching people's hearts. This puts him at odds with conservative medical school administrators. Though the movie makes its point with humor, and maybe with

some exaggeration, I think the motivation behind Patch's struggle is important to leading a worthwhile existence. His passion to help others, the strong desire to engage people's hearts through dialogue, and his unflinching courage to stand up against those in positions of authority who seek to attack, suppress, or even expel him is most extraordinary.

As the Daishonin writes: "When it comes to understanding the Lotus Sutra, I have only a minute fraction of the vast ability that T'ien-t'ai and Dengyo possessed. But as regards my ability to endure persecution and the wealth of my compassion for others, I believe they would hold me in awe" (MW-2, 100).

The qualities of passion, compassion and courage were the basis for the Daishonin's actions—for his faith, practice and study of Buddhism. They arose from his Buddhahood. They are also the basics of the Gakkai spirit to spread the Law for the happiness of others, for the happiness of humanity, without regard for personal gain.

IN a recent speech, President Ikeda quoted the second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, regarding the importance of courage: "It is important to have compassion," said Toda, "but compassion must ultimately be backed by courage. Only through courageous action can we be truly compassionate. Compassion and courage are two sides of the same coin" (September 18, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 8). He then quoted President John F. Kennedy, who admonished his contemporaries to ask the following question: "First, were we truly men of courage—with the courage to stand up to one's enemies—and the courage to stand up, when necessary, to one's associates—the courage to resist public pressure as well as private greed?" (*The Speeches, Statements and Writings of John F. Kennedy*, p. 57).

A knowledge of medical science is less than effective if not grounded in a passion to help others. The practice and study of Buddhism will also fall short of its purpose without a strong intention to rescue people from suffering and bring them to happiness, and the courage to carry through with that intention when opposed.

There is a scene in the movie where Patch almost gives up his dream, discouraged by the untimely death of a friend. But those fellow students whom he had

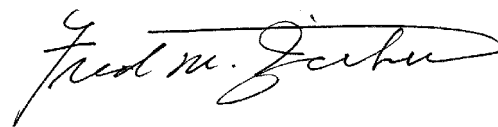
encouraged previously rally together to support him. This, I feel, is the very function of our organization: We are not super-heroes. We all have weaknesses, and at times lack courage. It is at those times that our good friends within SGI-USA, even those who have depended on us for inspiration, will serve to protect us—to give us courage.

Chanting daimoku to reach the heart of a suffering friend, engaging in the practice of Buddhist dialogue and studying the profound principles of this living philosophy—faith, practice and study—will help us bring forth the capacity to really help people.

I think the Patch Adams of real life must have found courage in his passion to help others, and in turn his courage allowed him to carry through with his dream of doing so. That courage allowed him to open up to people who were suffering, people who were even likely to resent his efforts.

What if we lack the desire or feel timid about talking to people—about encouraging or helping people? I once heard a leader say, "It's all right if you don't want to, but try to chant for the courage to want to." In other words, once we decide on the path we wish to take in life, we can bring forth passion and courage through prayer. When we determine to help others, to contribute to enriching society, and pray to be able to do so, passion, compassion and courage are ours. Without this, our "basics" may lack a real basis: We could become like priests who actually believe that people should revere them while lacking the capacity or desire to revere people; or like doctors who are unable to feel or care about the suffering of their patients.

I am confident that when grounded in the basics of compassion and courage and expressed in prayer and dialogue, our faith, practice and study of Buddhism will form for us a solid foundation for a happy and fulfilling life.



Fred M. Zaitso
SGI-USA General Director

Buddhist Concept for Today's Living (2)

“Earthly Desires Are Enlightenment”: Taking Control of Our Lives

AS THE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR of politicians surges to the forefront of public debate, two contrasting undercurrents of American thinking rise into view. One side tells us to suppress desires because they are nothing but trouble—the suppression or even denial of desire should be celebrated as a sign of virtue. Meanwhile, the other tells us that human desire is natural (and good!); that we should trust our feelings and desires, and do whatever they move us to do, so long as we do not infringe on the rights of others. Experience, however, tells us that neither the suppression of nor abandonment to desires leads to satisfaction in life. Then how do we live with the reality of our abundant desires and still become happy and fulfilled?

Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism helps shed light on this issue through the concept called “earthly desires are enlightenment.” The original term in Japanese is *bon'no soku bodai*. The Japanese word *bon'no* derives from the Chinese interpretation of the Sanskrit word *klisa* (or *klesa*), which means defilement, pain, affliction, distress, evil passion, moral depravity, worry, trouble, infection or contamination. The Chinese interpretation also implies delusions or temptations arising from passions or ignorance that disturb and distress the mind. The Japanese word *soku* means to be immediately present or to be the same as. And finally the Japanese word *bodai* is a transliteration of the Sanskrit *bodhi*, which means knowledge, understanding, perfect wisdom or the enlightened mind. Put simply, this Buddhist concept tells us that our desires and suffering—all that torments our mind—can be the source of wisdom and happiness.

On the surface, however, this concept is contradictory. Our desires often cause delusion and suffering, which are the exact opposite of wisdom and happiness. In this sense, defining desires as an obstacle to enlightenment, rather than as enlightenment, seems more reasonable. So the logical extension of this line of thought will be that we have to eliminate our desires in order to attain enlightenment. This is exactly what was taught in the monastic Theravada Buddhism, which the

populist Mahayana (“Greater Vehicle”) Buddhists called Hinayana (“Lesser Vehicle”). Taking this view of desires to the extreme, Theravada Buddhism taught the annihilation of self through religious austerities. In other words, as long as we have a body and mind, we will continue to suffer from our desires. So we must reduce ourselves to nothing, or so those Theravada monks thought.

The Daishonin's Buddhism, however, explains that both “earthly desires” and “enlightenment” are intrinsic to our lives. So any intent to deny either is itself a delusion. In this regard, the Daishonin states: “Among those who wish to become Buddhas through attempting to eradicate earthly desires and shunning the lower nine worlds, there is not one ordinary person who actually attained enlightenment. This is because Buddhahood cannot exist apart from the lower nine worlds” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 403). The Daishonin defines “earthly desires” as “the obstacles to one's practice which arise from greed,

anger, stupidity and the like” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 145). Earthly desires such as greed, anger, stupidity, arrogance and doubt have a negative influence upon our lives, causing delusion and suffering. The Daishonin teaches that since such earthly desires are ever-present, we must develop wisdom and inner strength so that they do not influence us negatively, and so that we may transform these functions into a driving force for our spiritual growth.

The Daishonin stresses the importance of inner strength to control our “earthly desires” as he encourages us to “keep the three paths of earthly desires, karma and suffering in check” (GZ, 984). Desires give rise to actions, but when those desires are steeped in delusion, those actions create negative karma, which in turn leads to suffering, which gives rise to more desire, and so on.

THE key for us to develop inner strength to stem this negative cycle lies in our prayer to the Gohonzon, in our chanting of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. The Daishonin states: “Believe in this mandala [the Gohonzon] with all your heart. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo is like the roar of a lion. What sickness can therefore be an obstacle?” (MW-1, 119). Though this was written to the parents of a child suffering from a physical illness, “sickness” can be broadly interpreted as earthly desires or all that causes spiritual or physical anguish such as problems with health, relationships, family harmony, money or career. As long as we firmly believe in the Gohonzon and continue to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, no suffering or hardship can be an obstacle to our happiness. With a powerful prayer to the Gohonzon, our earthly desires not only cease to cause suffering, but also become an impetus for our wisdom and happiness. The fact that they motivate us to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with a strong prayer in itself suggests the transformation of earthly desires into enlightenment. To illustrate this point, the Daishonin states: “Through burning the firewood of earthly desires, one can manifest the wisdom-fire of enlightenment” (GZ, 710).

Because we have earthly desires, that is, suffering and delusion, we pray to the Gohonzon. Our hardships are often our greatest motivation to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. When we make a determination that our desires and hardships are yet another opportunity to

strengthen our faith and our life, they no longer function as earthly desires that torment us.

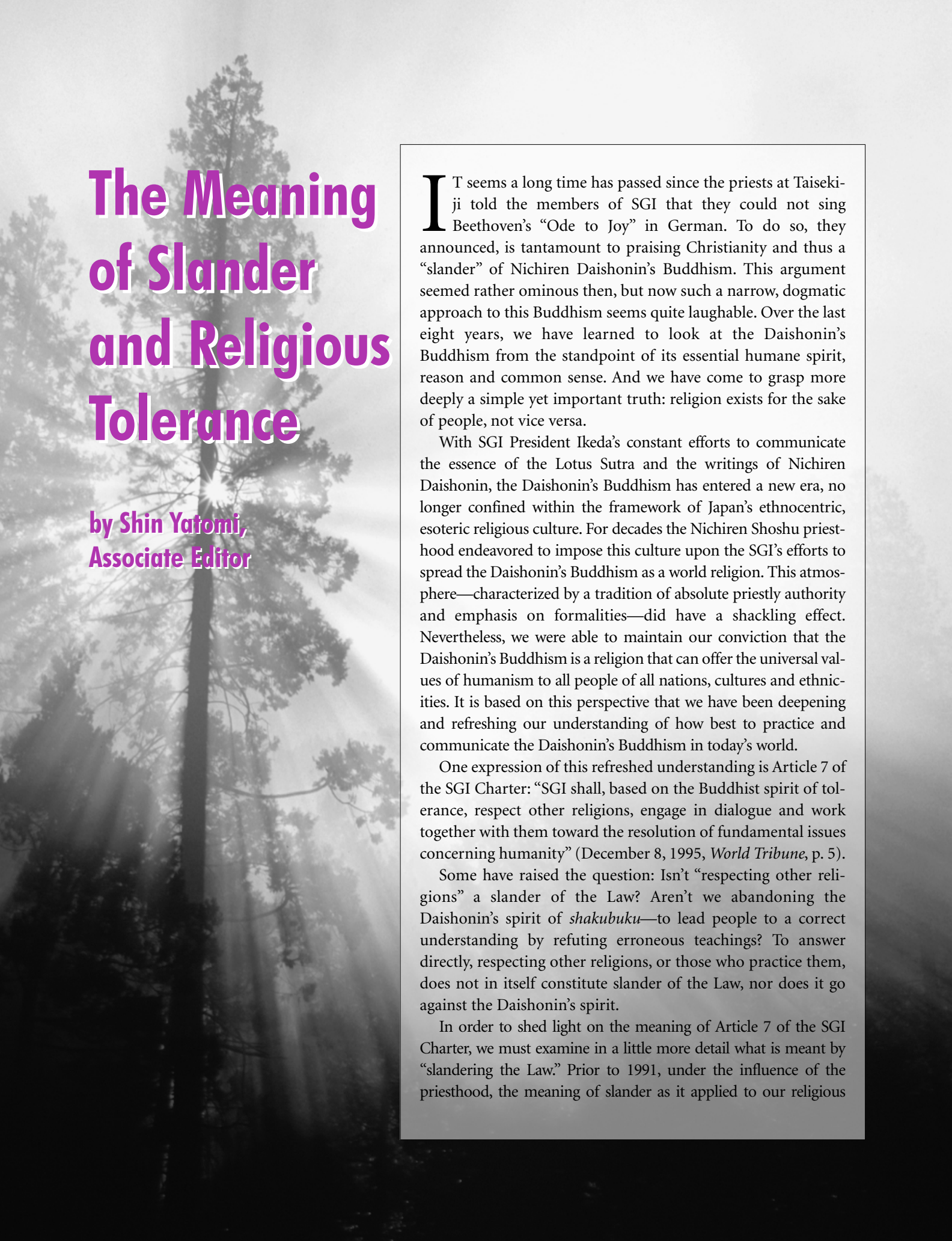
Through our prayer we can sublimate our base desires into noble and creative causes. Through the Buddhist practice, an egoist whose only concern in life is to gain material wealth can change into a person of magnanimity who gladly uses wealth for the sake of others’ peace and happiness. Sexual desires can be destructive. Shakespeare writes about them as: perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame, /Savage, extreme, rude cruel, not to trust (Sonnet 129).

Passion, however, if imbued with wisdom, can become an impetus for our affectionate expression of humanity as the Daishonin states: “Even during the physical union of man and woman, when one chants Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, then earthly desires are enlightenment and the sufferings of birth and death are nirvana” (MW-2, 200).

We cannot avoid our passions. But whether, when they arise, we act wisely and compassionately, or foolishly and selfishly, may determine happiness or suffering in life. The spirit to use whatever desires arise as fuel or “firewood” to empower our prayer to the Gohonzon and thus to bring forth wisdom, is the key to making the principle that “earthly desires are enlightenment” a reality. If we leave the “firewood of earthly desires” alone, they will simply remain a source of suffering. Only when we ignite the firewood with the spark of faith in the Gohonzon, can we bring forth a bright flame of wisdom and happiness from within. Through the concept that “earthly desires are enlightenment” the Daishonin teaches us how to create the greatest possible value from our natural desires and suffering, while neither denying them nor abandoning ourselves to them. This Buddhist principle thus offers us a new approach to the problem of human desire—one that is neither self-denying nor hedonistic.

Viewed from the standpoint of delusion—desire does not “equal” enlightenment. But viewed from the standpoint of enlightenment itself, earthly desires are indeed enlightenment. This is because a Buddha experiences desires while maintaining full control of them, always bringing forth their enlightened quality to the fullest benefit of self and others. □

(This series of Buddhist concepts was prepared by the SGI-USA Study Department)



The Meaning of Slander and Religious Tolerance

by Shin Yafomi,
Associate Editor

IT seems a long time has passed since the priests at Taiseiji told the members of SGI that they could not sing Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" in German. To do so, they announced, is tantamount to praising Christianity and thus a "slander" of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. This argument seemed rather ominous then, but now such a narrow, dogmatic approach to this Buddhism seems quite laughable. Over the last eight years, we have learned to look at the Daishonin's Buddhism from the standpoint of its essential humane spirit, reason and common sense. And we have come to grasp more deeply a simple yet important truth: religion exists for the sake of people, not vice versa.

With SGI President Ikeda's constant efforts to communicate the essence of the Lotus Sutra and the writings of Nichiren Daishonin, the Daishonin's Buddhism has entered a new era, no longer confined within the framework of Japan's ethnocentric, esoteric religious culture. For decades the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood endeavored to impose this culture upon the SGI's efforts to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism as a world religion. This atmosphere—characterized by a tradition of absolute priestly authority and emphasis on formalities—did have a shackling effect. Nevertheless, we were able to maintain our conviction that the Daishonin's Buddhism is a religion that can offer the universal values of humanism to all people of all nations, cultures and ethnicities. It is based on this perspective that we have been deepening and refreshing our understanding of how best to practice and communicate the Daishonin's Buddhism in today's world.

One expression of this refreshed understanding is Article 7 of the SGI Charter: "SGI shall, based on the Buddhist spirit of tolerance, respect other religions, engage in dialogue and work together with them toward the resolution of fundamental issues concerning humanity" (December 8, 1995, *World Tribune*, p. 5).

