

# living BUDDHISM

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

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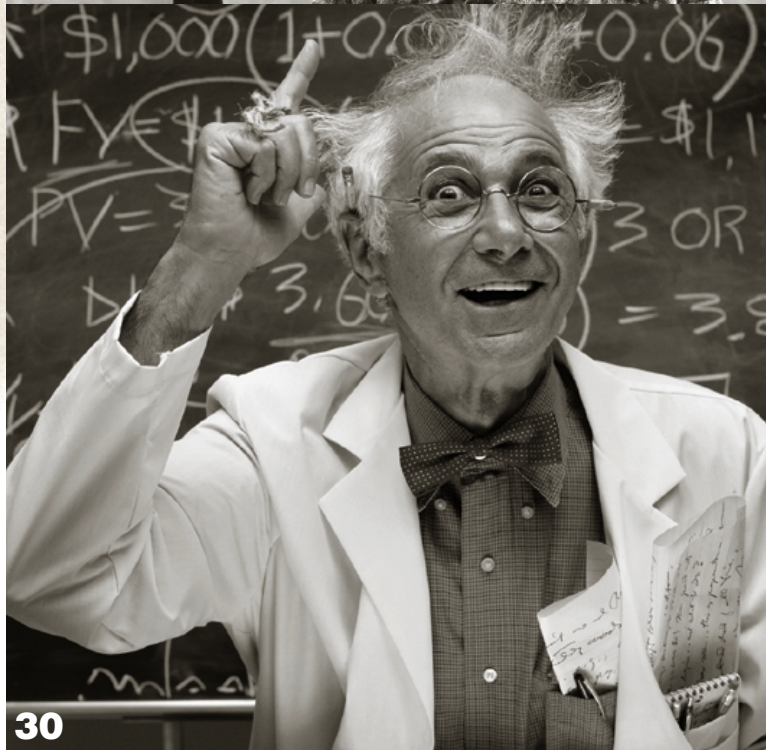
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COVER PHOTO: The sun shining over the earth. CORBIS

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# G L O S S A R Y

**Bodhisattvas of the Earth:** Those who chant and propagate Nam-myoho-rence-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-rence-kyo, the title of the Lotus Sutra.

**Gohonzon:** It is the embodiment of the Law of Nam-myoho-rence-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-rence-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-rence-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-rence-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; *rence* (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-rence-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>

# The TIME Is RIGHT

On July 16, 1260, Nichiren Daishonin submitted his thesis of remonstrance, “Rissho Ankoku Ron” (“On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism”)—to the most powerful representative of Japan’s Kamakura government. It was a proposal about how to restore peace to a devastated country through the inner reformation of each person. In it, the Daishonin appeals to the ruler and, by extension, to all people of Japan to transcend their ignorance and selfishness: “If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquillity throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2, [2nd ed.], p. 38).

The Daishonin thus teaches us that caring for the peace and happiness of others is not separate from our personal concerns. In fact, caring for others is the way to cultivate inner peace. Seven hundred and thirty-nine years later, this message is still valid—and yet to be practiced widely.

When I recently visited Oklahoma, I attended a memorial service with local SGI-USA members to pray for victims of recent tornados as well as for the earliest restoration of the affected areas. I was painfully reminded of nature’s destructive power when I saw the vast stretches of waste and debris where people’s houses had once stood and communities had once thrived.

In the midst of this horrendous disaster, I was inspired by the efforts of members who organized relief efforts for

the victims. I also heard that this tragedy served to strengthen the resolve of our members in the area to share the Daishonin’s Buddhism with friends and family. In the selfless dedication of the Oklahoma and Texas members, I saw the Daishonin’s spirit brought to life.

Through the actions of those members I was reminded of two key points that we all can keep in mind in our efforts to share the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The first is that none of us lives alone—without the help and goodwill of others. Those who think they live completely on their own—that they are independent entities—become trapped in their own selfish egos and, ultimately, become unhappy.

Those living with the awareness that they are connected with others in a fundamental way are happier because they are expanding the boundary of their consciousness, becoming freer and stronger. Such people can increase their happiness by sharing it with others. They transcend their own hardships by extending themselves to those in misery. In a sense, they develop a “larger self” that has the capacity to include and embrace others.

Buddhism ascribes this feeling of identity or connectedness to the principle of “dependent origination.” This means that nothing (and no one) in the universe exists on its own; everything arises through the influence of, or relationship with, something else. The feeling “I’m not alone” can be a source of compassion because we naturally care for others when we feel connected to them and regard them as important as ourselves. And when we understand

our deep relationship to others, we feel a corresponding deep sense of appreciation.

Filled with this sense of community, we don't have to pretend or force ourselves to pray for the welfare of others. It comes naturally. We want to pray for the happiness of people and share the Daishonin's Buddhism with them because we know there is no fundamental separation between our lives and theirs, our happiness and theirs. In this sense, no one is more pathetic than a person who takes pleasure in others' suffering and feels jealous at others' joy. Such people are crippled by their own self-centeredness, utterly alienated from the world.

Once we awaken a natural desire for others' happiness, the next step is to find the courage to translate our altruistic desires into action. Without such courage, our sense of community remains idealized, and we eventually lose the will to go beyond ourselves.

I know through experience how difficult it sometimes is just to say to a friend: "Let's go to an SGI meeting together!" or "Let's chant daimoku!" Our fear of rejection or scorn at times keeps us from encouraging our friends to take faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism. But we need courage to encourage, and acting in spite of our own fear is an expression of courage. Mark Twain once wrote, "Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear—no absence of fear" (*Pudd'nhead Wilson*, ch. 12; 1894).

And SGI President Ikeda has said, "Without courage, we cannot be compassionate. Courage and compassion are inseparable, like the two sides of a coin. And faith is the wellspring from which courage springs" (March 27, 1998, *World Tribune*, p. 9).

Whatever reaction we may receive, what is most important is that we tell our friends about the Daishonin's Buddhism, which can bring them true, lasting happiness. Such action is a gesture of our sincerest compassion and what fundamentally brings us closer to our friends, regardless of their response.

Of course, it is most important to understand and be respectful of the beliefs and circumstances of others. When our words to our friends about Buddhism arise

from a genuine concern for their happiness, they will hear us on some level, even though they may not show it. Having the courage to speak about the beneficial power of the Daishonin's Buddhism is the ultimate expression of our compassion.

On a broader scale, I also feel that society too is in dire need of a sense of interrelatedness, one that brings people together over racial, political or religious lines. More people are feeling alienated and alone. I believe that a sense of alienation contributes in no small part to violent crimes, especially among youth.

At the same time, fewer people, it seems, are speaking out for the sake of others' happiness in the context of political, cultural or religious debate. American society needs a sense of community; people need to feel they are all connected. I am confident that the Daishonin's Buddhism can make valuable contributions in this area. The Daishonin's heartfelt response to the suffering populace of thirteenth century Japan was, "I cannot keep silent on this matter" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 5).

More and more people are looking to Buddhism for concrete solutions to their everyday problems as well as for their spiritual enrichment. In "The Selection of the Time," Nichiren Daishonin writes, "The Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra. This is what should be propagated" (MW-3, 88).

I feel the time is right for us to share the Daishonin's Buddhism with friends, neighbors, family and acquaintances. We can start by awakening to our deep ties with others, and courageously expressing our heartfelt conviction.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fred M. Zaitu". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Fred M. Zaitu  
SGI-USA General Director



# Treasures of the HEART

## Essentials for proper self-control and personal brilliance

We value many things in life, particularly that which enhances and improves the quality of our lives in some way. Nichiren Daishonin divides life's "treasures" into three categories: treasures of the storehouse, treasures of the body, and treasures of the heart. He writes, "More valuable than treasures in a storehouse are treasures of the body, and the treasures of the heart are the most valuable of all. Strive to accumulate the treasures of the heart!" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 238) Thus the Daishonin teaches that life's most important commodity—that which most greatly enhances the quality of our lives—is treasures of the heart.

## To pursue material treasure alone is to lead a miserable life

"Treasures of the storehouse" are material treasures. They include such things as property and financial wealth. They are, for the most part, life's external adornments. These are things that almost all of us want—treasures we are naturally attracted to, often feel we need, and to which there is usually attached monetary value. And while we tend to seek these things, most of us realize that focusing on them exclusively or excessively can be futile, or even detrimental.

"Treasures of the body" are attributes that endow our person, such as skills, knowledge, educational background, etc. They also include perceptions that are attached to or associated with us, such as social standing, reputation, position and fame. In contrast to treasures of the storehouse, treasures of the body are perhaps more stable and lasting. Nevertheless, simply possessing them does not ensure happiness, and when such attributes are misused even a little, they can lead a person to ruin or to the ruin of others.

Nichiren Daishonin referred to those of great skill or learning who failed to use those skills wisely as "talented animals."