Some have raised the question: Isn't "respecting other religions" a slander of the Law? Aren't we abandoning the Daishonin's spirit of *shakubuku*—to lead people to a correct understanding by refuting erroneous teachings? To answer directly, respecting other religions, or those who practice them, does not in itself constitute slander of the Law, nor does it go against the Daishonin's spirit.

In order to shed light on the meaning of Article 7 of the SGI Charter, we must examine in a little more detail what is meant by "slandering the Law." Prior to 1991, under the influence of the priesthood, the meaning of slander as it applied to our religious

faith was ambiguous, and was often misinterpreted and misused. We often heard: “It’s a slander to point your feet at the Gohonzon.” Or, “It’s a slander to put a gongyo book on the floor.” We were also told that criticizing a priest constituted inexcusable slander, and that even “singing ‘Ode to Joy’ in German is a slander.”

IN fact, the priesthood’s tendency has been to use the term *slander* to describe any act that displeased them. This might be compared to a religious authority with a dogmatic belief in a Western religion promising his critics that they are “going to Hell” because of their criticism of him. To preserve their authority, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood used the concept of slandering the Law as a tool to intimidate believers and often to defend their view of certain Japanese cultural traditions as essential Buddhist practice.

“The Law” in “slandering the Law” refers to the Lotus Sutra. Of course, as Nichiren Daishonin made clear, the Lotus Sutra of the Latter Day means the sutra’s essence, the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo. But since the Daishonin expounded the Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo on the basis of the doctrines contained in the Lotus Sutra, when we examine the Buddhist concept of slander in terms of its doctrinal meaning, it is appropriate to take “the Law” to mean the Lotus Sutra. “A slander of the Law,” therefore, literally means a slander of the Lotus Sutra; it is speech or conduct that denies the teaching and ideal of the Lotus Sutra.

What is the teaching and ideal of the Lotus Sutra? The Daishonin

expressed what he saw as the quintessence of the Lotus Sutra in the form of the Gohonzon, using the doctrine of the three thousand realms in a single moment of life (*ichinen sanzen*) as his theoretical foundation. Based on the Lotus Sutra, T’ien-t’ai expounded the doctrine of three thousand realms in a single moment to explain that all beings are entities of the Mystic Law, endowed with the Buddha nature. In other words, the fundamental message of the Lotus Sutra is that all living beings have the Buddha nature and thus are infinitely precious and worthy of respect. The sanctity of life and the inherent dignity of all people are at the core of the Sutra’s teaching. From this perspective, we can define slander of the Law as any denial of the sanctity of life or the inherent dignity of all people.

This interpretation of slander is consistent with the Daishonin’s perspective. He criticized major Buddhist sects of his day as slanderous of the Lotus Sutra. His was not merely a criticism of doctrine, however. For example, the Daishonin criticized the Pure Land (Nembutsu) sect not just for denying the Lotus Sutra’s validity on a doctrinal level. The Pure Land sect views this world itself as defiled and detestable; it teaches believers that they can only be happy in the afterlife if they are reborn in the Pure Land through reciting the name of the Amida Buddha. What lies at the core of the Pure Land teaching is despair and an escapist attitude.

The Daishonin stated: “If you chant the Nembutsu incantation often, you will come to feel like

injuring yourself” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1509). The Daishonin denounced the Pure Land sect because it denied people’s potential to overcome their suffering and thus diminished the inherent dignity of their lives. Historically, the Pure Land sect was often manipulated by the authorities as a tool to oppress and control people. This is in complete opposition to the ideal of the Lotus Sutra, which is to empower people through awakening their inner potential.

THE Daishonin’s criticism was also directed toward the Shingon sect, not merely because it proclaimed its doctrinal superiority over the Lotus Sutra. The Shingon sect was essentially an esoteric teaching in which believers relied on priests to perform rituals so that they might receive blessings from the transcendental Dainichi Buddha; it promoted people’s dependence upon an imaginary superior being and diminished their ability to reason. Such an idea fundamentally contradicts the ideal of the Lotus Sutra, which asserts the importance of self-reliance by pointing out the existence of Buddhahood within each person.

As we see in those two instances of the Daishonin’s criticism of other Buddhist sects, slander of the Law is more than just vilifying the Lotus Sutra; it is to deny the sutra’s underlying humanistic principle. For example, if a child speaks ill of the Lotus Sutra or its practitioners while completely ignorant of what he or she is doing and of what the essence of the sutra is about, should



Arun Gandhi and wife, Sunanda, greet people at the SGI-USA Santa Monica Community Center on December 5, 1998.

we admonish this child as a slanderer of the Law? While maybe in need of some schooling in manners, that child should certainly not be taken to task as a slanderer.

On the other hand, what if a government official or a doctor superficially praises the Lotus Sutra or the Daishonin's teachings, but is led by corruption to give tacit approval to the use of contaminated blood supplies while knowing their potential for spreading disease? Some people, although though not directly critical of the Law, act counter to the Sutra's teaching about the inherent dignity of all people.

WHAT if a Christian minister in your neighborhood church were to ask for your cooperation in a neighborhood watch program to prevent crime or a community cleanup? Is lending this Christian minister your support considered to be a slander of the Law? Of course, it is not. In this case, discussing the safety of your community with those who embrace religions other than Buddhism has nothing to do with slandering the Law.

What is most important is to promote the happiness and peace of all humanity. Since Buddhism exists for us to achieve this goal, it is only natural to have dialogue and cooperate with those of different religious beliefs in the process of bringing such a Buddhist ideal to reality. From this viewpoint, Article 7 of the SGI Charter declares that we "respect other religions." This is not to say that we compromise our religious beliefs and abandon the Daishonin's spirit of *shakubuku*. The concept of "respecting other religions" is easier to comprehend if we understand its intention, which is to respect the people who practice those religions. It must be pointed out that showing respect to other human beings, regardless of their religious beliefs, is different from accepting or advocating their belief.

What is *shakubuku* then? Is it not to strictly refute erroneous teachings? *Shakubuku* may be defined from a number of perspectives. For example, *A Dictionary of Buddhist Terms and Concepts* explains that *shakubuku* is "a method of propagating Buddhism by refuting another's

attachment to heretical views and thus leading him to the correct Buddhist teaching. The term is used in contrast to *shoju*, or leading another to the true teaching gradually without refuting his misconception" (pp. 376–77). Ultimately, however, *shakubuku* is to speak the truth of the Lotus Sutra—the universal potential of enlightenment possessed by all people. So *shakubuku* is not simply a matter of using harsh words or roundly refuting other religious beliefs.

T'ien-t'ai in his *Hokke Gengi* (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra) explains that since the Lotus Sutra expounds the truth, it naturally refutes the provisional teachings (i.e., to teach it is to practice *shakubuku*) while the Nirvana Sutra, which was taught after, and serves to confirm the validity of the Lotus Sutra, accepts the provisional teachings (i.e., *shoju*).

Put simply, *shakubuku* is to speak the truth of the supremacy of the Lotus Sutra while *shoju* is to accept other religious teachings while teaching the benefit of the Lotus Sutra's teachings. Because we communicate the Daishonin's teachings based on our firm belief in the universal potential of enlightenment possessed by all people as expounded in the Lotus Sutra, and we hold these principles to be supreme, our method of communicating the Daishonin's Buddhism is basically *shakubuku*. The distinction between these two



Dr. John Montgomery, director of the Pacific Basin Research Center, speaks at the Human Rights Day Symposium at Soka University of America, Calabasas, Calif., December 10, 1998.

methods, however, may not be always clear-cut. Sometimes it is more appropriate to adopt *shoju* based on the spirit of *shakubuku*.

Nichiren Daishonin stated: “T’ien-t’ai declared that the practice should ‘accord with the times.’ His disciple Chang-an interpreted this to mean, ‘You should distinguish between *shoju* and *shakubuku* and never adhere solely to one or the other.’ The Lotus Sutra represents a single truth, but its practice and propagation vary according to the people and the time” (MW-1, 175). Instead of being overly concerned about which method to choose, what is most important to keep in mind is the goal of propagation—people’s happiness.

RELIGION is inextricably bound with culture. Even if we recognize a need to examine the value and philosophical correctness of various religious doctrines, it is very difficult to justify being critical of another culture. In countries with little relation to Buddhism, and where religious values and cultural values are

deeply intertwined, to disrespect or denounce a religious belief is tantamount to disrespecting and denouncing the culture. Buddhism makes clear that its teachings should be spread while showing respect for and taking into consideration the culture and traditions of the place where it is being propagated.

Although the basic attitude of the Daishonin’s propagation was *shakubuku*, his writings indicate that he exercised flexibility in his method of propagation. He states: “It is natural for a rooster to crow in the morning but strange for him to crow at dusk. Now when the true and provisional teachings are utterly confused, it would be equally unnatural for one to seclude himself in the mountains, carrying out the easy practice of *shoju*, and avoid refuting the enemies of the Lotus Sutra. He would lose all chance to practice the Lotus Sutra” (MW-1, 105). In this passage, the Daishonin refers to a situation in which the true and provisional teachings of Buddhism are confused. In such a case, the Daishonin suggests that a clear distinction be made between

what is a true Buddhist teaching and what is a provisional Buddhist teaching through the method of *shakubuku*.

THIS situation, however, may not represent today’s American society where the majority of people are unfamiliar with Buddhism. In this regard, the Daishonin states: “When the country is full of evil persons without wisdom, then *shoju* is the primary method to be applied, as described in the *Anrakugyo* [Peaceful Practices] chapter. But at a time when there are many persons of perverse views who slander the Law, then *shakubuku* should come first, as described in the *Fukyo* chapter” (MW-2, 183).

The Daishonin explains that when a society is ignorant of Buddhism, *shoju*, the tolerant way of propagation, may be a better approach. However, when confusion in the realm of Buddhism is the chief concern, *shakubuku*, the method of strictly refuting error and directly revealing the truth, may be the primary method. The strict stance the SGI has taken toward the errors and abuses of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood accords with this idea.

In another writing, the Daishonin said: “However, slander can be either minor or serious, and there are times when we should overlook it rather than attack it. The adherents of the Tendai and Shingon sects slander the Lotus Sutra and should be refuted. But

without great wisdom it is very difficult to differentiate correctly between their doctrines and the teachings which Nichiren expounds. Therefore, at times you might be well advised to refrain from attacking them, just as I did in the ‘Rissho Ankoku Ron’” (MW-1, 158). In the “Rissho Ankoku Ron,” the Daishonin refutes the teachings of the Pure Land sect, but does not refer to the teachings of the Shingon or Tendai sects. Here the Daishonin explains that although other religious sects, such as the Shingon and Tendai sects, contradict the Lotus Sutra, if the timing and condition of people are not appropriate, it is wise not to refute them.

In a letter written to a believer who had previously practiced the Pure Land sect and chanted the Nembutsu incantation, the Daishonin writes as follows: “Women who put their faith in the Lotus Sutra should chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo sixty thousand, a hundred thousand, or even ten million times a day, and after that, if they still have some time to spare, they may now and then murmur to themselves the name of Amida or one of the other Buddhas” (MW-3, 26–27). Of course, if you chant daimoku one hundred thousand times a day, you would not have time to even sleep, let alone to chant the Pure Land sect’s incantation. In this letter, although the Daishonin clarifies the erroneous teachings of the Pure Land sect, he does not tell her to stop chanting the name of Amida Buddha. The Daishonin simply tells the recipient to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Once again, we can see the Daishonin’s

flexible stance toward communicating his teaching to others. Had this believer been told never to chant the name of the Amida Buddha, she may have been unable to accept the Daishonin’s teaching. Religious beliefs and attitudes are deeply rooted in people’s minds; our sensitivity and understanding toward those to whom we are communicating are therefore critical, as the Daishonin demonstrates.

THE ultimate purpose of communicating Buddhism to others is to help them become happy, not to prove the superiority of Buddhism over other religions. As we can see in the Daishonin’s examples, he was always concerned about how to lead people to the truth revealed in the Lotus Sutra—to their inherent enlightened potential. The Daishonin’s views transcended narrow, religious sectarianism. He wrote, “I, Nichiren, am not the founder of any sect, nor am I a latter-day follower of any older sect” (MW-5, 195).

He did not try to spread his teachings to prove his own greatness; his sole concern was people’s happiness, as he states: “Nichiren has been trying to awaken all the people of Japan to faith in the Lotus Sutra so that they too can share the heritage and attain Buddhahood” (MW-1, 24). Based on his clear sense of purpose in propagation, he exercised a great deal of flexibility, while not compromising in proclaiming what constitutes the true essence of Buddhism.

As long as we do not contradict the essential teaching of the Daishonin and faith in the Gohonzon, it is natural that we take into

account the background and condition of individuals as well as the customs and traditions of the time and of the country. So when we are trying to communicate the Daishonin’s teaching, it is important to judge each case from the viewpoint of what is most important to the happiness of the person we are addressing. If we become overly concerned about details or methodology while forgetting the purpose of our dialogue, we may create a negative situation in which people actually go further away from Buddhism.

We might also consider that the time in which the Daishonin appeared—when the correct teaching and practice of the Lotus Sutra had never before been revealed—and the country—Japan, where great confusion in the realm of Buddhism prevailed—demanded that he clearly demonstrate what was correct and what was false, even to the point that doing so invited grave persecution. In this way, he could establish the correct teaching for all humankind in the Latter Day of the Law. Our mission today is to enable that powerful and universal teaching to flow to every corner of every nation of the world, a world whose survival depends on the wisdom that teaching can impart.

SGI President Ikeda gives us valuable insight into what it means to respect the practitioners of other religions while maintaining the integrity of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. He writes in *The New Human Revolution*:

To take a strict stance in distinguishing between good and evil



Over forty representatives of various religious denominations attended the "Religion and World Order" symposium held in Maryknoll, New York, May 1997. SGI-USA representatives participated and presented a paper.

and to show generosity toward others—these two things are in no way incompatible and are essentially part of the same whole.

Let's suppose, for example, that someone eats poisonous mushrooms and is rushed to a doctor. Irrespective of who the patient may be, the doctor naturally exhausts all possible means to save the person and also offers sincere words of encouragement. This, we might say, is an example of "generosity toward others."

It is also likely, however, that the doctor will warn the patient not to eat harmful mushrooms in the future. I am sure there is no doctor who would stand by indifferently while the patient declares, "But poisonous mushrooms are delicious; I want to eat them again." This corresponds to "taking a strict stance toward the Law."

In both these instances, the doctor is motivated by his compassion and commitment to removing the patient's suffering. This is also the behavior of a Buddhist.

For that reason, there is no contradiction between the spirit of *shakubuku*—that of "refuting the erroneous and revealing the true"—and true friendship. The spirit of compassion is fundamental to both. Consequently, it is the Buddhist ideal that the more we exert ourselves in faith, the greater the generosity with which we can embrace our friends and deepen our friendships. Because *shakubuku* is an endeavor to touch the others' lives through dialogue, trust and friendship are essential.

Please become a person who transcends differences of religion and prays for the happiness of her fellow human beings, who forges deep ties of friendship with many people. Your doing so will also testify to the depth and breadth of Buddhism. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 204–05).

Our challenge to grasp and practice the intent of Article 7 of the SGI Charter is two-fold. We must endeavor to be tolerant toward people regardless of their

religious affiliation, while at the same time maintaining and protecting the integrity of the Daisshonin's Buddhism. As mentioned before, slander of the Law is a denial of the inherent dignity of all people, and *shakubuku* is a dialogue with others that arises from our sincere conviction in the universal potential—the treasure of enlightenment possessed by all. When we understand slander and *shakubuku* in those terms, it helps us understand the meaning of the SGI Charter.

AS we set our sights on the peace and happiness of humanity as the ultimate goal of Buddhism, it is natural to respect all people as human beings regardless of their religious beliefs and cooperate with them toward humane goals. SGI President Ikeda states, "A person of true tolerance is at the same time a person of action who works to encourage the bonds of empathy and appreciation among people" (July 1996, *Seikyo Times*, p. 8). After all, if we discriminate against people based on their religious beliefs and refuse to work with them toward the resolution of humanity's problems, we would be contradicting the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and thus committing slander of the Law in the truest sense. □



Recollections of Leading World Figures

By Daisaku Ikeda

A Courageous Educator:

Dr. David L. Norton, Professor of Philosophy, University of Delaware

MANY people talk about philosophy, but few people actually live it. The late Dr. David Norton, professor of philosophy at the University of Delaware in the United States, was a person who practiced what he preached and who lived according to his convictions.

When he spoke of education and the educational theories of Tsunetsaburo Makiguchi (1871–1944), founding president of the Soka Gakkai, Dr. Norton's words resonated with extraordinary depth:

Mr. Makiguchi is working with the profound truth that all human beings have an innate desire to learn and to grow. We see this in young children. When infants first learn to walk, for example, they take their first steps and their faces light up with joy. And from then on, we can't stop them from walking. They are trying to improve, they are trying to learn, they are trying to improve their skills....

What Mr. Makiguchi recognized is that it is imperative that education not kill or stifle this innate desire to learn and to grow, but that it nurture and encourage it.... Unfortunately, education in Japan in his time did, and American education today does, I

think, crush that innate desire to learn and to grow.

Dr. Norton refrained from criticizing modern Japanese education but, as many have quite accurately pointed out, Japan's highly control-oriented educational system is very destructive.

I would like to share the following story conveyed by an elementary school teacher.

One young girl in his class was completely unable to keep up with the other students. She sat at her desk every day, her gaze turned downward. She was expressionless and her eyes, lackluster. She moved sluggishly, too, and her classmates ignored her.

The teacher wanted to do something to help her, but after a while he gave up. He had been angered by one of his fellow teachers, who had once callously told him, "Human beings are just like fruit; twenty to thirty percent is always worthless, and there's nothing you can do about it." But in his heart, he wondered if it wasn't in fact beyond this girl's capacity to study, as her intelligence test scores were extremely low.

Then, during a recess period, he noticed her playing with a puzzle that required putting the plastic pieces together in such a way that

they fit neatly into a box. He watched her through the window, and she seemed to be finding the puzzle quite a struggle.

Just as he was about to offer to help her, she fit all the pieces into the box perfectly. She stood up and yelled, "Hooray! Hooray!" Her face sparkled with an expression of delight he had never seen before.

Tears filled his eyes. So she could smile, she could shine! She wanted to understand, to succeed so badly!

The teacher felt remorse over his previous attitude. How dare he give up on her! Wasn't he a teacher? Wasn't he a professional? Wasn't it his job to make sure that when children graduated, they could walk out of his classroom with the confidence that they could accomplish anything if they really tried?

But no, he had planted a feeling of inferiority in this little girl. He had decided that it was her fault that she couldn't keep up, and he had abandoned her. He had never once thought about how painful it must be for her to sit there for six hours a day, not understanding any of the lessons.

The teacher had been a bright student from his earliest years in school. He had never experienced the panic, the embarrassment and

the despair of a student who didn't understand what was being taught. He never knew how bad it felt to be so lost and confused—not knowing what he did or didn't understand. He was forced to remain silent when the teacher said, "Ask me about the parts you don't understand."

THOUGH he was intellectually aware of these things, he had simply assumed that some students were just not very bright, and nothing could be done about it. But he found out that was not the case. He discovered that the girl's parents, both graduates of leading universities, were always calling her stupid at home. "I counted, and I've been called 'stupid' about twenty times a day," the girl confided. No wonder she had decided she was worthless.

The teacher resolved to praise her at least fifty times or more each day to make up for what she was experiencing at home. He would keep saying, "Smart girl, clever girl" and "Excellent job!" until he had washed away the stain of all that criticism from her heart. He also spoke to the parents, persuading them to change their attitude toward their daughter. For every little accomplishment, he went out of his way to praise her lavishly.

After a year of very hard work on everyone's part, the girl was transformed. It had been tremendously difficult but, proceeding at her own pace, she finally came to experience the joy of learning. A very important factor was her realization that if she made efforts to achieve something, she could

indeed accomplish it. Later, she graduated from a university, and today she is a pharmacist.

The teacher reflected: "The smallest failure can destroy a child's confidence, and the smallest catalyst can trigger explosive growth. The challenge for the teacher is to believe in each child's potential.

"Test scores only show whether a student can answer certain questions in a certain way and quickly. But some children think more slowly than others; and some excel and even surpass adults in areas in which they have a special interest. It is hard to decide just who is really 'intelligent.'

"If our schools evaluate students solely on test scores, turning their backs on those who don't 'measure up,' if they undermine students' confidence and destroy their special individuality, what good are they?"

How true! Children are filled with an eager desire to learn and to grow. Dr. Norton describes the joy that lights infants' faces when they take their first steps. Surely this joy of accomplishment perfectly symbolizes a child's spirit. Mr. Makiguchi called this joy "the happiness of value-creation." Dr. Norton described it as "the happiness of self-fulfillment."

One occasion when Dr. Norton keenly experienced this joy was when he was still in his teens.

When he was 16, he saw smoke jumpers fighting a forest fire in Priest River, Idaho. Smoke jumpers are volunteer forest-fire fighters who parachute into inaccessible areas and cut trees or dig trenches

to keep forest fires from spreading. It is not only heavy labor but extremely dangerous—not the kind of glamorous job that would attract most young people.

But for young Dr. Norton, who had a vague desire to work for the well being of others, the smoke jumpers were profoundly inspiring. The next summer, at the age of 17, he became one himself. At first he was afraid. But he forged ahead. He knew that as long as he was brave he could help others. He was convinced that facing one's fear and serving society made for the most noble life.

DR. Norton called the experience of smoke jumping a "peak experience." He said that by placing himself in danger and testing his bravery, he felt a tremendous expansion of his potential. Having placed his life on the line had given him the quiet confidence that he could do anything if he tried.

In August 1990, at our Nagano Training Center in Karuizawa, with the leaves of the green forest rustling gently in the breeze outside, Dr. Norton said to me: "President Ikeda, I have great respect for the principle of 'cherry, plum, peach and damson' [the Buddhist view of education and human nature—that like the cherry, plum, peach and damson flowers, all human beings have their own distinct way of flowering and bearing fruit, their own way of developing their personality]." He was with Professor Dayle M. Bethel of the International University, U.S.A., who encouraged Dr. Norton to do research on the subject of value-creating education.

SGI President Ikeda meets with Dr. David L. Norton (left) of the University of Delaware, and Dr. Dayle M. Bethel (center) of the International University, U.S.A., in Nagano, Japan, August 1990.



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I replied, “I am delighted that you know that expression! Yes, exactly so. The unique character of each person, of each country, of each culture must be respected to the utmost, and ties of friendship must be formed on an equal basis. This is the original spirit of Buddhism. The insistence on uniformity, the arrogance of authority and the desire to suppress and control others go against everything that Buddhism teaches. Nor can such things be permitted in true education.”

The door to happiness can only be opened from within. The flowering of the human being’s inner potential is the goal of Buddhism and, at the same time, the aim of humanistic education. The true meaning of education lies in the drawing forth of this inner potential. The essence of Buddhism, too, is to cultivate the inner goodness in each of us.

The young man who gained confidence by becoming a smoke jumper was convinced that he should live not as others told him to, but according to his own inner aspirations and desires.

Dr. Norton’s father and grandfather were both engineers; and he, too, originally started out as an engineer, following a course that accorded with his parents’ wishes. But he gradually became aware that this was not the life that he truly wanted to live.

At 35, he reached a turning point in his life. He quit his profession as an engineer and took up the study of philosophy. It was another adventure. He became a graduate student at Boston University and obtained his doctorate in philosophy in only two years.

This, he knew, was the fruit of the courage he had attained as a smoke jumper. He looked at the smoke jumper as similar to the bodhisattva in Buddhism. They were all ordinary people, he said, but by working for the sake of others, each was able to bring forth wonderful potential.

For Dr. Norton, the study of philosophy was not an abstract intellectual pursuit; rather, he saw it as a means to help people become happy.

Because of this belief, Dr. Norton deplored those who merely handed down orders and tried to control others, while themselves remaining in a safe haven and giving nothing of themselves for others. He was critical of any authori-

tarian behavior, be it in an educator, politician or religious leader.

He viewed favorably the fact that the Soka Gakkai has fought, since its founding, against all oppressive powers in Japan. And it fights today, he said, against forces that seek to return Japan to the authoritarianism of fifty or sixty years ago. In his view, the Soka Gakkai has been a powerful impetus in strengthening Japanese democracy after World War II. He defined this support of democracy as nurturing inner motivation and a spirit of independence among the people.

He asserted that those in power feared and hated any movement that encouraged people to think, see and decide for themselves. It was the very superiority of Mr. Makiguchi’s philosophy that led the authorities to suppress him. The essence of Mr. Makiguchi’s educational philosophy was to teach children to develop an independent spirit so that they would never blindly follow the dictates of authority.



The University of Delaware where Dr. Norton taught philosophy.

Dr. Norton looked on the continued persecution of the Soka Gakkai as a reaction of the forces who oppose any movement for the independence of the people. This was clear, he said, from an American perspective.

He acknowledged that an inner-motivated and global organization such as the Soka Gakkai might be beyond the realm of comprehension given the current Japanese mind-set. It is, nevertheless, a mistake, he said, to judge people or a group as being a threat just because they are different and

don't fit into fixed preconceptions.

The real problem, he noted, is the closed and self-righteous minds of those who judge others in this way.

Education, government, religion and learning—all exist for the sake of people's happiness. Of what use are such things if they do not bring people happiness? This was Dr. Norton's belief. He was a brilliant standard-bearer for humanism.

When he taught at the university, the students were attracted by his character and used to bring their personal problems to him. He

never treated them condescendingly, and so they could talk to him freely about anything. Just as surely as water does not run uphill, people never reveal their true feelings to those who they feel look down on them. Dr. Norton had perfected the art of placing himself in his students' shoes and seeing things from their perspective.

In July 1995, Dr. Norton was diagnosed with cancer. It was already too late, and nothing could be done.

His wife Mary relates: "He was afraid that the pain might reduce him, that it might make him waver from his philosophy, but it didn't. Pain didn't have a chance. I think that was the same kind of test as facing a forest fire.... He was gracious in his dying."

One of his friends urged him to fight the cancer and beat it, but Dr. Norton smiled and said, "I have already won."

Mrs. Norton remarked of her husband and the way he viewed his approaching death: "He even said to me that people speak of death as being lonely or solitary, but that he didn't feel that way at all. He had his friends inside of his head, friends like President Ikeda, and people who had inspired him, Thoreau and Emerson and Socrates and Plato, and he had his friends around him as he was dying." She said that her husband had faced death without fear and regarded it simply as "another adventure."

“I guess the first thing about an adventure,” Mrs. Norton said, “is that it’s an opportunity to challenge yourself. It’s getting yourself out of situations that are comfortable, where you know what goes, and where you don’t have to worry. It’s an opportunity to grow.... It’s really an opportunity to become what you must be. But it’s one that you must face without fear.” This underscores the spirit by which Dr. Norton lived his life.

“He had done what he wanted to do in life,” his wife explained. “He had stayed true to himself. He had everything he wanted from life. He had all the internal rewards from life.... He didn’t want to meet death with petty feelings. He wanted to meet it with courage, and in that sense it was an adventure. It really was.”

He was 65 when he died.

Dr. Norton chose to walk a different path than other scholars. Perhaps that is why he was able to penetrate the essence of humanity as deeply as he did. His learning was at one with his personal experience and his character.

The same was true of Mr. Makiguchi. He pursued his studies under adverse conditions and never graduated from one of the prestigious imperial universities, which was so vital in those days if one wished to gain scholarly recognition in Japan.

Thus, when Mr. Makiguchi first tried to publish his theory of value-creating education, he was attacked as being arrogant—how dare a mere elementary school principal offer an educational theory, something that was no easy feat even for world-renowned

scholars! Government educational officials told him scornfully that he should leave his research as a hobby to pursue after his retirement.

But Mr. Makiguchi would not be dissuaded. He declared: “I am driven by the frantic desire to prevent the present deplorable situation where ten million of our children and students are forced to endure the agonies of cut-throat competition—perpetrated by the difficulty getting into good schools, the ‘examination hell’ and the competitive struggle for jobs after graduation—from continuing into the next generation.”

THAT was his motivation—one filled with the deepest love and concern for the children of Japan—for offering “a type of education that will make all children happy.” Mr. Makiguchi formulated an educational technique, a tried and tested path that could be described as the “Way of Education,” not just for the sake of children’s future happiness, but to allow them to savor the pleasures of learning in the present.

The words that my beloved mentor Josei Toda said to Mr. Makiguchi when he met him for the first time contain the essence of Soka education: “I will make even the poorest student into an excellent one.”

That affirmation was based on Mr. Toda’s conviction that no child started out as a poor student, and that if one taught a child the basics of thinking, how to deduce and reason, any child could become an outstanding student. It was an

expression of invincible faith in human potential. It was also a burning indignation at the deep-seated tendency toward standardization, ranking people according to academic grades and callously cutting off and discarding those students who could not keep up with the program—all things that were the very antithesis of the pluralistic philosophy expressed in the Buddhist concept of “cherry, plum, peach and damson.” [Just as each of these trees brings forth its own unique kind of blossoms and fruit, true human potential manifests itself in a way unique to that individual.]

Dr. Norton described the phrase “You will need to know this,” which was so often used by educators when teaching children, as the “deadliest phrase in the world.” It does nothing to attract children’s interest; it only forces something on them. It is a crime. We should offer children the joy of learning, Dr. Norton insisted. We must try to preserve the happiness of learning, the beaming faces of children when they took their very first steps in infancy.