The human heart, left to its own devices, tends to lean toward the exclusive pursuit of wants and desires. When, spurred on by this "hungry heart," people focus their energies on obtaining treasures of the storehouse and treasures of the body, they are never satisfied. It is quite as Cicero said, "The thirst of desire is never filled, nor fully satisfied."

Psychological research is finding more and more that people whose primary focus in life is the attainment of "extrinsic goals"—externals such as wealth, property, fame or status—tend to be less happy. In general, they are said to experience higher levels of anxiety, suffer more from illness, and have less of a sense of fulfillment.

Shakyamuni Buddha said that “the mind is wavering and restless, difficult to guard and restrain. . . . But it is a great good to control the mind; a mind self-controlled is a source of great joy” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 34–35).

The most respected figures in early Buddhism were those known as *arhats*. Literally, the Sanskrit word *arhat* meant “deserving,” or “worthy,” but it was also interpreted as meaning “killer of the robber.” In other words, an arhat was a Buddhist sage who had defeated the “robber” of earthly desires within his heart and mind.

Shakyamuni also said, “If a man should conquer in battle a thousand and a thousand more, and another man should conquer himself, this would be the greater victory, because the greatest victory is over oneself...” (*The Dhammapada*, verse 103).

No matter how many “treasures of the storehouse” and “treasures of the body” one amasses, nothing of these may remain in the aftermath of an unexpected event. And certainly after one has been visited by what Buddhism calls the four sufferings—birth, old age, sickness and death—these external treasures lose all meaning. The sense of loss one feels at parting with such treasures can even become a cause for further suffering. In this light, it is easy to see why the ability to win over ourselves—over our weakness that makes us vulnerable to defeat by our own desires—is the most important treasure we can possess. This is the treasure of the heart.

We can define “treasures of the heart” as the mental and spiritual capacities to achieve mastery over oneself and to have genuine concern for others.

This equates to such attributes as a solid sense of fulfillment, a brightness of spirit, a warm and attractive personality, self-control, conviction, a sense of justice, courage, empathy and compassion.

Or, it may be viewed as an indestructible spiritual state—the state of absolute happiness—that allows a person to surmount even life’s most fundamental sufferings. A winner in life is a person who amasses treasures of the heart.

The Roman philosopher Seneca, tutor to the infamous Emperor Nero, was unjustly sentenced by imperial order to commit suicide. Just before the end, he turned to his family and is reported to have said, “There is no need to worry. There is something that surpasses the riches of this world and I will leave as an example, the moral life I have lead.”

Even though facing a tragic and unjust death, at the final moment, he gave expression to the treasures of the heart he had accumulated through the way he lived. He also stated that he had led a full life. “Death,” he said, “is so little to be feared that through its good offices, nothing is to be feared” (*Moral Essays*, book 1, XXIV).

Though not persecuted in the same way as Seneca, we may perceive the sufferings of birth, aging, illness and death, which assail us all, as inherently unjust. In a sense, we all fall victim to the tyrannical emperor of death. The question is whether we can face this ultimate suffering of death with composure and confidence.

Nichiren Daishonin wrote that because the four sufferings of birth, aging, sickness and death are the greatest of life’s sufferings, we can use them to “adorn the [treasure] tower of our beings” to the greatest extent. In other words, through our practice of the Mystic Law, we turn the greatest of life’s sufferings into life’s greatest assets—we develop treasures of the heart.

Ultimately, treasures of the heart mean the strength, wisdom and good fortune not to be done in by desires and suffering. It indicates the condition of Buddhahood potential within us, which we aim to bring forth and develop through Buddhist practice. And when we become rich in treasures of the heart, on that basis we also enrich our treasures of the storehouse and treasures of the body. In fact, we gain the ability to use these other two treasures to enhance our happiness and that of others.□

*By Jeff Kriger, Managing Editor*

*Based on the book Yasashi*

*Kyogaku (Easy Study), Tokyo: Seikyo Press*



## "On My Sickness"

### BACKGROUND

Nichiren Daishonin wrote this letter to Lady Nanjo (also known as Ueno-ama Gozen) on December 8, 1281. The Daishonin, then 59, was residing at Mount Minobu, and it was less than a year before his death. The letter was written in response to offerings Lady Nanjo had given to the Daishonin. It opens with a detailed list of these offerings: a bushel of brown rice, a container of sake, twenty metal pots and a bag of medicinal herbs (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1583). After thanking Lady Nanjo for her consideration, the Daishonin touches on his deteriorating physical condition—hence the letter's name, "On My Sickness." Next the Daishonin consoles Lady Nanjo on the death of her youngest son, Shichiro Goro. Sensing his own approaching death, it seems, the Daishonin concludes his letter: "If I should see him before you do, then I will inform him of your grief" (GZ, 1584).

#### LADY NANJO: PROFILE

**Family:** Lady Nanjo's father was Lord Matsuno Rokuro Zaemon and her mother was known as Lady Matsuno. The family lived in Matsuno Village in Suruga province (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture, on the southwest flank of Mount Fuji). It is believed that Lord Matsuno took faith in the Daishonin's Buddhism after being introduced to it by his daughter or by Nikko Shonin.

**Marriage:** Lady Nanjo married Nanjo Hyoe Shichiro, a retainer of the Kamakura government who was originally based in the Nanjo District, Izu province (present-day Shizuoka Prefecture), hence the family name. Later he was transferred to Ueno

# On My SICKNESS

*The following text from Nichiren Daishonin's letter titled "On My Sickness," and the accompanying commentary, are taken from SGI President Ikeda's book, Learning From the Gosho: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin, pp. 172-77.*

From the seventeenth day of the sixth month of the eleventh year of Bun'ei (1274), when I retired here [Mount Minobu], through the eighth day of the twelfth month of this year [1281], I have not ventured away from this mountain. For the past eight years I have become weaker year by year because of emaciating sickness and old age, and my mental powers have waned.

I have been ill since the spring of this year,

and with the passing of autumn and arrival of winter I have grown weaker by the day, and each night my symptoms have grown more severe. For more than ten days now I have hardly been able to eat anything. Meanwhile the snow grows deeper and I am assailed by the cold.

My body is as cold as a stone, and the coldness in my breast is like ice. At such times, I warm up some sake and consume *kakko*,<sup>1</sup>

District, Suruga province, and became a steward there.

**Conversion:** Around 1263 or 1264, Lady Nanjo and her husband met the Daishonin in Kamakura and took faith in his teaching.

**Husband's death:** On March 8, 1265, Lord Nanjo died, leaving his wife with eight children and pregnant with the youngest son.

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

**Persecution (1271–1274):** She continued in her faith through the turbulent years during which the Daishonin was nearly beheaded and then exiled to the remote northern island of Sado. This was followed by an all-out crackdown on the Daishonin’s followers by the shogunate government.

**Supporting the mentor:** In July 1274, when news of the Daishonin’s return from Sado and relocation to Mount Minobu finally reached the Nanjo family, they immediately sent offerings. Toward the end of the same month, Tokimitsu, the second eldest son, then 16, brought gifts to the Daishonin deep in the mountains.

**and it’s as though a fire has been kindled in my heart, or like entering a hot bath. Sweat washes my body and the droplets cleanse my feet.**

**As I was happily thinking about how I might respond to your sincerity, tears welled up in my eyes....**

**While I, Nichiren, have been refraining from responding to letters from people on account of my illness, I am so saddened by this matter [of Shichiro Goro’s death] that I have taken up my brush to write you. I, too, shall not be long in this world. I believe that I will certainly meet Lord Goro. If I should see him before you do, then I will inform him of your grief. (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1583–84)<sup>2</sup>**

### **The Spirit to Struggle for Others at All Times**

The Daishonin describes his condition without embellishment. He is entirely unaffected; he makes no attempt to make himself appear to others as somehow special. In so doing, he reveals true greatness.

What sense does it make for ordinary people of the Latter Day of the Law to put on airs? What

can they possibly stand to gain? We should focus instead on the self, polishing the self and striving always to live with honesty and sincerity, modesty and humility.

Since we are human, we will as a matter of course undergo the four sufferings—birth, aging, sickness and death. The important thing is that we withstand the onslaught of these sufferings and overcome them with true nobility.

Several years before this letter was written, the Daishonin wrote with calm detachment to Abutsu-bo of Sado Island: “I was born and since I have already reached nearly 60, there is no doubt that I have also experienced aging. Sickness and death are all that remain” (GZ, 1317). What a lofty state of life! It is as though he is calmly looking down on the dark clouds of sickness and death from blue skies high above.

The Daishonin wrote this letter to Ueno-ama Gozen in December 1281—just ten months before his death—in response to an offering of food and medicine she had sent knowing that he was physically weakened and not eating. The offering included unpolished rice, clear sake and medicinal herbs for use as stomach medicine.

He describes his physical condition in detail. This suggests just how grateful the Daishonin must have been for Ueno-ama Gozen’s sincerity. He may have taken her gesture of concern as an indication that she had recovered from her grief at her son’s death and regained the capacity to respond to others’ needs.