Dr. Norton believed that our value-creating movement was committed to that challenge. He was impressed when he visited our Soka schools. “The eyes of every child are shining,” he said. He loved the name “Soka,” or value creation, and he regarded his encounter with the Soka Gakkai as the greatest honor in his life. And until the very end, he wore his Soka University pin, received along with an honorary doctorate from that school, with deepest pride. □

The Untold History of the Fuji School: The Origins of the Temple Issue (12)

This series is based on The Dark History of the Fuji School: Revealing the Origin of the Nikken Sect (Ankoku no Fuji Shumonshi: Nikken Shu no Engen o Kiru) by Hajime Kawai, a vice senior advisor of the Soka Gakkai Study Department.

The last installment addressed the priesthood's behavior during World War II and the imprisonment of Soka Gakkai leaders Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Josei Toda after rejecting the priesthood's request to accept the Shinto talisman.

Chapter 12: The Soka Gakkai's postwar expansion

(1) The postwar reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai

ON July 3, 1945, Josei Toda was released from the Toshima Penitentiary in Tokyo to find his country burned to ashes, people in utter misery and destitution and the Soka Gakkai nearly destroyed. Jailed in the same facility as his mentor, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Toda read the Lotus Sutra and continued to chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo in his cell. His study and prayer in prison eventually led him to a profound awakening—an awakening to his mission to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism as a leader of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth. These are the bodhisattvas described in the Lotus Sutra who would become the sutra's devout practitioners long after the passing of Shakyamuni Buddha. Upon his release from prison, Toda was resolved to realize the will of his late mentor, who had died in confinement, and spread the

Daishonin's teaching throughout war-torn Japan. He wasted no time in beginning the reconstruction of the Soka Gakkai.

In January 1946, Toda renamed the Soka Kyoiku Gakkai ("Educational Society of Value Creation") the Soka Gakkai ("Society of Value Creation"), indicating his broader vision to promote the Daishonin's Buddhism throughout all aspects of society, beyond its application in education. He soon held discussion meetings and led propagation efforts. In July 1949, he published *The Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai's monthly study journal. In April 1951, he also began the newspaper, *Seikyo Shimbun*.

Toda was inaugurated the second Soka Gakkai president on May 3, 1951. Approximately 3,080 members signed the petition for Toda's inauguration. They represented the active membership of the Gakkai. In his inaugural speech, Toda made a bold declaration of his goal to achieve a membership of 750,000 households in his lifetime: "While I am alive, I will achieve



A mother and children in the devastation of postwar Japan.

the propagation of 750,000 households by my own hand. If this cannot be achieved in my lifetime, please do not hold my funeral. Just dispose of my body off the coast of Shinagawa” (*Complete Works of Josei Toda*, vol. 3, p. 433).

With its second president inaugurated, the Soka Gakkai launched full-fledged activities to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In response to Toda’s firm resolve, Gakkai members exerted themselves in propagation. Many people began taking faith in the Daishonin’s Buddhism each year. By the end of 1951, the membership had grown to 5,700 households, by the end of 1952, to 22,000 households, in 1953, to 70,000 households, in 1954, to 170,000 households, and by the end of 1955, to 300,000.

Envisioning a dramatic increase in membership, Josei Toda submitted a request to Nissho, the sixty-fourth high priest, to transcribe a Gohonzon for the

wide propagation of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In response, the high priest transcribed a Gohonzon with the inscription, “For the achievement of the wide spread of the Great Law through compassionate propagation” and conferred it upon the Soka Gakkai on May 20, 1951. This Gohonzon is symbolic of the Gakkai’s essential role, its dedication to broadly disseminating the essence of Buddhism.

The Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and its temples sustained significant damage during the war. While the head temple burnt down, many branch temples were destroyed in air raids. Furthermore, in December 1945, Taiseki-ji lost its farmland in the postwar agrarian reform, which the government was promoting as a part of the nation’s democratization. The landowners who rented out their land to tenant farmers instead of farming themselves had to sell off their farmland to the government at a fixed price. The government in

Second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, makes his declaration against nuclear weapons at the fourth East Japan Athletic Meet in Yokohama on September 8, 1957.

turn sold those tracts of farmland to tenant farmers. This agrarian reform was instituted between 1946 and 1948. As a result, Japan's land-holding gentry class was virtually eliminated, and the lives of tenant farmers were much improved.

Taiseki-ji had owned a vast tract of farmland donated by its patrons, which it had rented out to farmers for hundreds of bushels of rice per year. The head temple had long depended on the income from this farmland for its operation. So when it lost that farmland in the postwar agrarian reform, the priesthood faced severe financial hardship. The chief priests of the lodging temples on the head temple grounds had to cultivate empty lots and hillsides themselves for meager crops—just enough to keep them from starvation. They did not have enough money to buy candles for Gohonzon's altar. In this dire financial situation, the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood appealed desperately to its parishioners for more financial support.

In November 1950, the priesthood decided to promote Taiseki-ji as a tourist attraction to generate additional income, and held a conference at the reception hall to discuss how. Besides representatives of the priesthood, the mayor of Fujinomiya, the chief of Ueno Village, executives of Fujinomiya's tourist association and local news reporters attended the conference.

During the conference, participants discussed concrete plans to promote tourism at Taiseki-ji. For example, a scenic road, a tourist information center at the head temple's Sanmon Gate and a new lodging facility were suggested. It was also proposed that Taiseki-ji hold a dance to attract young people in the spring and autumn. To generate funds, the priesthood did not hesitate to turn Taiseki-ji into a tourist attraction.

During the war, the priesthood curried favor with the military regime and compromised the Daishonin's teaching as part of its wartime strategy to survive. And it nearly led to ruin. The priesthood's plan to promote the head temple as a tourist attraction, however, tells us that it learned little about the importance of upholding the integrity of Buddhism from its wartime experience.



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Toda was enraged to hear about the priesthood's plan, stating that tourists who were not seeking the Gohonzon must not be allowed on the head temple grounds. His strong opposition prevented the plan from being realized. In order to relieve the head temple of its financial burden, Toda decided to organize group pilgrimages of Gakkai members. This was in spite of the fact that the number of Gakkai members at the time was relatively small, and their financial prospects were no more hopeful than that of the priesthood. Toda often expressed his belief that when the true Law is about to be obscured and driven to extinction, that is precisely the time for its true development and broad propagation to begin. Toward 1952, which marked the beginning of the 700th year since the Daishonin established his Buddhism in 1253, Toda emphasized the necessity of spreading the Daishonin's Buddhism and urged Gakkai members to awaken to their mission as the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

(2) The Ogasawara Incident

THE celebration to commemorate the establishment of the Daishonin's Buddhism was held at Taiseki-ji on April 27 and 28, 1952. Attended by 4,000 Gakkai members, the event was unprecedented in scale for both the priesthood and the Gakkai at that time. In order to commemorate the occasion, on April 24, the Soka Gakkai published *The Collected Writings of Nichiren Daishonin* (Jpn *Nichiren Daishonin Gosho Zenshu*), which had been edited by Nichiko Hori, the retired fifty-ninth high priest and renowned historian of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

The publication of the Daishonin's writings marked the beginning of the Gakkai's broad-based study movement, solidifying the Gakkai's philosophical foundation. In his preface to *The Collected Writings*, Toda compares Buddhist study to the strict discipline of swordsmanship (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1). Toda was passionate about the importance of Buddhist study in one's practice.

On the evening of April 27, during commemorative activities at the head temple, Soka Gakkai youth division members found out that Jimon Ogasawara was also staying at the head temple. During World War II, Ogasawara had propounded the erroneous doctrine that regarded the Buddha as a transient manifestation of the Shinto goddess in order to curry favor with the Japan's militaristic regime. He also worked to induce the government to persecute the Gakkai, leading to the imprisonment of Makiguchi and Toda. Ogasawara's presence at the head temple on this auspicious occasion came as a great surprise to the youth division members because he had been long expelled from the priesthood (For more details about Ogasawara, see Chapter 11, in the January 1999 issue of *Living Buddhism*).

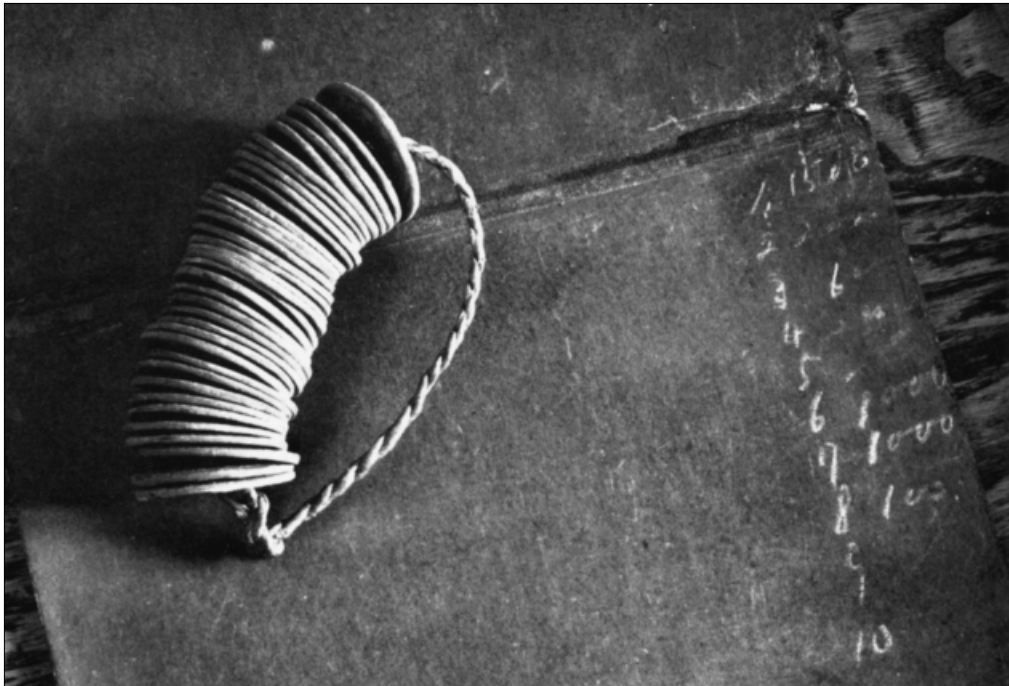
The youth division members met Ogasawara at one of the lodging temples on the head temple grounds and refuted his erroneous doctrine. Then they escorted him to the grave of Makiguchi where he wrote a letter of apology to the Daishonin for distorting the Daishonin's teachings. This is known as the Ogasawara incident.

During the war, Ogasawara pushed for the merger

of Nichiren Shoshu and the Minobu-based Nichiren School. He was said to have had a secret agreement with the Nichiren School that allegedly promised him the position of general administrator or the chief priest position at Taiseki-ji or Seicho-ji. Furthermore, Ogasawara attempted to have High Priest Nikkyo arrested on the charge of treason. Ironically, Ogasawara's attempt to take control of the head temple encouraged the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood to go further astray from the Daishonin's Buddhism and support Shintoism and the government's war efforts. Since Ogasawara corrupted the Daishonin's Buddhism, incited persecutions against the Soka Gakkai, and attempted to control the head temple for personal gain, he should have been condemned as an enemy not only to the Daishonin's Buddhism and the Gakkai, but also to the priesthood.

When youth division members reprimanded Ogasawara's offenses at the head temple, however, the priesthood was not pleased. Though it was a sincere action to protect the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism, the head temple administration regarded the incident as the disruption of an auspicious celebration. It also viewed the Gakkai's refutation of Ogasawara as challenging the high priest's prerogative to decide what is orthodox and what is heretical. The Nichiren Shoshu executive priests thought that it was utterly inappropriate for lay believers to refute any priest who had been ordained under the high priest's authority. Put simply, the incident was viewed as arrogance of challenge by lay believers toward the authority of the priesthood as well as the high priest. Many priests throughout Japan expressed their discontent. For example, the chief priest of the Osaka area parish issued a letter of protest against the Soka Gakkai on May 13, condemning its action as "an insult to the entire priesthood." The parish of the Kyushu area passed a resolution on May 21 calling for disciplinary action to be taken against the Soka Gakkai. While the priesthood never publicly condemned Ogasawara for his wartime behavior, it severely attacked the Soka Gakkai's action as an "insult" to the priesthood. The priesthood's emotional reaction to the Ogasawara incident was clearly a reflection of its deep-seated insecurity and need to maintain a sense of superiority over the laity.

In the middle of May, following the incident, the



A string of makeshift prayer beads that Toda fashioned from paper milk-bottle caps while in prison, on a slate on which he recorded the number of daimoku he had chanted.

(Opposite page) Toda returns to Tokyo after the Otaru debate at Haneda airport in March 1955.

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priesthood published the April issue of *Dai-Nichiren*, its official monthly magazine. This belated April issue contained notice of Ogasawara's reinstatement, as of April 5, into the priesthood. In other words, the priesthood retroactively admitted Ogasawara to the priesthood after the incident. This provided a pretext for accusing the Soka Gakkai of criticizing a Nichiren Shoshu priest on the head temple grounds.

Actually Ogasawara was reinstated into the priesthood soon after the war. On March 31, 1946, Nichiman, the sixty-third high priest, restored Ogasawara's status as a Nichiren Shoshu priest. His reinstatement was public knowledge within the priesthood as he ran for a position on the Nichiren Shoshu council in 1947. According to an April 28, 1947, publication, Ogasawara was not elected. However, when the Soka Gakkai inquired about Ogasawara's status, the priesthood on numerous occasions denied that he was a Nichiren Shoshu priest. For example, the May 1951 issue of *Dai-Nichiren* contains the following notice from the Nichiren Shoshu administrative office: "The *Seikyo Shimbun* reported that a priest who had filed a suit against High Priest Nikkyo Suzuki and attempted to disband Nichiren Shoshu still remains at the head temple. It must be clarified, however, that there is no

such priest among the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood." So naturally when the incident took place, none of the Soka Gakkai members thought that Ogasawara was a Nichiren Shoshu priest.

On June 28, 1952, the Nichiren Shoshu council met to discuss the Ogasawara incident. The council passed a resolution calling on Toda to submit a letter of apology to the head temple through the chief priest of the branch temple to which he belonged, and ordered his dismissal from the position of chief lay representative and barring him from visiting the head temple.

Outraged by this resolution, the Soka Gakkai youth division visited the council members one by one, and tried to convince them of the unjust nature of their decision. Through their efforts, the situation gradually improved. On July 24, Nissho, the sixty-fourth high priest, issued a written admonition to Toda. In response, Toda submitted a letter of apology, in which he expressed his confidence in the action taken by the youth division. He states in the letter: "When we see those in our school who are weak in their faith in the great pure Law and leaning toward slander of the Law, because we keep the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin and Nikko Shonin deep in our hearts...we tend to be uncompromising in our battle.... Since I believe that



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our action did not contradict the golden words of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin in the slightest, I am not ashamed to call myself a believer of Nichiren Shoshu before the Gohonzon. Therefore, I will not resign from the position of chief lay representative.”

Later Ogasawara lodged a complaint with police against Soka Gakkai leaders, including Toda, and a police investigation of the incident followed. However, Ogasawara filed a complaint also against the high priest, and as a result he was strongly criticized within Nichiren Shoshu. Eventually he retracted his complaints. Even after he had caused so much turmoil, the priesthood took no disciplinary action against Ogasawara.

The Ogasawara incident highlighted the priesthood’s desire to protect its authority at all costs, as well as its tendency to look condescendingly upon lay believers. Instead of making the Daishonin’s teachings a guideline for its behavior, the priesthood had

allowed its decisions to be driven by these baser motives. Another reason why the priesthood reacted so emotionally to the incident was its fear of being accused of the same crime as Ogasawara’s. The priesthood was afraid that if it allowed the Gakkai to rebuke Ogasawara for his actions during the war, it would be subjected to the same criticism due to its wartime support for Shintoism and the military regime. In short, the priesthood wanted to protect itself against any possible criticism from the laity.

This incident, however, did not in the least shake the Gakkai’s confidence in the Daishonin’s teaching or its movement to spread it. When Toda heard about the council resolution to prohibit him from visiting the head temple, he said: “It is all right if they want to bar me from visiting the head temple. It is not that we cannot attain enlightenment unless we go to the head temple. The Daishonin’s writings clearly explain this principle.”

(3) The propagation led by Josei Toda

IN August 1952, the Soka Gakkai was incorporated as an independent religious organization. Toda was keenly aware of the priesthood’s authoritarianism and its limitations in terms of its ability and sense of responsibility for the spread of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. With incorporation, the Soka Gakkai’s propagation efforts made further progress as it could now take the initiative and full responsibility for its actions.

Although the Gakkai made efforts to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism, the priesthood was not cooperative. Most Nichiren Shoshu priests did not understand the Gakkai’s earnest efforts in propagation. Many were even critical. In those early days of the Soka Gakkai’s development, there were about one hundred branch temples in Japan and ten in Tokyo. Only two temples in Tokyo were willing to conduct initiation ceremonies (Jpn *gojukai*) for new converts introduced by Soka Gakkai members. As the Gakkai conducted its propagation nationwide, more branch temples gradually started to conduct initiation ceremonies.

Because there were virtually no new converts

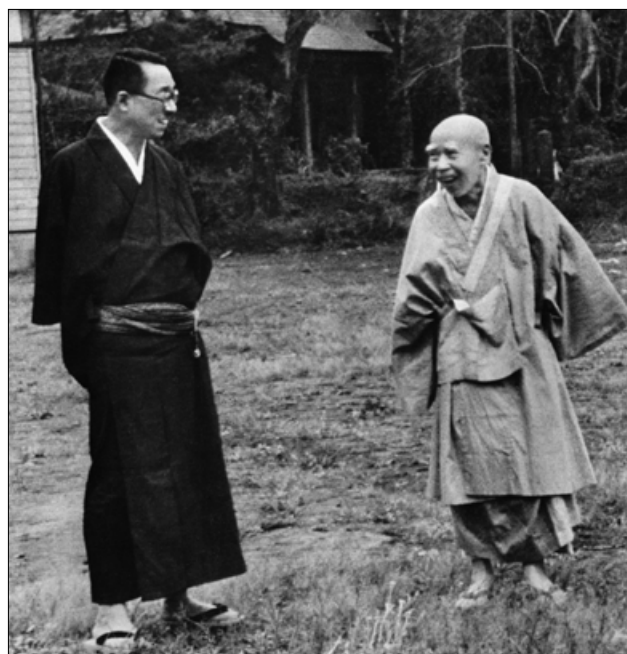
Josei Toda (left) with retired fifty-ninth high priest, Nissho, at Taiseki-ji.

before the existence of the Soka Gakkai, Nichiren Shoshu priests were not accustomed to conducting initiation ceremonies. (Most parishioners and their families had belonged to Nichiren Shoshu temples for generations, and as such, had been considered believers since birth.) As more people took faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism, President Makiguchi saw practical merit in a solemn ceremony to encourage new converts in their new faith and draw a distinction between the Daishonin's Buddhism and their previous religious affiliation.

In the Daishonin's Buddhism, however, embracing the Gohonzon in and of itself is to accept the supreme Buddhist precept. So the ceremony was not strictly necessary. When the Daishonin's Buddhism spread rapidly after the war due to the Gakkai's efforts, not many priests knew how to conduct initiation ceremonies, and sometimes Gakkai leaders had to assist priests in doing so.

Furthermore, as many Gakkai members were well versed in the lessons taught by Nichiren Daishonin, new members were encouraged to remove objects of other Buddhist beliefs so that they might not be confused about their fundamental object of devotion, which is the Gohonzon. The priesthood, however, remained lax in this area. For example, some lodging temples on the head temple grounds continued to enshrine the Shinto talisman even after the Gakkai's organized pilgrimages had begun. As late as the mid 1950s, Soka Gakkai youth division members encouraged one lodging temple to remove a Shinto talisman.

Inspired by Soka Gakkai members, certain priests removed objects of other faiths from their temples. For example, in 1953, the chief priest of Myofuku-ji in Fukushima Prefecture removed various Buddhist statues that had been kept at the temple for the past 600 years. The temple members, whose families had belonged to the parish for many generations, however, fiercely opposed the removal of those religious objects. On the nights of April 18 and 19, 1953, a mob of those disgruntled temple believers stormed the temple, throwing stones and vandalizing the grounds.



The police were called, and criminal charges were filed. Later, twenty-two temple members were expelled from Nichiren Shoshu. Like Myofuku-ji, many branch temples, especially those in northeastern Japan, had kept religious objects from other Buddhist sects for centuries. Also many temple believers living in the vicinity of the head temple enshrined the objects of other faiths and thus drew Gakkai members' attention. But the priesthood took no significant action regarding this.

Although the head temple professed strict adherence to the Daishonin's and Nikko Shonin's teachings in matters of Buddhist doctrine, it continued to allow its branch temples and parishioners to enshrine objects of other faiths. In this regard, Nichiko Hori, the fifty-ninth high priest of Taiseki-ji and noted scholar of Nichiren Buddhism, states: "Those who appear to be strict with regard to the slander of the Law, yet are lenient in reality are monstrous" (*Essential Writings of the Fuji School*, vol. 1, p. 153).

While the Soka Gakkai continued to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, it also began making many contributions to the priesthood. On the head temple grounds, Gakkai members' financial contributions made possible the restoration of the five-storied pagoda, the repair of the Somon Gate, the construction of Hoan-den, the construction and renovation of

lodging temples, the construction of the Grand Lecture Hall, and so on.

Furthermore, numerous branch temples were constructed and donated by the Gakkai. With the rapid progress of propagation, the priesthood soon attained an unprecedented level of prosperity. The postwar restoration of the priesthood was made possible solely through the Soka Gakkai's efforts. In this regard, Nichiko Hori, then the retired fifty-ninth high priest, once said to Toda: "Mr. Toda, if it weren't for you, Nichiren Shoshu would have already collapsed."

With the advent of the Soka Gakkai and its rapid development after World War II, a new era of the Daishonin's Buddhism was unfolding. On New Years Day in 1956, Nichijun, the sixty-fifth high priest, stated: "When I look back over the last 700 years and compare them with our circumstances today, it is apparent that we have undergone a great transformation; a new era in history has been created. That is, through the propagation of the Soka Gakkai, the True Law has spread throughout the nation. The unprecedented expansion of our order is being realized. In this regard, future historians will probably define the first seven hundred years [since the Daishonin's establishment of his Buddhism] as an era of protection by the priesthood, and the era thereafter as an era of spread and propagation" (*Complete Works of High Priest Nichijun*, p. 1620).

Nichijun continues: "Seven hundred years after the Daishonin's establishment of his Buddhism, wide-scale propagation began. The current propagation of the True Law seems to hold profound promise. In this regard, I sense something extraordinary about the Soka Gakkai's appearance, about its relationship with the Buddha" (*Ibid.*, p. 1622). Nichijun realized that the priesthood's role to preserve the Daishonin's teaching was ending and the Soka Gakkai's era of propagation had begun. Nichijun stated at the seventh Soka Gakkai general meeting on December 7, 1952: "I entrust the great propagation of the Law to the members of the Soka Gakkai" (*Ibid.*, p. 308). This statement, leaving the spread of the Daishonin's teachings to Gakkai members, apparently arose from Nichijun's awareness of the priesthood's lack of ability in spreading Buddhism on its own.

On March 11, 1955, the Soka Gakkai had an official debate with the Minobu-based Nichiren School in Otaru, Hokkaido. Instructed by Toda, the Gakkai representatives completely refuted the Minobu Nichiren School's distortions of the Daishonin's Buddhism. While the priesthood was unable to represent itself in debate, the Gakkai clearly validated the correct teaching of the Daishonin through its outstanding grasp of Buddhist teachings.

On September 8, 1957, during a youth division athletic meet in Yokohama, Toda made a historic declaration against the use of nuclear weapons, urging the young people present to communicate the Daishonin's emphasis on the respect for life and bringing lasting peace to the entire world. With his antinuclear declaration, Toda laid the philosophical foundation for the SGI's movement to promote peace and culture based on Buddhism.

By the end of 1957, the Gakkai's membership grew to over 760,000 households, surpassing Toda's lifelong goal of 750,000 households and thereby solidifying the foundation of the spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism in Japan. His goal complete, Toda died on April 2, 1958. He was 58. At the eighteenth Soka Gakkai general meeting held immediately after Toda's death, on May 3, 1958, High Priest Nichijun stated: "In the Lotus Sutra, great bodhisattvas equal in number to the grains of sand of sixty-thousand Ganges rivers, led by four leaders including the foremost, Bodhisattva Superior Practices, gather at the assembly of Eagle Peak and pledge to spread Myoho-rence-kyo in the Latter Day of the Law. Those bodhisattvas are now appearing as they promised at the assembly of Eagle Peak.

It was President Toda who, as their leader, called forth those bodhisattvas; it was in the Soka Gakkai that they gathered. In other words, it was President Toda who manifested the five and seven characters of Myoho-rence-kyo as 750,000 [bodhisattvas]" (*Complete Works of High Priest Nichijun*, p. 357). As Nichijun eulogized, Toda, inheriting the will of his mentor, Makiguchi, had reconstructed the Soka Gakkai and laid the foundation for the spread of the Law in Japan in accord with the teachings of the Daishonin and Nikko Shonin.

(Translated and edited by SGI-USA Study Department)

DIALOGUE

on the *Lotus Sutra*

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

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

Participants this time discuss various issues pertaining to the Buddhist view of eternal life. What precisely continues on eternally? What is the state after death like? They also discuss universal life in terms of the concept of non-substantiality and the doctrine of the nine consciousnesses.

35 The “Life Span” Chapter—Life after Death—Fusion with the Universal Life: The Meaning of Eternal Life

KATSUJI SAITO: The more I think about the eternity of life, the more questions I find myself confronted with. Take for example, the concept of “life after death.” We know that once dead, the physical body starts to decompose, so my question is, what is it that remains? What is eternal? What continues on after death?

TAKANORI ENDO: Indeed. In our last discussion, the point was made that there is no evidence to support the view that once we die nothing remains of our existence. That is, we refuted the doctrine of annihilation. But neither is there evidence of an unchanging soul, distinct from our physical body, which continues on eternally.

HARUO SUDA: In other words, as the refutation of the doctrine of eternity points out, there is no spirit-like substance that flits about hither and yon after death.

SAITO: Nonetheless, it seems many people think



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French historian, Dr. René Huyghe meets with SGI President Ikeda, June 1989. Their dialogues were compiled into the book *Dawn After Dark*.

that Buddhism ascribes to this idea of an eternal soul in its view of life after death. And it often comes as quite a surprise to them to hear that Buddhism in fact rejects this view.

SUDA: If not a soul, then just what continues on after death? This is a difficult question.

DAISAKU IKEDA: The second Soka Gakkai president, Josei Toda, would often say that upon death our lives fuse with the universe. It's not a matter of there being a soul; rather, our life, as an entity of the oneness of body and mind, returns to the universe. The universe itself is one great living entity. It is a vast ocean of life. It nurtures all things, gives all things life and enables them to function. When things die, they

return again to its embrace and receive new vitality.

There is a boundless and overflowing ocean of life which is always in motion. As it moves and changes, it enacts the rhythm of life and death. Our individual lives are like waves produced from the great ocean that is the universe; the emergence of a wave is “life,” and its abatement is “death.” This rhythm repeats eternally.

This is not only true of the lives of people. Nichiren Daishonin says, “No phenomena—heaven or earth, Yin or Yang,¹ the sun or the moon, the five planets,² or any life-condition from Hell to Buddhahood—are free from birth and death” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, pp. 21–22). “Heaven or earth, Yin or Yang, the sun or the moon, the five planets”



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The Lagoon Nebula—What is the relationship between human life and the universe? Recalling the views of his mentor, Josei Toda, SGI President Ikeda explains: “The universe itself is one great living entity. It is a vast ocean of life. It nurtures all things, gives all things life and enables them to function. When things die, they return again to its embrace and receive new vitality.”

refers to the realm of celestial bodies. Stars also experience birth and death. They have a life span. The Milky Way was born and it, too, will die; its life is limited. The laws of birth and death dictate this. The same holds true in the realm of the microscopic. Each of the Ten Worlds from Hell to Buddhahood, in all phenomena, experiences birth and death. For example, the state of Hell may manifest in life at one time, and in death at another.

The Daishonin writes to his follower Nanjo Tokimitsu about his late father, “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), indicating that the effect of Buddhahood he had attained in his life

would continue even after death.

All things in the universe weave an eternal rhythm of life and death. What, then, is the state after death in which one fuses with the universe like? Let’s try to investigate this further. Why don’t we first consider the moment of death, which is the transition from life to death?

The Disintegration of the Five Components

SUDA: Perhaps we could start by looking at the “Rinju yojin sho” (Cautions on the Moment of Death).³ As the title suggests, this document, which is a record of sermons delivered by Nichikan

(1665–1726), the twenty-sixth high priest of Taiseki-ji, contains a number of things to bear in mind at the time of one’s death.

ENDO: These include, for example, “People who are intoxicated should not come near the ailing person,” and “The person should not be surrounded by large numbers of boisterous people.”⁴ What this basically means is that one must take care not to interrupt the dying person’s tranquillity.

IKEDA: Our *ichinen*, or frame of mind, at the moment of death is a major determinant of which of the Ten Worlds in the universe our life will enter. Therefore, Nichikan warns that every precaution should be taken to ensure that the dying person can single-mindedly focus on the Mystic Law.