More than a year had passed since Shichiro Goro had died.

From that time on, Lady Nanjo consistently supported the Daishonin by sending offerings on numerous occasions, despite her family's economic difficulty.

**The deaths of loved ones:** After her husband died, Lady Nanjo continued to experience a series of deaths in her family. In 1274, her eldest son Shichiro Taro died. Her second son, Tokimitsu, became the head of the household and assumed responsibility as a steward of the Ueno area. In 1280, her youngest son Shichiro Goro died suddenly. His death was especially devastating to her, since she had raised him alone after her husband's death. Following those deaths, the Daishonin continued to encourage Lady Nanjo through his letters to her.

**Triumph:** The Daishonin died on October 13, 1282. About two years later, on May 10, 1284, Lady Nanjo peacefully breathed her last while Tokimitsu and the rest of her family watched over her. Until the end, she maintained her faith in the Daishonin's teachings. In 1289, Nanjo Tokimitsu invited Nikko Shonin to Ueno and helped him establish Taiseki-ji, thereby preserving the integrity of the Daishonin's Buddhism, protecting it from the corruption and distortion perpetrated by the other five senior priests. Lady Nanjo, as well as her family, made outstanding contributions to the spread and protection of the Daishonin's teaching, attesting to her genuine and steadfast faith, which never wavered, even under the weight of numerous persecutions and personal difficulties.

(Source: "Lady Nanjo, A Woman of Strength: Overcoming the Death of Loved Ones," *Living Buddhism*, September 1998, pp. 11–13)

Time, it is said, is an excellent physician that eventually cures all ills. Even so, a void in the heart cannot easily be filled.

The Daishonin again touches on Shichiro Goro's passing, sharing Ueno-ama Gozen's sorrow. He concludes the letter by telling her in effect, "If I should die before you do, then I will meet the late Lord Goro and tell him of your sorrow."

**W**HEN he wrote this letter, the Daishonin had grown so weak and emaciated that he didn't even feel like taking up his writing brush. He does so in this case not simply to express his gratitude for the offerings but as an indication of how highly he treasures Ueno-ama Gozen's feelings. No doubt he wanted to write her even if it meant pushing himself unreasonably.

The Buddha continually prays for people's happiness. The verse section of the "Life Span" chapter of the Lotus Sutra reads:

*At all times I think to myself:  
How can I cause living beings  
to gain entry into the unsur-  
passed way  
and quickly acquire the body of  
a Buddha?  
(LS16, 232)*

This prayer of the Buddha concludes "Life Span." The Buddha, twenty-four hours a day, day after day and month after month, is constantly concerned about others' well-being. Continually and unswervingly, he sends people encouragement. This is the world of Buddhahood.

We who have embraced the Gohonzon should struggle to thoroughly protect all the people in our communities and organizations—to help them become happy, stand up and receive benefit. We should do so with the spirit of this passage, "At all times I think to myself..." Everything depends on leaders having such a sense of responsibility.

Leaders must always have the sensitivity and compassion to lend a hand where help is needed. They must also give guidance that is both warm-hearted and reasonable. The Daishonin's encouragement is a model for all Buddhists and for all leaders in society.

Embraced by his mother's strong faith, Nanjo Tokimitsu overcame a severe illness and went on to live to 74. In Buddhism, everything has meaning. It may be that Shichiro Goro "bequeathed" his own life span to Tokimitsu.

Carrying on the flame of his father and younger brother, Tokimitsu dedicated his life to kosen-rufu in keeping with the vow he made during his youth. And his magnificent life also attests to the victory of his mother and Shichiro Goro.

**footnotes:**

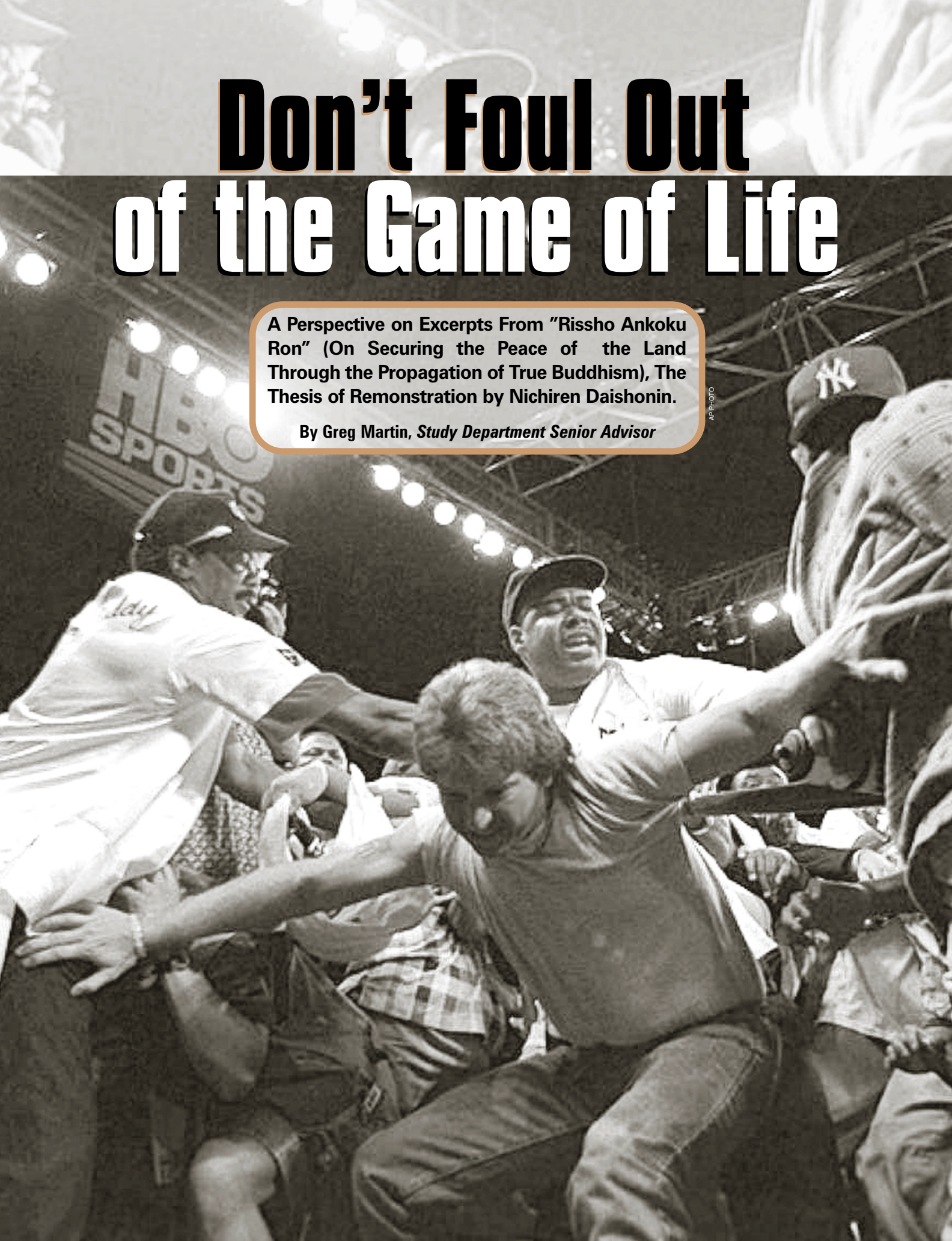
1. Kakko: A medical herb, tamalapatra (sandalwood) fragrance.
2. "Ueno Dono Haha Gozen Gohenji" (*Gosho Zenshu*, pp. 1583–84), written in December 1281 when the Daishonin was 59.

# Don't Foul Out of the Game of Life

A Perspective on Excerpts From "Rissho Ankoku Ron" (On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism), The Thesis of Remonstrance by Nichiren Daishonin.

By Greg Martin, *Study Department Senior Advisor*

AP PHOTO





Greg Martin

# i n t r o d u c t i o n

In the opening lines of the “Rissho Ankoku Ron” (On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism), Nichiren Daishonin paints a dire picture of thirteenth-century Japan. But it is no exaggeration. Official records<sup>1</sup> of the time confirm abnormal numbers of fires, floods, earthquakes, epidemics, famines and great religious and civil strife.

The Daishonin had already established his Buddhism in April of 1253 and to him, the cause of the relentless suffering of the people was clear. At the risk of his own life, he submitted this work on July 16, 1260, to the most powerful man in Japan, Hojo Tokiyori, and challenged the existing power structure of the country. Supported by scripture from Buddhist sutras, he urges the country

to abandon Buddhist practices that had turned against the very essence of Buddhism itself—practices that defiled the lives of the populace and the land in which they live. What the Daishonin saw as he looked out across the land is in many ways no different from the view we have of our world as we look through the window of the mass media.

The thesis is written in the form of questions and answers exchanged between a host and a guest (see sidebar p. 13). The host symbolizes Nichiren Daishonin and the guest, Hojo Tokiyori. Tokiyori, having retired as regent of the Kamakura shogunate government, still held the actual reigns of power and, therefore, represented the government. In this writing, the Daishonin predicts more terrifying calamities,

specifically revolution and invasion, if the nation continues to embrace false doctrines. Later, these were fulfilled with factional infighting within the Hojo clan in 1272 and when the Mongols attacked Japan twice, in 1274 and 1281.

The Daishonin introduces the “three proofs” as a way to measure the validity of a teaching. They are documentary, theoretical and actual proofs. For the Daishonin, documentary proof was the Lotus Sutra.

Implicit in the “Rissho Ankoku Ron” is theoretical proof, although he did not expand upon it. Hence this article will approach the thesis from the standpoint of philosophy, not doctrine. Actual proof, results in the lives of practitioners, is the most important of all.

## PART 1: BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW

In recent years, there are unusual disturbances in the heavens, strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the [country] and

spreading throughout the land. Oxen and horses lie dead in the streets, the bones of the stricken crowd the highways. Over half the population has already been carried off by death, and in every family someone grieves.... Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely

than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes. Corpses pile up in mounds like observation platforms, dead bodies lie side by side like planks on a bridge.” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], pp. 3–4)

# The Millennium? You Missed It.

**T**he January 18, 1999 issue of *Time* magazine reports: "Whenever the millennium is, it's not really next year, even if that's when just about everybody will be marking it. The party crowd pounding back beers in Times Square, the doomsayers bunched in armored yurts, all of them will greet the millennium at the stroke of midnight on Dec. 31. But by more careful calculations, the millennium began a few years ago. A large part of the misunderstanding stems from Dionysius Exiguus—Latin for "Dennis the Short"—a 6th century monk who should be thought of as the original millennium bug. Dennis laid down the basis for the calendars we use today by figuring how far in the past Christ's birth was. As it turns out, he was off by several years. Historians now place the Nativity no later than 4 B.C., the year King Herod died. By that reckoning, the third millennium would have commenced no later than 1997. You missed it." (January 18, 1999, *Time*, p. 62)

This passage reads like the six o'clock news on a really bad day. In an interesting parallel with present times—with the spiritual uncertainty and social confusion we see as we enter the third millennium of the Christian Era—Nichiren Daishonin was writing at a time when the Buddhist world had entered the third age of its history known as the Latter Day of the Law. This was the period that Buddhist sutras described as an evil age when Buddhism would no longer have the power to help people. It was an age the onset of which many people feared.

As our world approaches the end of the second millennium of Christian history, many are also filled with fear and uncertainty. While specific circumstances differ, as we shall see, the underlying spiritual crisis is not much different for us than when the Buddhist world faced its own "millennium fever."

Sutras divide the years following the establishment of Buddhism by

Shakyamuni into three time periods, although there are several views on the length of these periods. The Daishonin adopted the explanation found in the Sutra of the Great Assembly, which describes five consecutive five-hundred-year periods following the death of Shakyamuni Buddha. The first two five-hundred year periods are regarded as the Former Day of the Law, and the following two five-hundred year periods as the Middle Day of the Law.

The fifth five-hundred year period is regarded as the beginning of the Latter Day of the Law, which continues indefinitely. The concept of the three time periods explains that as time passes, the conditions and capacity of the people also change, and an appropriate teaching is needed for each of the three periods. The Daishonin explains his view in a later work, "The Selection of the Time":

In the Daijuku Sutra [Sutra of the Great Assembly], Shakyamuni Buddha, the World-Honored One,... predicts the future. Thus he says that the first five hundred years after his passing will be the age of enlightenment,<sup>2</sup> and the next five hundred years, the age of meditation (making one thousand years). The next five hundred years will be the age of reading, reciting and listening,<sup>3</sup> and the next five hundred years, the age of building temples and stupas<sup>4</sup> (making two thousand years). Concerning the next five hundred years after that [The Latter Day of the Law], he says, "Quarrels and disputes will arise among the adherents to my teachings, and the Pure Law will become obscured and lost" (MW-3, 85).

The first period saw the wide propagation of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings in India and a great culture and civilization arose based on the revitalizing power of this profound philosophy. Yet Buddhism eventually declined in India and was replaced by Hinduism, which evolved from ancient Brahmanism.

During the Middle Day of the Law, the second millennium of Buddhist history, Buddhist sutras and teachings were transported to China as a result of commerce along the Silk Road. Buddhism showed its remarkable ability to adapt and evolve with changing times, different cultures and the people's capacity. As it took root, it became the spiritual driving force for another great cultural revival lasting many centuries in China. Yet as effective as these teachings were in that time and place and for those people, they also eventually lost their vitality.



CORBIS

**"In recent years, there are unusual disturbances in the heavens, strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the empire."**

As the power of Buddhist practice declined a second time in the closing years of the second millennium, the resulting spiritual vacuum led to an era of increasing anxiety and suffering. Many Buddhist scholars concluded that the feared third millennium, the Latter Day of the Law that was to last for 10,000 years and more, was at hand. This would be a time, many concluded, that would see the beneficial power of the Buddhist practice disappear and the world enter a dark and fearful era when the evils of human nature would dominate. In this spiritual atmosphere, the coming millennium was viewed with great fear and anxiety.

Also, in the second millennium, Buddhism had been widely exported from China into Japan where the conditions of the times fed these fears. Disasters, epidemics, pestilence and civil strife occurred with frightening regularity prompting renewed and vigorous efforts by monks, peasants and court officials to offer prayers and conduct religious rituals with heightened intensity. Yet, these efforts were to no avail. The country was in turmoil and the people suffered greatly.

One Buddhist priest, Nichiren Daishonin, was prompted to ask, "Why is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 4) In his "Securing the Peace of the Land" thesis, he answers these questions.

We are now standing on the brink of a new millennium. How remarkably similar are our circumstances. The last fifty years of so-called peace since the Second World War has seen hundreds of regional wars cause the death of millions of people and misery for many times more. We still hear such vulgar terms as ethnic cleansing and hate crimes.

Not so many years ago, some thought most diseases could be cured by the dawn of the twenty-first century, but we are still plagued by many old ones as well as new ones. Furthermore, the possibility of terrorist forces using disease as a weapon against humanity is unfortunately not a remote one.

Every day people die of starvation, including children. Meanwhile the wealthy nations use up the lion's

**Outline of Questions and Answers  
in the "Rishsho Ankoku Ron"**

The "Rishsho Ankoku Ron" is written in the form of a dialogue between a host and his guest. The host signifies Nichiren Daishonin and the guest Hojo Tokiyori, the recipient of the thesis and the de facto ruler of Japan at that time. The reader should take care to distinguish the guest's statements from those of the host since the guest mostly represents errors and misconceptions in Buddhism (except for his last statement) while the host corrects them. The following is an outline of the dialogue between the host and his guest:

**GUEST Q#1:** The guest notes that in recent years, natural disasters, famine and epidemics have occurred again and again. The people exhaust themselves in prayer and rituals, while others strive to make certain that government at the national and local level is carried out in a benevolent manner. Yet, despite these efforts, "Famine and epidemics rage more fiercely than ever, beggars are everywhere in sight, and scenes of death fill our eyes.... Then why is it that the world has already fallen into decline and that the laws of the state have come to an end? What is wrong? What error has been committed?" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 4)

**HOST A#1:** "I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have searched rather widely in the scriptures for an answer. The people of today all turn their backs upon what is right; to a man, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together,

that sages leave and do not return. And in their stead come devils and demons, disasters and calamities that arise one after another" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 5). There are three main points to his answer: 1) Because people believe in and therefore act in ways that are at variance with the law of life, 2) the positive functions inherent in life and the environment can no longer manifest, and 3) negative functions come to the fore.

**GUEST Q#2:** The guest asks the host (Nichiren Daishonin) to cite documentary proof in support of his statement.

**HOST A#2:** In response, the Daishonin cites four sutras: the Konkomyo, Daijuku, Ninno and Yakushi sutras. These passages explain that calamities and disasters arise from the disorder of a person's inner realm caused by embracing falsehood. Then he restates the three elements of his original answer. He says that the passages are very clear—"what person in ten thousand could possibly doubt their meaning? And yet the blind and the deluded recklessly trust to heretical doctrines and fail to recognize the correct teachings" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 11).

**GUEST Q#3:** The guest is angry and demands to know how the Daishonin can say Buddhism is declining in Japan when it has long since spread throughout the country and people everywhere pay homage to the priests and temples. He says: "How, then, can anyone say that the teachings of the Buddha's lifetime are despised or that the three treasures of Buddhism have ceased to exist? If there is evidence to support such a contention, I would like to hear all the facts!" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 12).