SAITO: To enable the person to concentrate on the Mystic Law, he advises against such things as placing items of sentimental value nearby to which the sick person might feel a strong attachment, or engaging in discussion which may arouse feelings of anxiety or causing them to become excited.⁵

SUDA: He also says, “Even after the person has stopped breathing, you should continue chanting daimoku near the deceased.” That’s because, he explains, “even after death the fundamental mind remains.”⁶ Even though in Nichikan’s day the cessation of breathing was held to constitute the moment of death, he asserts that for a while thereafter the “fundamental mind” remains. He says that one should allow that mind to hear the sound of daimoku.

ENDO: This suggests that the transition from life to death does not take place in a single instant, but occurs gradually.

IKEDA: Yes. Death is seen as a process that continues over a certain period of time.

SAITO: In terms of the physical body, that process involves a transformation from “sentience” to “insentience.” In the course of this process, the possibility exists that, due to some circumstance, the person may return to life. But it seems that once a certain stage is passed, that is no longer possible. The near-death experiences that we discussed last time of course involve people who were at the stage when it was still possible to return.

SUDA: After passing the point at which return to life is no longer possible, the person finally proceeds

toward complete death. This may be the point that has since ancient times been described in Buddhism as the “river of three crossings.”⁷

IKEDA: Just what takes place when a living entity makes the transition from life to death? Buddhism after all views the physical and spiritual functions of a living entity as a temporary union.

ENDO: That’s what’s referred to as the “temporary union of the five components.”

IKEDA: Of the five components, form indicates the physical dimension of life. And perception, conception, volition and consciousness indicate life’s spiritual functions.

[Perception is the spiritual function that enables one to take in stimuli from the external world via the “six sense organs”—the five sense organs plus mind, which integrates the impressions of the five senses. Conception is the function of creating mental ideas about what has been perceived. Volition is the spiritual function to take some action based on conception. And consciousness is the fundamental spiritual activity that integrates the functions of perception, conception and volition.]

Life has the power to harmoniously fuse these physical and spiritual functions. It harmonizes them, unifies them, and enables proactive engagement with respect to the external world.

ENDO: Certainly, viewed strictly in terms of the physical aspect, our bodies are an amalgam of materials existing in the universe.

IKEDA: According to one source, the cells of the human body number 60 trillion. As they age, old cells are constantly being replaced by new ones. In other words, life and death is taking place constantly on the cellular level. Here we see once again the laws of birth and death at work.

At the same time, a single living entity strictly integrates and governs these cells allowing itself to carry out activity. When death approaches, the integrative power of life is lost and the five components, which have hitherto been held in a state of temporary union, disintegrate. Life’s physical and spiritual functions subsequently recede into latency, and the union of the five elements⁸ is also lost.

SUDA: Nichikan’s “Cautions on the Moment of

“When the lives of these persons come to an end, they will be received into the hands of a thousand Buddhas, who will free them from all fear and keep them from falling into the evil paths of existence” (LS28, 322).

Death” reads, “When the wind of the ‘devil of extinction’ enters the body, the bone and flesh separate.”⁹ This seems to suggest that the dying person senses a wind passing through the body as the five elements all go their separate ways. The annals of near-death experiences in fact include such accounts. The distress that one experiences at that time is termed the suffering of death. Nichikan says of the suffering of death, “If a person has accumulated good karma, he will not suffer a great deal.”

IKEDA: Even if the only benefit of faith in the Mystic Law was to be free of suffering at the time of death, it would still be wonderful.

Changes in Appearance at the Time of Death Corroborated by Medical Field

SAITO: In the SGI, there are countless reports of people who have passed away with a look of peace and ease at the final moment. You frequently hear about people who, though they may have died of illness, did not experience any pain; or who, although they died due to some untoward accident, breathed their last with a peaceful look as though simply dozing off.

SUDA: I once heard someone who worked for a funeral house remark: “No matter how you might try to improve the appearance of a corpse with cosmetics, you cannot fundamentally alter the person’s visage at death. No amount of money or status can acquire a good appearance at death. Having seen a great many people in life and in death, it seems to me that, ultimately, how a person looks at death reflects how he or she has lived.”

At funerals for SGI members, there is definitely something different about the general atmosphere, too. Observers noting the heartfelt mourning of other members often are left with the sense that the

deceased must have truly treasured others.

ENDO: In particular, the funerals for individuals who have worked hard to help others are attended by endless streams of mourners. You often hear about how family members or people in the community who are not SGI members gain a new understanding of the great achievements of the deceased by the large numbers of people who come to pay their last respects, even though the deceased may not have had any special standing in society.

IKEDA: Such people propagate the Daishonin’s teaching even in death. This is truly wonderful. They are genuine champions of the people. A passage in the “Encouragements of the Bodhisattva Universal Worthy” chapter of the Lotus Sutra indicates just this when it says: “When the lives of these persons come to an end, they will be received into the hands of a thousand Buddhas, who will free them from all fear and keep them from falling into the evil paths of existence” (LS28, 322).

A thousand Buddhas applaud those champions of the people who have fought hard for kosen-rufu. Here, a “thousand Buddhas” could be said to point to the many people who chant daimoku for the sake of the deceased.

Of course, the important thing is not the number of people who see a person off, but that the deceased be embraced by sincere daimoku. There is no greater way to embark on the journey for Eagle Peak than to be sent off from this life by the sincere daimoku of one’s fellow members.

SUDA: I heard the experience of Harue Yamaguchi of Hachioji, Tokyo, who died in 1996. The funeral of Mrs. Yamaguchi, who had fought for many years for kosen-rufu in her community, was attended by an extraordinary number of people.

She was 65 when she died, but the look on her face was so peaceful that it became the talk of the community. During the five days her body lay at home while

funeral ceremonies were under way, she reportedly grew more lovely by the day. The wrinkles on her forehead vanished and she looked as though she had actually grown younger. On viewing her, one person even remarked in surprise, “She is smiling like a child. That’s truly how she looks.”

Mrs. Yamaguchi, who joined the Soka Gakkai in 1955, had undergone surgery to remove a tumor from her lung eight years prior to her death. But even after that, she continued energetically carrying out activities in the Hachioji area.

IKEDA: I have heard a great deal about her. She was deeply trusted by many people not only in Hachioji, but throughout the western Tokyo region.

SUDA: Whenever she had a moment’s time, she would be talking with local members or calling up someone to offer encouragement. She was so lively and high-spirited, people sometimes would ask her, “How do you manage to always be so bright and cheerful?” To which she would reply: “It’s because I chant daimoku to help people overcome their sufferings. It seems to me that the more I encourage others, the more abundant my own life force becomes.”

Because she was always brightly encouraging other members, everyone was surprised at her sudden death. While alive, she had often said, “Life is eternal. I would like to die quickly, the way the petals of a flower scatter after it has bloomed. I don’t want to become a burden for others.”

When she died, she quickly lost consciousness and didn’t experience any suffering at all. And, as has already been noted, she had a truly peaceful countenance—with the same look on her face she had when encouraging someone.

SAITO: Her appearance in death was indeed a source of great encouragement for everyone.

ENDO: Nichiren Daishonin indicates that one’s appearance at the moment of death reveals one’s condition of life. He says, for example, that the expression of a virtuous person at the time of death will be “pure and bright” and that person’s body will be “as light as a goose feather and as soft and pliable as cotton” (MW-5, 288).

I once asked a specialist in terminal care to explain the circumstances in which a person’s facial color improves upon death. In short, I was told that when a person dies with a sense of satisfaction and peace of

mind, generally the blood vessels will be in a dilated and non-constricted state. The formation of blood clots and hardening of the muscles take comparatively longer to occur. As a result, the person’s face brightens while the body remains supple.

On the other hand, when someone dies with feelings of chagrin and regret, in a state of suffering, the body becomes like a clenched fist and consequently the blood vessels are in a constricted state. Then the clotting of the blood and hardening of the muscles begin sooner, so that the person’s appearance darkens as the body stiffens.

While on a different level from attaining Buddhahood, it seems that, in general, the state of a person’s mind upon encountering death is reflected in his or her appearance.

IKEDA: This suggests that, to some extent, medicine can explain why there are differences in people’s appearances at death.

The Three Truths:

THE truth of nonsubstantiality (Jpn *kutai*), the truth of temporary existence (*ketai*) and the truth of the Middle Way (*chutai*). Three integral aspects of the truth formulated by T’ien-t’ai of China. They indicate three phases of one truth. The truth of nonsubstantiality means that phenomena have no absolute or fixed existence of their own; their true nature is *ku*, the potential state that cannot be defined as either existence or nonexistence. The truth of temporary existence means that while all things are *ku* or nonsubstantial in nature, they nevertheless possess a provisional or temporary reality which is in constant flux. The truth of the Middle Way is that all phenomena are characterized by both nonsubstantiality and temporary existence yet are in essence neither. The true nature of all phenomena transcends words or conception.

Of course, since the benefit of the Mystic Law purifies our lives, those who really exert themselves in faith have absolutely no need to fear death. Even if someone should die in an accident, as long as the person has maintained strong faith in life, he or she will attain Buddhahood without fail.

The Energy of Karma Continues after Death

SAITO: We still haven't answered the question of what it is that continues after death.

Specifically, Buddhism explains the concept of selflessness, denying the existence of a soul after death. It teaches that there is no "self" that lives as an eternally unchanging entity. At the same time, it teaches that life continues after death, and in a qualified sense recognizes the concept of transmigration. We need to consider whether these two views are contradictory.

IKEDA: This is a very old question that has been posed since the dawn of Buddhism. While it would be very interesting to explore the historical development of thought on the matter, I think that because of the complexity, we should perhaps pass over this discussion for now. I would just like to note that the concept of nonsubstantiality and the investigations of the Consciousness-Only school¹⁰ involve a close awareness of this issue.

What continues after death? Shakyamuni's conclusion is that karma continues. Our circumstances in our present life are the effect of our past actions (karma), and our actions in the present determine the circumstances of our lives in the future. In other words, the influence of our actions is carried on from one existence to the next transcending life and death.

SAITO: Karma, as indicated by the concept of the three categories of action—namely thoughts, words and deeds—means both physical and spiritual activity. What we have done, what we have said, what we have thought—the consequences of all these actions continue into the future unabated. When you think about it, this is an extremely strict perspective on causality.

IKEDA: That's right. Essentially, it is the energy of karma that continues beyond birth and death.

ENDO: The mention of energy calls to mind the principle of the conservation of energy, a law of

physics which holds that energy can be neither created nor destroyed. While thermal energy may change into kinetic energy, and potential energy may turn into electrical energy, energy cannot suddenly be produced from nothing. Nor can existing energy simply disappear. It only changes form.

SUDA: Even matter is nothing more than a stable form of energy. From that standpoint, some claim that energy is the ultimate reality.

IKEDA: René Huyghe discusses this in his important work *Formes et forces* (Forms and Forces).¹¹

[Huyghe (1906–97) was a French art historian. His dialogue with the SGI president was published in 1991 under the title *Dawn After Dark*, by Weatherhill, Inc.]

According to Huyghe, there is a dynamic of form and energy operating on all levels of existence, from the atomic to the universal. And the high-level spiritual activity of artistic creation is no exception.

He proposes that, through some function, force produces a stable form. Should the energy contained in the form remain active, it will eventually take another form or will return to a state of pure force. In terms of the Buddhist concept of "the three truths," force represents the truth of nonsubstantiality, and form the truth of temporary existence. [see box p. 40]

SAITO: So with respect to life and death, we can say that life is when the energy of karma temporarily assumes a fixed form, and death is when the form breaks down and becomes one with the life current of the universe as a flow of pure energy.

IKEDA: Generally speaking, that comparison is probably an apt one. Of course, form changes continually from moment to moment.

ENDO: Along the lines of the principle of conservation of energy, we might be able to speak loosely of a principle of conservation of karma.

IKEDA: I find it deeply intriguing that Huyghe identifies wave motion as an important factor in energy's transformation into form. He postulates that form is determined by the various wave, vibratory and rhythmic attributes of force. This is based on well-known experiments in cymatics.

SAITO: Cymatic experiments involve imparting a fixed vibration to liquids, or to dust or metal shavings



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When liquids, dust or metal shavings are exposed to sound vibrations, certain frequencies produce particular patterns such as those found in nature—bee-hives, coral, shells etc. Dr. René Huyghe speculates that all matter is made of energy of a particular vibration or rhythm and each living entity may have its own “vibratory reality.”



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spread over a disc-shaped surface. When a certain frequency is reached, the particles describe a particular pattern on the surface. The patterns include those of helices, snails, dendriforms or tree-like patterns, hexagons and scales.

IKEDA: They also often manifest the shapes of such organic substances as sprigs of coral, broad beans, shells, fish skeletons, turtle shells, and the hexagonal loculi of a beehive. Based on these experiments, Huyghe speculates that all matter is made up of energy and a particular vibration or rhythm. His insight is that each living entity may have a particular “vibratory reality.”¹²

Of course, the energy of karma is different from physical energy. It is latent life energy that influences both

physical and spiritual aspects of our being. So we should always remember that this is merely an analogy for helping us understand the true nature of life and death.

The *Alaya*-Consciousness: A Vehicle for the Continuation of Karma

SUDA: This karmic energy is said to continue on, transcending life and death. Since there is both positive karma and negative karma, the circumstances of each living entity’s present existence is determined by its karmic energy of both good and evil from previous existences.

IKEDA: That's right. The present form of our life is determined by an equilibrium of positive and negative energies.

ENDO: As an effect of this karmic energy a person might, for example, be born with superior intelligence or good looks. Because this is an effect that appears in the subject, it is termed a "life effect." By contrast, to be born, for example, in a home that is the scene of constant fighting is an "environmental effect."

President Toda once said:

All of our actions in past existences are contained in their entirety in our life. This is why Buddhism is so important. While we might want to say, "What I did in the past is irrelevant. I was born with a clean slate," we cannot get away from our past so easily.

"Why was I born poor?" "Why was I born stupid?" "Why is my business failing even though I am working as hard as I can?" The answer to all of these questions is to be found in our past lives. Although the cause is in our past lives, the Daishonin's Buddhism teaches how we can break through such obstacles.

Looking at our lives from a physiological standpoint, in the course of several years every cell in our body, from the center of our eyeballs to the marrow of our bones, is replaced. This is recognized by medical science. On that basis, you could perhaps argue that you are not liable for a debt incurred five years earlier. But while we might like to be absolved of our debts, the debt collector will come without fail. Similarly, we have no choice but to take responsibility for our actions of the past.

While we can readily understand this from a logical standpoint, when we are faced with it as an actual problem we find ourselves at a loss. In this connection, Nichiren Daishonin says that those who worship the Dai-Gohonzon, though they may be people of little virtue or people who committed great offenses in the past, will be completely absolved, and will receive the same effects as they would if they had made many good causes in the past (GZ, 754). That's why faith is so important.¹³

SAITO: The karmic energy that sustains our lives does not all become manifest at once in the present. But sooner or later that energy will produce some

kind of effect, though it may not be until a future lifetime. In terms of the theme of our discussion this time, the question is how this karmic energy continues on after death.