KIRK CONDYLLES

**Human harmony is a result of people's individual awakening to the dignity of self and others, and conflict a result of their blindness to it caused by the delusions of greed, anger and foolishness. So the key to lasting peace, Nichiren Daishonin suggests, lies in reforming "the tenets that you hold in your heart" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 40).**

share of the earth's precious natural resources at an alarming rate and with environmental destruction that threatens the viability of our planet as a haven for human life. And the list goes on.

Some believe these events are leading to the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and the coming Day of Judgment. Some see the new millennium as a benchmark foreordained from the day of Jesus' birth. Yet, some point out the arbitrary nature of marking millenniums. For instance, there is evidence that a calculation error made by a sincere but misguided Christian monk some 1400 years ago has us already entered into the third millennium by about three years. According to this account, we entered the third Christian millennium in 1997. (see box p. 12)

Of course, given the subjective nature of human methods for marking the passage of time, in terms of the five-billion-year age of our planet, next year is, in fact, no more significant than any other.

But the idea that these troubled times are not ordained provides little consolation. Sincere people dedicate

themselves with great religious fervor, offering prayers with ever-increasing intensity, turning back to fundamentalist hopes of salvation. Others search for spiritual solace in a variety of "new age" movements. Many disregard religion and seek solutions in politics alone, or bemoan the state of politics while feeling helpless themselves to change things.

Some even hunker down in survivalist camps, or themselves stockpile food and weapons, hoping to ride out the difficult times they see coming.

With hearts as heavy with fear and anxiety as people in Japan more than 700 years ago, we too raise our eyes to the heavens and ask: "What is wrong? What will become of us?"

Under remarkably similar, if not more miserable, circumstances, Nichiren Daishonin found cause for great hope for the future. He and his followers faced the coming age not with fear but with hope and confidence. Amid the destitution of his time, he envisioned a new spiritual energy that would become the foundation for building a new, humanistic culture. One that would include all

people—indeed, all creatures and the entire planet—in its embrace. In “The Selection of the Time,” he explains, “But that which is to come after ‘the Pure Law has become obscured and lost’ is the Great Pure Law of Nam-myoho-enge-kyo, the heart and core of the Lotus Sutra. This is what should be propagated” (MW-3, 87–88).

His thesis provides a convincing and detailed analysis of the problem, exposing the root cause of the people’s plight and the beneficial medicine of a spiritual reformation that will lead to a peaceful society—a peaceful land. This is the essential message and purpose of the “Rishsho Ankoku Ron.”

## PART 2: TURNING OUR BACKS ON THE TRUTH

**I have pondered the matter carefully with what limited resources I possess, and have searched rather widely in the scriptures for an answer. The people of today all turn their backs on what is right; to a man, they give their allegiance to evil. This is the reason that the benevolent deities have abandoned the nation and departed together, that sages leave and do not return. And in their stead come devils and demons, disasters and calamities that arise one after another. I cannot keep silent on this matter. I cannot suppress my fears. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 5)**

In this passionate passage, Nichiren Daishonin summarizes his conclusions. He makes two important statements: 1) People ignore or

refuse to recognize what is right and give themselves over to evil (what is false); 2) Because people believe and, therefore act in ways that are at variance with what is right or correct, the positive functions (“sages and benevolent deities”) inherent in life and the environment become inactive, and negative functions (“devils and demons”) come to the fore.

The Daishonin follows this bold assertion with a detailed and thorough analysis. He quotes extensively from Buddhist sutras. Because of the vast number of sutras and teachings based upon them, there was widespread confusion over what was the correct practice of Buddhism. He wished to demonstrate that the current understanding of the Buddhist teachings was flawed, and he used the body of Buddhist writings known to his contemporaries to prove his point. He did so by comparing the points and predictions made in the sutras to the actual state of the world, and specifically Japan, at that time. His aim was to correct mistaken views about Buddhism and reveal the correct Buddhist teaching for the Latter Day of the Law that had the power to bring about a peaceful and secure society.

The Daishonin chose three standards for determining the relative merit of Buddhist doctrine, stating “I, Nichiren, believe that the best standards are those of reason and documentary proof. And even more valuable than reason and documentary proof is the proof of actual fact” (MW-6, 111). Ultimately, of course, it is actual proof—whether or not a philosophy actually works in the lives of those who put it to the test—that is the most important proof.

What motivated the Daishonin to write this thesis? He states, “I cannot keep silent.” He could not keep silent

**HOST A#3:** In reply, the Daishonin says that although the temples and priests are widely respected by the people, they do not keep a correct understanding of the true intent of Buddhism but instead cling to erroneous interpretations that mislead the people. He quotes from several sutras and then concludes: “When we look at the world in the light of these passages of scripture, we see that the situation is just as they describe it. If we do not admonish the evil monks, how can we hope to do good?” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 14).

**GUEST Q#4:** The guest, growing more indignant, is shocked and offended that the Daishonin could speak ill of priests who are widely respected. “If they were in fact evil monks, then the wise ruler would put no trust in them,” he claims. He then asks, “To whom are you referring when you speak of ‘evil monks?’” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 15).

**HOST A#4:** The Daishonin unhesitatingly identifies Honen, founder of the popular Pure Land school, whom many considered a saint. He goes on to point out the contradictions between Honen’s teachings and the Buddhist sutras. The Daishonin is most critical of Honen’s teaching to abandon the Lotus Sutra. By teaching people to abandon the Lotus Sutra (which has the power to help all people manifest their inherent Buddhahood) and instead rely upon other sutras (which teach people to rely on external power), Honen’s teachings will lead people to incessant suffering, not to the Buddha land as they promise. Thus, the Daishonin concludes with this answer: “If people favor what is only incidental and forget what is primary, can the benevolent deities be anything but angry? If people cast aside what is perfect and take up what is biased, can

the world escape the plots of demons? Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better simply to outlaw this one evil [doctrine] that is the source of all the trouble!" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 20).

**GUEST Q#5** The guest is truly enraged because the Daishonin has now criticized a person respected and revered by people everywhere. The guest feels the Daishonin has now become deliberately unreasonable. The guest says: "When you pile up such grave offenses, how can you hope to escape punishment? I am afraid even to sit here in your company. I must take up my staff and be on my way!" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 22).

**HOST A#5** The Daishonin, soothing his irate guest, begins his reply by saying, "Insects that live on smartweed forget how bitter it tastes; those who stay long in privies forget how foul the smell is." People can get used to anything and think it natural. He appeals to the guest, "Listen to my explanation of how this confusion arose and let us discuss the matter in detail" (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 22). Nichiren Daishonin explains that people accepted the teachings of Honen without comparing carefully to the Buddha's teachings, without realizing that they contradict the Buddha's original intent. This was true not only for the Pure Land school, but also of other schools of Buddhism in the Daishonin's day. He uses both historic examples and sutra references to prove his case. By disregarding the Buddha's teachings, these new schools no longer reflected the original teaching of Buddhism. Hence, they could only mislead the people away from the truth and toward falsehood. The Daishonin says: "You should neither doubt this nor consider it

because the people were suffering terribly and he knew how to relieve their suffering. He had to speak out.

In the Japan of the Daishonin's lifetime, religious, political and military authorities were closely aligned. Speaking out in criticism of the powerful forces dominating Japanese society was quite literally to risk one's life. These conditions prompted the great nineteenth-century Japanese thinker and educator Fukuzawa Yukichi to comment on the nature of Buddhist influence in his *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization*:

If you inquire into the basis of this power [of the Japanese Buddhist establishment], you will find it is not religious. They have simply borrowed the government's power. Ultimately, they are nothing else but a branch of secular authority.

Buddhism has flourished, true. But its teaching has been entirely absorbed by political authority. What shines throughout the world is not the radiance of Buddha's teachings but the glory of Buddhism's political authority." (qtd. in *The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 202)

Thus, the Daishonin was not speaking out of personal interest in making his declaration "I must speak out." It is a bold statement of his profound compassion and uncompromising courage.

With this in mind, let us discuss "right" and "evil" as used by the Daishonin in the above passage. Science, reason and our own experience tell us that certain natural laws exist; for example, the law of gravity. Laws in science are not the same as theories or hypotheses. When theories are verified by scientific experimentation (by the

proof of actual fact) then we begin to refer to a theory as a law. For example, the law of gravity exists and, at least in the universe of human experience, works as we expect it to. Because the theory of gravity has been shown to work in every case, it has become known as a law.

The law of gravity is something that is true and right in the sense that it correctly describes and predicts the phenomenal world. Knowing of and living according to this law can benefit our lives. Even infants, ignorant of this law, are aware of it and come to put their faith in it as they learn to walk and deal with the world around them. Their faith in the law of gravity is not blind faith, it is reasoned and realistic faith based on observation.

Imagine, however, if someone were to ignore this law, choosing to believe that there is no gravity. What can we predict for such a person? Calamity and disaster with every step off a curb or attempt to float from a rooftop. Ignoring the truths or laws of life and putting one's trust and faith in things that are not true—such as the denial of gravity—are to embrace the "evil" mentioned in the above passage. In this sense, evil may be viewed as beliefs or choices that are harmful to the individual or to others—that which destroys happiness and brings suffering.

Similarly, Buddhism postulates that there is a law of life. Like gravity, it is not something created by Buddhists but the actual way that all existence—including human life—works. And in the same way that Isaac Newton didn't invent gravity but identified what had always existed, Buddhism has discovered and identified the law of life that has always existed but has not been understood.

To illustrate, imagine that you are a member of a championship soccer team (what most countries call football). Imagine also that your team is mistakenly assigned to play in an American-style football game. You may be a good athlete, in prime physical shape with a good mental attitude, and you exert yourself to the best of your ability. But you don't know the rules of the game! You are playing by the wrong rules. You can't succeed, no matter how sincerely you exert yourself. In fact, the harder you try, the more misery you may bring upon yourself. You will be flagged for various violations of the rules. You will be unable to achieve goals. You will likely be injured or foul out of the game entirely.

Living is similar in that it doesn't matter how capable, sincere or hard-working you are if you don't know the rules of life—the truth or law by which life functions. You will be unable to attain the greatest victory in life—enlightenment or absolute happiness. Quite the contrary, in spite of your many efforts, you will find “disasters and calamities that arise one after another.”

This is the substance of the Daishonin's conclusion. The reason disasters and calamities arise one after another is because people turn their backs on a correct understanding of life and instead embrace ways of life that overlook or misperceive the law of life. In other words, the root of the problems plaguing society both then and now is confusion in the inner realm of life, confusion about the true nature of life itself. This accords with not knowing the rules of the game of life. And when one does not know the rules, playing the game harder isn't the answer—living in accord with the law of life is.

Scientists have explained in mathematical terms how the law of gravity

functions. The law of life as explained in Buddhism teaches us that our state of life is reflected in myriads of ways—both positive and negative—on the different levels of our individual body and mind, our relationships with others and with the natural environment.

This law of life is revealed in the Lotus Sutra. The teaching of the Lotus Sutra is a “right” or “correct” teaching because it reveals the truth about life and those teachings that contradict it or don't express it completely are false or misleading. The Daishonin was fully aware of this law, and it forms the basis of his explanations and conclusions. Armed with this knowledge let us move deeper into the “Risshō Ankoku Ron.”

**PART 3: “THE THREE POISONS” AND “THREE CALAMITIES”**

**The Daijuku Sutra [Sutra of the Great Assembly] says: “Though the ruler of a state may have for countless existences in the past practiced the giving of alms...if he sees that my teaching is in danger of perishing and stands idly by without doing anything to protect it, his country will become the scene of three inauspicious occurrences. The first is high grain prices, the second is warfare, and the third is epidemics.” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 10–11)**

Here and in several other passages, Nichiren Daishonin writes of “the three calamities” that will befall people when they hold false or erroneous beliefs. The three calamities of high grain prices, warfare and epidemics

strange. The only thing to do now is to abandon the evil ways and take up those that are good, to cut off this affliction at the source, to cut it off at the root!” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 25).

**GUEST Q#6:** The guest looks mollified, but is not entirely convinced yet. He points out that there are many Buddhist scholars and eminent members of the clergy, yet none of them has made such statements. He says: “You, on the other hand, a person of humble position, think nothing of spewing out offensive accusations. Your assertion goes too far and your behavior is unreasonable” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 25).

**HOST A#6:** The Daishonin replies that one's status or authority cannot determine the truth of one's argument. Its validity must be judged on its merits. He asserts that since his argument is based on the Lotus Sutra, it is valid no matter how incapable he may be. He states that, “A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 25).

**GUEST Q#7:** The guest is becoming convinced and speaking more mildly now, but he still has some doubts. “Between you and Honen, I cannot tell which is wise and which is foolish, or determine whose assertions are right and whose are wrong.” He continues, “Now if you know of any means whereby disasters can be prevented and troubles brought to an end, I would like to hear about it” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 27). The guest points out that it's easy to complain about others. Show me your plan for peace, he demands.



**Glendale firefighters converge on the scene of a brush fire in 1998, near Glendale, Calif. Dozens of firefighters and two water-dropping helicopters fought the blaze fanned by high Santa Ana winds that scoured the Southland, and at times gusted up to 80 mph.**

**HOST A#7:** In response to the first part of the question, the Daishonin quotes several sutras to demonstrate who is right and who is wrong. In response to the second part, he quotes several sutras and points out the importance of stopping the slander of the true teaching of Buddhism—the Lotus Sutra. “If we hope to bring order and tranquillity to the world without further delay, we must put an end to these slanders of the Law that

represent all calamities that threaten human survival, disrupting the harmony within our life—both body and mind—and in our relationship with others and the land.

“The three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness” are impurities of the inner realm of life. These three originate in the “fundamental darkness” inherent in life, or, simply put, our fundamental ignorance of the law of life, and cause human suffering. They

are regarded as the most prevalent illusions of all. They are the “evil” the Daishonin decries when he says that the people “give their allegiance to evil.”

Furthermore, the three calamities are manifestations of disharmony within life and in its relationship with the rest of humanity and the natural environment. They are closely related to the “three poisons” in the inner realm of life (see box p. 19).

The desire to hoard necessities drives prices up. Thus, the calamity of high grain prices is caused by the poison of greed—the belief that one’s own needs are paramount to those of others. Inflation—a calamity caused by greed—represents all calamities of the land such as food shortages, for example.

Warfare is caused by the poison of anger and represents calamities in our relations with others. People operating in anger believe their view and their view alone is correct.

Epidemics result from the poison of foolishness, of living unwisely without considering the law of cause and effect, and represent calamities of the inner realm, lack of harmony between our own mind and body. In other words, because people are ignorant of the law of life, they do not know how to live correctly and therefore illnesses—physical, mental and spiritual—spread.

If people are susceptible to the workings of the three poisons within themselves, they cannot live in harmony with the law of life. The effects will be evident within the individual, society and environment as the three calamities.

The only calamity not already occurring in Japan at the time this thesis was submitted was that of war—foreign invasion and internal strife. Nichiren Daishonin writes:

# How the **three poisons** and **three calamities** affect us

the three poisons lead to the three calamities which occur in the three realms



In the present age, which Buddhism calls the Latter Day of the Law, life is strongly influenced by the three poisons, which cause people to take incorrect actions resulting in disasters within the three areas of human activity.

Why do I say this? Because, of the seven types of disasters described in the Yakushi Sutra [Sutra of the Buddha of Medicine], five have already occurred. Only two have yet to appear, the calamity of invasion from foreign lands and the calamity of revolt within one's own domain. And of the three calamities mentioned in the Daijuku Sutra [Sutra of the Great Assembly], two have already made their appearance. Only one remains, the disaster of warfare. (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 37)

Thus, his motivation was to avert war. And this war he could easily predict, not because of any clairvoyant or paranormal powers, but as easily and surely as you and I can predict the sun will rise tomorrow morning—simply because he

understood the workings of life, the law of causality.

Similarly, if we examine the world today, we see the effects of greed, anger and foolishness. We too can predict with confidence that unless something is done, natural disasters, warfare, starvation and epidemics will continue to wreak suffering. We too should feel that we “cannot keep silent.”

It is, or should be, the purpose of education, philosophy and religion to enable people to control the “three poisons” so they can eliminate suffering. Unfortunately this is not the case, so it is natural that the world is full of calamities and disasters, suffering and unhappiness.

## PART 4: INCORRECT VIEWS OF LIFE ARE THE CAUSE OF SUFFERING

If people favor what is only incidental and forget

fill the country!” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 34).

**GUEST Q#8:** The guest asks if the Daishonin means that these priests should be killed in order to stop the slander. Doing so would also amount to slander.

**HOST A#8:** The Daishonin points out that his intention is not to denounce the individuals, but it is the act of slander that he hates and wishes to eliminate. This can be done by denying those priests the alms upon which their livelihood depends, thus forcing them to stop slandering.

**GUEST Q#9:** The guest is moved by this reply and, filled with respect, replies that he is now convinced. He has forsaken his earlier views, and his ears and eyes have been opened to the truth. And since

all people wish for peace and security, we should quickly put an end to the financial support of those priests propagating incorrect views.

**HOST A#9:** The Daishonin is filled with delight: “The dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam! How gratifying! You have transformed yourself through your association with [me,] a friend in the orchid room, just as the mugwort growing in the hemp field becomes straight.” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 36). But, just as we can grow through association with good influences, we can also be discouraged by contact with negative ones. The Daishonin expresses his concerns about whether the guest will be able to keep his resolve.

Next the Daishonin urges quick action because of the various calamities and disasters befalling the nation of which two—foreign invasion and internal strife—have yet to occur. He worries about the suffering and plight of the people. “It distresses me that they should be so confused about right and wrong, and at the same time I feel pity that, having embraced Buddhism, they should have chosen the wrong kind. With the power of faith that is in their hearts, why must they recklessly give credence to heretical doctrines? If they do not shake off these delusions that they cling to but continue to harbor distorted views, then they will quickly leave this world of the living and surely fall into the hell of incessant suffering” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 38).