IKEDA: I think the doctrine of the nine consciousnesses speaks most aptly to this subject.

SAITO: Indeed. The Consciousness-Only doctrine clarifies the interior dimension of human life to such an extent that it has had an important influence on modern psychology. In the first place, it resolves the seeming contradiction between the view of the self as empty and the concept of transmigration.

SUDA: Of the nine consciousnesses, the first five are based on the five senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch. These are functions of perception and awareness. The sixth consciousness integrates these five consciousnesses into coherent images; it is the function of intelligence to make inferences and judgments about things. It is primarily with these six consciousnesses that we perform our daily activities.

ENDO: Going further, we come to the seventh or *mano*-consciousness and the eighth or *alaya*-consciousness, which corresponds to the realm of the so-called subconscious.

IKEDA: The eighth consciousness ensures the continuity of karma from one lifetime to the next.

SAITO: The functions of all the consciousnesses up through the seventh consciousness cease upon death. But the *alaya*-consciousness continues to function over the three existences of past, present and future. The original meaning of the Sanskrit term *alaya* is storehouse or repository. Since it is where karma is stored, it is also known as the storehouse consciousness.

IKEDA: Incidentally, it is said that the word Himalaya is a combination of *hima* or "snow" and *alaya* or "storehouse."

ENDO: The storehouse of snow.

IKEDA: All of our karma accumulates in the *alaya*-consciousness as though in a storehouse. Both good karma and bad karma are stored there like seeds in a granary.

The term *storehouse* conjures the image of an actual structure into which things of substance can be placed. But in fact it may be more accurate to say that the life-current of karmic energy itself constitutes the eighth consciousness.



Inventor Thomas Edison had a keen interest in life after death. Based on the principle that energy continues to exist eternally, he speculated that there may be something of human life that continues after death and it may be detectable with a sensitive machine.

SAITO: A Buddhist text likens the eighth consciousness to a rushing stream.

IKEDA: Moreover, the eighth consciousness transcends the boundaries of the individual and interacts with the karmic energy of others. On the inner dimension of life, this latent karmic energy merges with the latent energy of one's family, one's ethnic group, and humankind, and also with that of animals and plants.

SUDA: That's a magnificent image. That's why the human revolution of one person also changes the destiny of the person's family and society. A positive change in the karmic energy in the depths of one person's life becomes a cogwheel for change in the karma in the lives of others.

IKEDA: There are methods for changing the karmic energy in one's life from negative to positive through steadily accumulating good causes. But in reality that is not practical; sooner or later we are

liable to do something that erases the good causes we have made, just as in piling up stones we can only get so high before we upset what we have worked to create. That is particularly so in an age when society to its very depths is swirling with negative energy.

By contrast, the Lotus Sutra teaches how, by activating the ninth consciousness, which lies at the utmost depths of our being and is fundamentally free of impurity, we can at once change both the negative and positive karmic energy in our life into supremely positive energy. The ninth consciousness is the universal life that underlies the eighth consciousness and every other facet of our being.

The eternal Buddha of the "Life Span" (sixteenth) chapter could be called an expression in human form of this fundamentally pure consciousness that is without beginning or end. When we activate this fundamentally pure consciousness, the energy of all life's good and evil karma is directed toward value creation;

and the mind or consciousness of our ethnic group and of humankind is infused with the life current of compassion and wisdom.

SAITO: The Daishonin calls this fundamentally pure consciousness the “unchanging reality which reigns over all life’s functions” (MW-1, 213). It is the Gohonzon, which exists “only within the mortal flesh of us ordinary people who embrace the Lotus Sutra and chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo” (MW-1, 213).

ENDO: The Daishonin also says, “The five characters of Myoho-renge-kyo represent the ninth consciousness” (GZ, 794). This is saying that Myoho-renge-kyo itself is the universal life.

The Ten Worlds Are “Life Wavelengths”

IKEDA: So, life after death means that the life current of karma, in a state of nonsubstantiality, merges with the universal life.

Since it is nonsubstantial, it is neither existence nor nonexistence. Nor can it be said to exist in any particular place in the universe. Rather, it becomes one with the life of the universe in its entirety.

SUDA: President Toda put it this way: “The lives of your grandfather and your grandmother exist in the universe. But that doesn’t mean that they are out there somewhere holding hands. They’re there, it’s just that there’s no way of pinpointing a single location for them.”¹⁴

IKEDA: Since they are in no particular place in the universe, you cannot say simply that they exist. On the other hand, they will be born again in response to the appropriate causes; so you cannot say that they do not exist either. Life after death transcends the concepts of both existence and nonexistence.

This might seem to defy common sense, but we in fact find similar concepts in areas of physics such as quantum mechanics. The fact that light has properties both of a wave and of a particle seems to fly in the face of our ordinary way of thinking.

SUDA: It does seem contradictory to say that something is both a wave and a particle. That light has the properties of both—sometimes displaying those of a wave and sometimes those of a particle—confounds ordinary logic.

SAITO: President Toda used the analogy of radio waves to explain life in the state of nonsubstantiality. In this day and age, it may make more sense to use the example of televisions.

IKEDA: Yes. Broadcast waves of various wavelengths from stations in many different countries criss-cross the world. When you take a television receiver and tune it to the wavelength of the broadcast you want to receive, you are able to hear sound and see images. Through the *relation* or *external cause* of the receiver, the silent and invisible waves become audible sounds and visible images. It could be said that this represents the transformation of the wavelengths from death to life.

SUDA: The broadcaster breaks down sounds and images into various streams of data and transmits them as radio waves. Through the television receiver they are reconstituted and the original sounds and images reappear. Although the sound and image are broken down into unintelligible signals, the original composite is later reconstituted and reappears. This seems analogous to the temporary union of the five components.

IKEDA: We are born with a body and mind (a life effect) and in an environment (an environmental effect) that matches our own karmic energy. Of course, life and environment are in fact inseparable. For they both are manifestations (effects) of our own karmic energy.

President Toda often used the example of the Japanese board game *Go* to explain the transition from death to life. In an important title match between two masters, a single game can take as long as two days to complete. If on the first day there is no winner, the play is suspended. This corresponds to the moment of death. But on the following day, the match is resumed with the stones laid out exactly as they had been at the end of play the day before. This corresponds to the next life. There is continuity. We aren’t born with a blank slate; rather, we continue where we left off. That’s why the expression “to be born anew”¹⁵ is something of a misnomer.

President Toda emphasized this point, saying: “We don’t say that a stick of incense or a cigarette is reborn when we relight it. They simply resume burning from the point where they had stopped before. When we

Ten Factors

RELATION or external cause is one of the Ten Factors, an analysis of the unchanging aspects common to all life and phenomena. Part of the theory of life that “a single life-moment possesses three thousand realms,” the Ten Factors are mentioned in the “Expedient Means” chapter of the Lotus Sutra which states: “The true entity of all phenomena can only be understood and shared between Buddhas. This reality consists of the appearance, nature, entity, power, influence, inherent cause, relation, latent effect, manifest effect and their consistency from beginning to end” (LS2, 24).

The Ten Worlds or states of life include Hell, Hunger, Anger, Animality, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood. As different as these worlds are from each other, they all have the Ten Factors in common. The Ten Factors are: (1) Appearance, or that aspect of things which can be discerned from the outside. It includes such

attributes as color, form, shape and behavior, and points to the material and physical side of existence. (2) Nature, which indicates inherent disposition or quality that cannot be perceived directly from the outside. In terms of human life, it corresponds to spiritual aspects as mind and consciousness. (3) Entity, or the essence of life which permeates and integrates external appearance and internal nature. These first three factors explain the reality of life itself.

THE next six factors analyze the functions and workings of life. They are: (4) Power, life’s inherent strength or energy to achieve something. (5) Influence, or the movement or action when latent power is activated. (6) Internal cause, the cause latent in life which produces an effect of the same nature as itself, i.e. good or evil. Internal cause is formed through influence or actions. Each internal cause simultaneously contains a latent

effect. (7) Relation, or external cause. The external stimulus which helps an internal cause produce its effect. (8) Latent effect, or the effect produced in the depths of life when an internal cause is activated by relation. Both internal cause and latent effect are dormant within life and exist simultaneously without the time gap that often occurs between an action and its manifest effect. (9) Manifest effect, or the concrete, perceivable result that emerges with the passing of time as a consequence of internal cause and latent effect. (10) Consistency from beginning to end, or the integrating factor which unifies the other nine from appearance to manifest effect in every moment of life. Consistency from beginning to end also explains that the first three factors are collectively defined as entity (beginning) and the following six factors as function (end). Both beginning and end, or the entity and all phenomena and functions, are inseparable.

die and are reborn, our life, just as it is, continues.”¹⁶ “This very body continues on,” he added, thumping his chest for emphasis. In other words, he was saying that the continuity of our life, consisting of an entity of body and mind, is not impeded by our going

through death and rebirth.

At any given moment our life is in one of the Ten Worlds. President Toda compared the differences between the Ten Worlds to the differences between various wavelengths, calling them differences in life wavelength.

The Ten Worlds also exist in the great life of the universe. If a person's state of life at the last moment is that of the world of Hell, then the person's life fuses with the world of Hell in the universal life; if they are in Rapture, their life fuses with the world of Rapture (Heaven).

ENDO: In other words, it merges with the world in the universal life whose wavelength matches that of our own life.

SAITO: Life wavelength—that reminds me of Huyghe's comment, introduced earlier, that all matter ultimately is composed of energy and a particular rhythm.

SUDA: As to the manner in which our lives fuse with the universe, even though we speak of the Ten Worlds inherent in the universal life, they do not, as we have discussed previously, exist as actual places somewhere in the universe. It's not the case, for example, that the eight cold hells lie beyond Pluto, or that the world of Rapture is next to Venus. Rather, they permeate the entirety of the universal life.

IKEDA: Whether we are speaking of the world of Hell, the world of Rapture or the world of Buddhahood, each pervades the entire universe. This is a point we covered in discussing the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds.

When our being becomes one with the world corresponding to our state of life at the moment of death, we become one with the entire universe. For precisely this reason, as long as the appropriate external cause exists, there is no restriction on when and where in the universe we can reappear. And we are reborn with the body and mind and in the environment that is most suited to us.

ENDO: President Toda said of this life that pervades the entire universe: "At some stage, life comes to concentrate in one part of the universe. It is then that it is born as a living being." Isn't he saying that when the proper external cause is present, our life, which pervades the universe, instantaneously becomes concentrated in one particular place and manifests as a distinct living entity?

IKEDA: That is one explanation.

At the same time, we should bear in mind that "pervading the entire universe" does not indicate that life is expansive, nor does existing in a life form

as tiny as the head of a pin mean that life is small and narrow.

SAITO: In his writing, "On the Ultimate Teaching Affirmed by All Buddhas of Past, Present and Future" (Jpn Sanze shobutsu sokanmon kyoso hairyu), the Daishonin says: "Although it [the true entity of life] can fit inside a mustard seed, the seed does not expand, nor does life contract. Although it fills the vastness of space, space is not too wide, nor is life too small" (GZ, 563).

IKEDA: In other words, it's not a matter of something widely spread out over infinite space suddenly concentrating together in a discrete location. After death and before rebirth, life is in a state of latency; it is not dispersed. Since the entire universe is one living entity, a life that is one with the universe is never distant and can manifest anywhere in an instant. We must be clear on this point.

ENDO: It's a rather difficult concept.

Can the Deceased Feel Suffering or Joy?

**When living beings witness the end
of a kalpa
and all is consumed in a great fire,
this, my land, remains safe and tranquil,
constantly filled with heavenly and
human beings.
The halls and pavilions in its gardens
and groves
are adorned with various kinds of gems.
Jeweled trees abound in flowers and fruit
where living beings enjoy themselves
at ease.
The gods strike heavenly drums,
constantly making many kinds of music.
Mandarava blossoms rain down,
scattering over the Buddha and the
great assembly.
(LS16, 230–31)¹⁷**

SUDA: I have a question. It is said that the life of someone who has died is in a state of latency and has neither physical nor spiritual properties. If that is the case, then is it possible that the deceased feel suffering or joy?

President Toda once remarked: “If it were possible to see the life of a deceased father or sibling that had become one with the universe, you would find some there shrieking in agony and some filled with joy. But the deceased entity, which abides in a state of suffering or joy depending on its karma, is not visible, having neither form nor color.”

IKEDA: Indeed, they do.

President Toda once remarked that it would be interesting if a device were invented that could make it possible to see life after death. He elaborated: “If it were possible to see the life of a deceased father or sibling that had become one with the universe, you would find some there shrieking in agony and some filled with joy. But the deceased entity, which abides in a state of suffering or joy depending on its karma, is not visible, having neither form nor color. Unless you understand this view of nonsubstantiality, you cannot grasp the essence of the Buddhist doctrine of life.”¹⁸

SAITO: For that matter, the great inventor Thomas Edison (1847–1931) had a keen interest in life after death. Drawing inferences based on the scientific principle that energy continues to exist eternally, he speculated that an “indestructible and undying personality” continued to exist after death. In 1920, he reportedly announced that “he was working on a sensitive apparatus with which to detect and record the myriad infinitesimal, immortal monads ‘prowling through the ether of space.’”¹⁹

IKEDA: That’s very interesting. If the king of invention had succeeded in building such a device, that would have been the greatest invention in human history.

SAITO: He wrote: “The reason why you are you and I am Edison is because we have different swarms or groups or whatever you wish to call them, of entities.”²⁰

From the standpoint of Buddhism, this view could perhaps be expressed as follows: The individuality of each living entity is due to differences in the composition of the five components, reflecting its karmic energy.

Incidentally, Edison’s last words were, “It is very beautiful over there.”²¹ Edison, who had been in a coma state, suddenly opened his eyes and uttered these words to his wife.

IKEDA: These words are full of suggestion.

At any rate, if such a device as Edison described were built, then we would probably find that the deceased experience good and bad life feelings according to their respective karma.

SUDA: What would be doing the experiencing?

IKEDA: That would be the life current itself of the individual, which had been colored by the person’s good or bad karma. Apart from this life current, which changes from moment to moment, there is no self.

Moreover, this current is constantly interacting with other life currents in a relation of dependent origination. The life current is therefore selfless, in the sense that the self has no fixed substance. But at the same time, the individual self definitely has its own life current.

SAITO: In light of the concept of nonsubstantiality or selflessness, which tries to clarify the true aspect of our life, perhaps we could say that this life current is the self.