It is not enough to simply reject what is false. The truth must be taught in order to replace it. “Therefore you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of

**what is primary, can the benevolent deities be anything but angry? If people cast aside what is perfect and take up what is biased, can the world escape the plots of demons? Rather than offering up ten thousand prayers for remedy, it would be better to simply outlaw this one evil [doctrine] that is the source of all the trouble!” (MW-2 [2nd], 20)**

First, it should be noted that Nichiren Daishonin’s call to “simply outlaw this one evil [doctrine]” was done in the context of the times. Religion in thirteenth-century Japan had become, in effect, institutionalized within a corrupt government that suppressed a suffering populace. By “simply outlaw this one evil [doctrine],” the Daishonin was urging the government to stop using religion as a tool of suppression—a tool to make people apathetic and submissive. By “outlaw” he was implying not so much a government ban, but a removal of official government sanction and patronage.

Where there is freedom of religious expression, religious truth can be determined in the marketplace of ideas. Today, the validity or value of beliefs can be illuminated through social discourse. False assumptions and beliefs will tend to “outlaw” themselves when thoroughly discussed and examined in the context of individuals’ and humanity’s needs. In that sense, religious freedom implies not only the freedom to believe as one wishes, but the freedom to investigate beliefs and discuss and verify their validity against the standards of documentary, theological and actual proofs.

In the Daishonin’s time, the Pure Land teachings of Honen had an immense influence upon society. Honen, the founder of the Pure Land sect, urged his followers to obtain rebirth in a Pure Land after death. But more critically, he urged them to “discard, close, ignore and abandon” all other teachings, including the Lotus Sutra.

Honen advocated belief in what the Daishonin saw as an imaginary or other-worldly Buddha—Amida. He taught people to despise the real world, discard hope for any satisfaction in this life, and long for rebirth in an imagined “pure land.” Nichiren Daishonin saw these beliefs as misleading and detrimental to the morale of the people and the nation. It was such erroneous and destructive beliefs and the effects they cause in the lives of the people that the Daishonin strove to eliminate. Without government sanction, the prevalent sects would not support themselves when people found there was a greater truth available to them. President Ikeda writes:

Nichiren made this point to urge the government to cease its protection and patronage of Zen, Pure Land and other Buddhist schools and to sever the corrupt ties existing between government and religion. In contemporary terms, what Nichiren was talking about accords with the principle of separation of church and state. He rejected the idea that the fate of religion should be dependent upon the whims of the state. With this conviction, Nichiren strove to spread the True Law by examining the validity of each teaching through debate and dialogue

among the different Buddhist schools.

When a given religious order seeks the patronage of the state, it is a clear sign of its degeneration. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 235)

There are other mistaken beliefs that people give their allegiance to—put their faith in—that are contrary to the law of life. For example: beliefs that deny a person’s highest potential, that diminish the sanctity of life; beliefs that take people’s focus away from improving their lives in the present to awaiting some reward in an afterlife; beliefs that do not respect the lives of other human beings; beliefs that enslave people to the whims of religious demigods; etc.

All of them fail to focus our efforts on purification of the inner realm, manifestation of our inherent greatness (Buddhahood) and respect for that same greatness in others. These beliefs can neither lead people to lasting happiness nor protection from calamity and disaster.

President Ikeda writes in his narrative *The Human Revolution*:

If someone believes in something that’s mistaken, no matter what it is, it’ll drag that person into the depths of misery. The same holds true for a group of men, society, even a whole nation. To mistake a fallacy for the truth and believe it is the most horrible thing in the world. No amount of good intentions or hard work will help people then. If they believe in something false or unscientific, they can’t help but invite misfortune. It’s inevitable.

Some may place their trust in a specific doctrine, or in science,

religion, their country, their business, their relatives, their friends, in their convictions, or in medicine or technology. Human beings can’t act unless they believe in something. Unconsciously, even one who flaunts his atheism acts on the basis of some belief. All human affairs are no more than the sum of actions rooted in faith.

Belief is not something apart from life. Nor is it confined to a select group of people. The important thing is the extent to which we are aware of what we believe in. Most people never even question if the substance of their belief is absolutely correct. Right or wrong, just or evil—they ignore it and go merrily on their way. Here, right here, is the root of unhappiness. (*The Human Revolution*, vol. 1, pp. 100–01)

People are hungry for the truth. They yearn for it and the relief from suffering that living wisely brings. The recent interest in New Age religions and self-help movements attest to this fact. As we approach the new century, it seems clear that we are at the beginning of a great spiritual journey and awakening. What people seek is a way of life that is at once sound in reason, is relatively easy to practice and provides verifiable proof in their daily life. Religion is, therefore, both the problem and the solution. It’s a matter of discerning between a false one and a correct one.

Buddhism sees life as an ongoing struggle between our fundamental darkness and our fundamental enlightenment—between that which denies the greatness of life and that which confirms and cultivates it. Buddhism recognizes that the key to

the Lotus Sutra]” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 40). This inner transformation is the basis for establishing a peaceful world.

Guest Q#10: The guest agrees. He sees now that slander of the true Law is the root cause of suffering. With the Daishonin’s help, he has dispelled the ignorance from his mind. And the guest concludes the entire dialogue with a call to action: “I hope we may set about as quickly as possible taking measures to deal with these slanders against the Law and to bring peace to the world without delay, thus insuring that we may live in safety in this life and enjoy good fortune in the life to come. But it is not enough that I alone should accept and have faith in your words—we must see to it that others as well are warned of their errors!” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 41).



AP PHOTOS/ANTHONY LYON

**A Serbian police officer pulls an elderly ethnic Albanian refugee from Kosovo to his feet as he escorts him out of Kosovo and into Albania at the Morini border crossing Sunday, April 18, 1999. The man was suffering from exhaustion and could not walk by himself.**

winning that internal battle is to live in harmony with the law of life.

## **PART 5: REFORMATION OF OUR BELIEFS: THE HUMAN REVOLUTION**

**T**herefore you must quickly reform the tenets that you hold in your heart and embrace the one true vehicle, the single good doctrine [of the Lotus Sutra]. If you do so, then the threefold world will become the Buddha land, and how could a Buddha land ever decline? The regions in the ten directions will all become treasure realms, and how could a treasure realm ever suffer harm? If you live in a country that knows no decline or diminution, in a land that suffers no harm or disruption, then your body will find peace and security and your mind will be calm and untroubled. You must believe my words, heed what I say! (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 40)

Since calamities and disasters arise from believing something to be true or correct, which is, in fact, false or in error, Nichiren Daishonin concludes that if we wish to create a peaceful society we must reform the beliefs we hold in our hearts. We must turn away from beliefs that are false—that do not enable us to purify ourselves of the “three poisons”—and reorient our belief system to recognize and embrace the reality of life. It is our desires and actions influenced by the “three poisons” that result in suffering.

The crisis we find ourselves in today leaves us conflicted over the

great civilization humanity has created, on one hand, and the evil that continues to exist within it, on the other. It makes us wonder who we are. On a broad scale, this wondering has led to a sort of global identity crisis.

In his 1999 peace proposal submitted to the United Nations on January 26, President Ikeda states:

At the heart of the SGI movement is the effort to develop a new cosmology and to address the identity crises head-on.

This cosmology provides answers to fundamental questions inherent in our very humanity. Moreover, it provides a framework—accessible to all—for resolving the identity crises and transforming our *fin-de-siècle* chaos into a world where all human beings can find meaning for their existence. (May 1999, *Living Buddhism*, p. 27)

This new cosmology involves the transformation of delusion into wisdom. This reformation or transformation is called human revolution. Human revolution is the reformation of one’s beliefs, of one’s faith: an essential realignment of our world view and the purpose of life. This, the Daishonin concludes, is the key to personal happiness, social harmony and a peaceful land.

## **PART 6: HOW TO ACCOMPLISH A REFORMATION OF THE INNER SELF**

**I**n his “Rissho Ankoku Ron,” Nichiren Daishonin teaches us how to establish a peaceful society through the reformation of our inner selves. We may not be aware that our practice is contributing to world

peace, but the Daishonin explains that the power of the Law to purify our lives makes it so. “Though I may be a person of little ability, I have reverently given myself to the study of the Mahayana [Lotus Sutra]. A blue fly, if it clings to the tail of a thoroughbred horse, can travel ten thousand miles, and the green ivy that twines around the tall pine can grow to a thousand feet.” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 25) In a passage from another writing he also states: “Since the Law is supreme, the Person is worthy of respect.” (MW-1, 264). By awakening to the law of life, ordinary people such as we can transform ourselves into Buddhas, thus taking a journey or accomplishing a task that we could not do otherwise.