IKEDA: While activity is the main characteristic of one’s life current while alive, one’s life current after death is fundamentally passive. From that standpoint, we cannot independently change our state of life after we have died. For instance, while we are alive, even if our underlying tendency is that of the world of Hell, through contact with other people and the influence of the environment, we may experience a variety of different worlds—Heaven, Humanity and so on. But in the state of death we lose touch with external stimuli, reverting to the underlying state of our own life.

Upon death, a life that has the world of Hell as its underlying tendency becomes one with the world of Hell existing in the universe and is filled with unmitigated pain and suffering. A life that has the world of Hunger as its underlying tendency will be tormented by a sense of hunger even more overwhelming than any experienced while alive.

When our being becomes one with the world corresponding to our state of life at the moment of death, we become one with the entire universe.

As long as the appropriate external cause exists, there is no restriction on when and where in the universe we can reappear. And we are reborn with the body and mind and in the environment that is most suited to us.

The self of a life that has the world of Heaven or Humanity as its fundamental tendency will, after passing through the suffering of death, regain its peace and tranquillity and be gently embraced, experiencing a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction.

Lives that have Buddhahood as their fundamental tendency will upon death instantaneously become one with the world of Buddhahood in the universe and be infused with a sense of great and brilliant joy. Perceiving that the entire universe is the Buddha land, they will enjoy the state of life described by the passages: "This, my land, remains safe and tranquil, constantly filled with heavenly and human beings" and "living beings enjoy themselves at ease. The gods strike heavenly drums" (LS16, 230). And, in accord with their sworn prayer, their lives will function as one with the eternal Buddha in both life and death. Let's talk further about life and death in regards to the world of Buddhahood next time when we sum up the "Life Span" chapter.

Can You Change Your State of Life after Death?

The countless entities in the three thousand realms which are undergoing the process of birth, duration, change and extinction are all in themselves embodiments of [the Thus Come One's] transcendental powers.

But in the view of Nichiren and his followers, the realization and understanding of the concept of attainment of Buddhahood in one's present form is what is meant by the words "the Thus Come One's secret and his transcendental powers." For outside of the attainment of Buddhahood, there is no "secret" and no "transcendental powers." (GZ, 753)

ENDO: Since life after death is devoid of activity, is there nothing that can change the state of a person

who dies and fuses with the world of Hell?

IKEDA: That's why we need to struggle to do our human revolution in this life. If you spend your life in vain, then, even though you may regret it for all eternity, it will be too late to do anything about it.

But the power of the Mystic Law is enormous. The daimoku that we chant reaches the lives of the deceased latent in the universal life. President Toda said: "The power of daimoku is immense. It can cause a life laboring under painful karma to experience a peaceful and dream-like state as though frolicking in a garden of flowers."²² The sound of our voices chanting daimoku resonates throughout the entire universe.

ENDO: Daimoku chanted by those who are alive reaches the lives of those who have died. If that is true, do the lives of those who have died then come to function on behalf of those who are living?

SAITO: Life after death is in a state of latency; it has lost all activity. Accordingly, it would seem to follow that the lives of those who have died could not function in any active capacity.

SUDA: That's indeed so. There are religions that solicit money from their adherents by telling them, for example, that the spirit of their ancestor wants this or that. That is reprehensible.

ENDO: Yes. But there are many people who have reported actually hearing the voice of a deceased person or seeing a ghost. It would seem that we cannot discount all such accounts as illusions or hoaxes.

IKEDA: President Toda once told someone who thought they had heard the voice of a dead person: "Living people have the Ten Worlds in their life. So it may happen that someone will sense the 'life wave-length' of someone who has died and whose life has become one with the universe. I think that you sensed this as audible words."

In other words, if your own life force is weak, you

can be affected by life wavelengths from beyond similar to the way a radio or television picks up a broadcast. And people only sense these voices individually. President Toda pointed out to the person that if he developed his life force through strong faith, then the life wavelength of his own world of Buddhahood would instead be broadcast out, and bring the deceased person peace and repose.

He further declared: “Up to now you were deceived into thinking that your deceased wife or your deceased ancestors were spirits. You must not be fooled by such deceptions. If this were in fact the case, then the whole world would be full of ghosts and it would be so crowded you could not move.”²³

At any rate, the universe eternally enacts the rhythm of life and death. The infinite currents of the ocean of life surge high one moment and quiet down the next, never stopping for an instant, repeating the drama of life and death. The “Life Span” chapter explains that the driving force behind this is the “transcendental power” of the Thus Come One.

In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” (Jpn Ongi kuden), the Daishonin says, “The countless entities in the three thousand realms which are undergoing the process of birth, duration,

change and extinction are all in themselves embodiments of [the Thus Come One’s] transcendental powers” (GZ, 753).

In essence, the “Life Span” chapter exhorts us to develop these transcendental powers, this great, fundamental vitality, in ourselves. The important thing—whether we are speaking about transcendental powers or the universal life—is that we can only attain this through wholeheartedly taking action for kosen-rufu. It’s a matter of practicing with the spirit of “single-mindedly desiring to see the Buddha, not hesitating even if it costs them their lives” (LS16, 230).

President Toda battled difficulties head-on and was imprisoned. And it was there that he attained enlightenment. Based on a sense of mission transcending life and death, he vowed to give his life for the sake of kosen-rufu, and as a result awakened to the true aspect of life and death.

The faith to continue tirelessly struggling for kosen-rufu over the three existences of past, present and future is itself the great ship for embarking on an eternal voyage across the ocean of life and death.

To be continued

1. Yin and Yang: Two complementary principles of ancient Chinese philosophy that make up all aspects and phenomena of life. Yin is seen as earth, female, dark and absorbing; Yang is heaven, male, light and penetrating. Their interaction was thought to affect the destiny of all things.
2. Five planets: Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn. The more distant planets were undetected in thirteenth-century Japan.
3. *Fuji Shugaku Yoshu* (Essential Writings of the Fuji School), ed. Hori Nichiko (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1977), vol. 3.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 264.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *Ibid.*, p. 265.
7. River of Three Crossings: A river which the dead are said to cross after their demise. It has three points of crossing, shallow, deeper and deepest, and the place where a person crosses depends on the individual’s karma.
8. Five elements: The five constituents of all things in the universe, according to ancient Indian belief; earth, water, fire, wind and space. The first four correspond respectively to the physical states of solid, liquid, heat and gas. Space, here, is interrupted as integrating the other four elements.
9. *Fuji Shugaku Yoshu*, *ibid.*, p. 265.
10. Consciousness-Only school: (Skt. *Vijnanavada*) Also called the Yogachara school, one of the two major Mahayana schools in India, along with the Madhyamika school. Maitreya, around 270–350, is regarded as the founder. Maitreya’s doctrine, the Consciousness-Only doctrine, was expounded in his one-hundred-fascicle “Yugashiji Ron” (“Treatise on the Stages of Yoga Practice”) and was further developed by his disciples Asanga and Vasubandhu in the fifth century. This school upholds the concept that all phenomena arise from the *vijnana* or consciousness and that the basis of all functions of consciousness is the *alaya-vijnana* or *alaya*-consciousness.
11. René Huyghe, *Formes et forces: de l’atome à Rembrandt* (Forms and Forces: From the Atom to Rembrandt) (Paris: Flammarion, 1971).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
13. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1985), vol. 5, p. 412.
14. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1982), vol. 2, p. 190.
15. Born anew: This is the literal translation of the Japanese term commonly used to mean rebirth.
16. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 5, p. 411.
17. Editor’s note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For 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.
18. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, pp. 253–54.
19. Neil Baldwin, *Edison: Inventing the Century* (NY: Hyperion, 1995), p. 377.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*, p. 407.
22. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 4, pp. 261–62.
23. *Toda Josei Zenshu*, vol. 2, pp. 169–70.



The Luxor Hotel and Casino, Las Vegas.

THE ART OF CONSTRUCTION

BY MICHAEL GOODMAN,
NEW YORK

THE famous San Diego Chicken was one of my first subjects as a photographer. The biggest radio station in San Diego had hired me to photograph the mascot sliding into the feet of baseball Hall of Famer Lou Brock at Jack Murphy Stadium. It was 1977 and the St. Louis Car-

dinal outfielder had just broken the world record for stolen bases in a career.

I was a nervous wreck and unfamiliar with how the flash on my camera worked. With just minutes before the Cardinals were to play the Padres, I shot a whole roll of film with the Chicken and Brock in various poses. I turned the film over to the station rep and left for my next job in New York. It was the next day that I realized I had used the wrong setting on my camera for the Lou Brock job. The film would be blank and I felt awful. I had only been practicing Buddhism in the SGI for three months at the time. I

thought that was the end of my short career as a professional photographer. I sank into a black hole of self-doubt. Before I began chanting, I believed a photographer had to be tall, handsome and cool like James Bond (which I wasn't), and have lots of camera gear and money (which I didn't).

I told myself I would never make it as a photographer because I wasn't good enough, that I didn't have the training and that there was too much competition. The person who introduced me to Buddhism said, Why don't you put all your worries aside and chant for your dream to be a photographer?



Shanghai, China.



Worker in New Jersey.

Very upset and discouraged over the San Diego assignment, I remember calling a young man who had great experiences practicing this Buddhism. His genuine concern and faith in Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism inspired me. Now I look back to that day as the true beginning of my career, and I'll never forget the warmth he showed me.

President Ikeda said, "I have a mission, mine alone. You too have a mission only you can fulfill." These words, and the encouragement of my fellow SGI-USA members, made me more determined than ever to be a great photographer. I made this resolution as I chanted. It was in the SGI that an opportunity presented itself. I began volunteer-



Workmen in Indonesia.

ing as a photographer for SGI events in San Diego and Los Angeles for the organization's newspaper, *World Tribune*. This allowed me to receive training from the paper's chief photographer, Gregory Nakasugi, and as I found out later, it was also a source of good fortune.

I learned that by chanting and taking action I could overcome

obstacles and turn them into benefits—that what appears as loss can actually be a great opportunity. I sensed a dynamic rhythm in my life, fully supported by my environment. This was very exciting to me and something I had never understood nor experienced before I began practicing Buddhism. As my faith grew, so did my desire to be a great pho-



Tire recycling plant, California.

tographer. One of my dreams was for people to pay me to travel on photographic assignments.

Today, I specialize in construction photography. I have been on assignment in thirteen countries including Spain, Italy, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, India, Japan and China. To date, my construction photos have appeared

on sixty-three covers of major construction magazines. In the writings of Nichiren Daishonin it states, "A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2, p. 25). I feel like the SGI has been just such a 'thoroughbred horse'. I am so grateful to be practicing with

the SGI and chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo.

A Blend of Art and Construction

I GREW up in a family of civil engineers and art lovers in New York. My father, uncles and cousin were part of the family tunneling business, which was started by my grandfather in the 1940's. When I was 12, my mother began a thirty-year career as an art dealer, opening galleries in New York and Paris. The combined influence of both engineering and art has played a meaningful role in shaping my career and interests in life.

After deciding in college that I didn't want to become a biologist, I transferred to the art program at the University of California at San Diego in 1976. It was there that I studied art history, filmmaking and photography. In reality, I am mostly self-taught.

For the first five years, I shot sports and rock groups at the San Diego Sports Arena and dabbled a little in fashion photography. It was when I moved back to New York City that I became fascinated by construction photography. One of my first assignments was in a tunnel seven hundred feet below the earth. It was dark, wet, noisy, and loaded with tons of heavy equipment and big burly men. All larger than life, it was as if I were watching superb athletes. And photography was a way for me to capture it all. Having gained experience as a fashion photographer, I was able to use my eye for beauty and glamour in the world of construction.

In 1993 the bombing of the



1:00 a.m.: Sweeping up after the Kobe earthquake, Japan.

World Trade Center in New York caught the attention of the world's media. I became interested in the reconstruction effort, which went largely unnoticed by the press after the first week. One of my photos of the bomb site was published as a two-page spread in *Life* magazine. In 1995, after the Kobe earthquake, I traveled to Japan for the same reason. Again after a week's time, the story of devastation was over in the media, but to me the more positive and inspiring story of reconstruction had begun. The photos I took were in several magazines,

including *Business Week*.

Art and construction, the careers of my parents, have provided me with two different views of the world. I've been able to draw from each of them and at the same time, follow my own dream. This is fortune from my Buddhist practice. The engineer's world is one of logic, requiring creative solutions for difficult problems. The artist's viewpoint of the world is not necessarily logical, rather it involves interpretations based on free expression of individual style. In construction photography, I found a way to connect both worlds. □



Michael Goodman in China.



Reconstruction at the World Trade Center bomb site, New York.



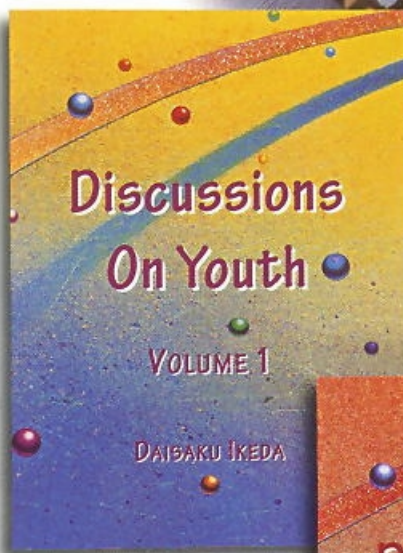
Times Square redevelopment, New York.



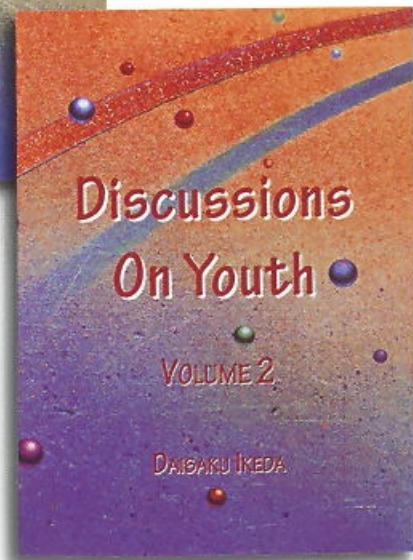
New York after a storm.

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THE MEANING OF SLANDER AND RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE
THE ART OF CONSTRUCTION: THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF MICHAEL GOODMAN



NEW YORK CULTURE CENTER



RECENTLY described as a remarkable example of nineteenth-century Romanesque Revival architecture, the five-story brownstone, located at 7 East 15th Street, was originally designed as the new headquarters of the YWCA in 1885 by the architect, R.H. Robertson. Designated a historical landmark in 1989, the newly acquired landmark building was first opened in December of that year as the New York Culture Center.

Since the center's spectacular restoration in 1995, the SGI-USA received the New York Landmarks Conservancy's highest honor—the Lucy G. Moses Preservation Award—for outstanding efforts in historic preservation. The exterior was restored to its original grandeur, while the interior boasts Italian marble floors, vaulted ceilings, cherry wood decor, arched oak windows and a magnificent seven-foot, etched-glass lotus flower emblem in the reception area (lower left).