In the thesis he says, “The dove has changed into a hawk, the sparrow into a clam! How gratifying! You have transformed yourself through your association with [me] a friend in the orchid room, just as the mugwort growing in the hemp field becomes straight” (MW2 [2nd ed.], 36). We see the importance of good influences in terms of finding a good teacher. The mentor-disciple relationship is implicit in this passage.

By inscribing the true object of devotion, the Gohonzon, the Daishonin made it possible to actualize the spirit of this thesis. He took it out of the realm of theory and put it into actuality. Thus, when we put our faith in the Gohonzon, the Lotus Sutra of the Later Day of the Law, by chanting Nam-myohorenge-kyo, the process of “reforming the tenets we hold in our hearts” is activated.

**I hope we may set about as quickly as possible taking measures to deal with these slanders against the Law and**



MARTIN COHEN

**“If you care anything about your personal security, you should first of all pray for order and tranquility throughout the four quarters of the land, should you not?” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 38) Nichiren Daishonin suggests that the peace and security of others should become our personal concern.**

**to bring peace to the world without delay, thus insuring that we may live in safety in this life and enjoy good fortune in the life to come. But it is not enough that I alone should accept and have faith**

**in your words—we must see to it that others as well are warned of their errors! (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 41)**

Because people are not in harmony with the law of life, they fall

under the influence of the three poisons and behave in ways that bring misery upon themselves and the land in which they live. But through practicing the Daishonin’s Buddhism, they can strengthen the law within them, master their negative impulses and establish a positive state of life that will be reflected in the environment—a process of inner or human revolution.

The process of human revolution is the most essential and effective contribution one can make toward a peaceful society. But we must realize that our own human revolution necessitates an awareness of our responsibility to teach others.

President Ikeda writes:

The key to establishing peace and prosperity in our world, as expressed here, lies in the human heart—in people’s prayers for order and tranquillity in society—and in each person establishing a solid self-identity through the process of human revolution. (*The New Human Revolution*, vol. 4, p. 245)

Henry David Thoreau writes: “There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.”<sup>5</sup> In a world filled with millions of people battling thousands of evils, we can be the ones to strike at the root. □

1. *Nihon Rekishi Daijiten* (Encyclopedia of Japanese History) and *Azuma Kagami* (Mirror of the East).
2. Age of Enlightenment: The period when many people are sure to attain enlightenment through practicing the Buddha’s teachings.
3. Age of reading, reciting and listening: The period when studying, reciting the sutras and listening to lectures on them constitute the central practice.
4. Age of building temples and stupas: The period when many temples and stupas—a kind of shrine—are built.
5. *Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations*, John Bartlett, 1980, p. 559

# DIALOGUE

## ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

### The Wisdom of the Lotus Sutra— A Discussion on Religion in the Twenty-first Century

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*This is the thirty-ninth installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Ikeda, Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and vice Chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda.*

*This time, participants discuss the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” (nineteenth) chapter. How does the state of life of someone who propagates the Mystic Law change? Participants investigate the specific nature of these changes in light of the principle of the “purification of the six sense organs.”*

#### **39** Those Who Spread the Mystic Law Receive the Great Benefit of the Purification of the Six Sense Organs

At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattva and mahasattva Constant Exertion: “If good men or good women accept and uphold this Lotus Sutra, if they read it, recite it, explain and preach it, or transcribe it, such persons will obtain eight hundred eye benefits, twelve hundred ear benefits, eight hundred nose benefits, twelve hundred tongue benefits, eight hundred body benefits, and twelve hundred mind benefits. With these benefits they will be able to adorn their six sense organs, making all of them pure.” (LS19, 251)<sup>1</sup>



With regard to the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings” says: The word *hosshi*, or teacher of the Law, means one who teaches the five practices [of embracing, reading, reciting, teaching and transcribing the Lotus Sutra]. The word *kudoku*, or benefit, means the results or rewards that come about through the purification of the six sense organs. In essence we may say that Nichiren and his followers who now chant Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are carrying out purification of the six sense organs. Hence they are acting as teachers of the Law of Myoho-renge-kyo and possess great virtue. The element *ku* in the word *kudoku* means good fortune. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 762)

#### KATSUJI SAITO:

During February, the traditional month of propagation,<sup>2</sup> members throughout the country made wonderful strides in spreading Nichiren Daishonin’s teaching. In this we can see a living example of the boundless spread of the Mystic Law to the “fiftieth person,” which we studied last time in our discussion of “Benefits of Responding with Joy,” the eighteenth chapter.

**DAISAKU IKEDA:** That’s wonderful! In this world of the Latter Day of the Law, no one is more noble than those who pray and take action out of the desire to help others become happy.

Often when we tell another about Buddhism, even if it’s with all sincerity, we find ourselves ridiculed and sometimes treated with outright contempt. Members nevertheless continue to engage people in dialogue, with a patient spirit of compassion like that of a parent trying to teach something new to a child. They are bodhisattvas carrying out the sacred work of Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

It’s important to remember that every time we are slighted or vilified on account of our efforts to tell others about Buddhism, our life becomes purer. That’s why second Soka Gakkai president Josei Toda used to say: “You should be



CORBIS/OWEN FRANKEN

**The simple touch of our hands can reveal much about ourselves: “If one upholds the Lotus Sutra / his body will be very pure” (LS19, 262).**

filled with appreciation when you are treated badly as a result of your efforts to share Buddhism with others. That’s because being subjected to such behavior enables us to rid our lives of negative karma and its effects and consequently move in the direction of absolute happiness.”<sup>3</sup>

**ENDO:** This is the concept of the “purification of the six sense organs,” which is the central theme of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter we are discussing this time.

**SUDA:** This chapter explains the benefits received by “teachers of the Law”—those who propagate the teaching in addition to practicing it themselves.

**IKEDA:** The term *teacher of the Law* does not refer to priests. As we noted in discussing “Teacher of the Law,” the tenth chapter, a teacher of the Law is a person who takes the Law as his or her teacher, and who teaches others about it. Anyone, whether priest or lay person, who seeks out and propagates the Law is a “teacher of the Law.”

**SAITO:** The “Teacher of the Law” chapter describes these teachers as “lay persons or monks or nuns who

read and recite the Lotus Sutra” (LS10, 162). Anyone who earnestly devotes him- or herself to Buddhist practice is a noble teacher of the Law. Someone who becomes idle or lazy, however, even if he or she wears the garments of a priest, is, as the Daishonin says, “no better than an animal dressed in priestly robes” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 3, p. 215). Dedication to Buddhism, not outward status, is the important distinction.

**IKEDA:** We can therefore state unequivocally that the members of the SGI who are single-mindedly working to apply and spread the Daishonin’s teaching are the true teachers of the Law in this day and age. Where, outside of the SGI, are there people who can declare confidently: “I have found the correct path in life!” “I have discovered the way to genuine happiness!”?

Teachers of the Law are spiritual leaders who, in a society overshadowed by darkness and confusion, strive to guide others toward happiness. They are beacons illuminating the community and society. There are countless

such people in the great grass-roots organization that is the SGI. I'm sure each of you knows many of them.

**SUDA:** Indeed. In Tokyo's Sumida Ward where I live, there is a district staff member named Chii Sekino who has to date personally converted 106 households to the Daishonin's Buddhism. She joined the Soka Gakkai in 1956. Last year (1997), she converted three households and this year (1998) she has already converted two more. As a result, a tremendous surge of propagation has swept through her chapter. Moreover, the people she has introduced to the practice have all realized steady growth, and not a few of them are currently active as chapter- and district-level leaders.

**IKEDA:** To help a hundred people fundamentally transform their lives for the better is a great achievement that few scholars or business leaders could claim to match. To perceive this truth, without being blinded by such considerations as social status, corresponds to the "purification of the eye" as explained by the principle of the purification of the six sense organs.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino operates a wholesale business specializing in shoe-manufacturing materials in Sumida Ward. Even now, at more than 60 years of age, she continues to drive herself around town to conduct business.

Though she is very healthy today, when she joined the Soka Gakkai she suffered from a severe case of tuberculosis of the spine, or Pott's disease. Her mother died when she was five and for many years she lived in poverty. When she heard the guidance that there is no way to transform your destiny other than by sharing Buddhism with others, she determined to dedicate herself to doing just that.

Her first attempts at Buddhist dialogue consisted of talking to the people who came to visit her at the hospital. Although she had been told she would likely have to spend years in the hospital convalescing, as a result of these efforts she was discharged after just six months. Her recovery was so remarkable that she began working again only four days after her release. Through this experience, she gained supreme confidence and conviction in the Daishonin's Buddhism.

**SAITO:** No one is stronger than a person of conviction.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino says, "I make efforts to spread Buddhism 365 days a year." Each morning and evening she prays to meet people with whom she shares some connection. As a result, she runs into people who are interested in learning about Buddhism. The people she introduced to the practice this year were old friends she had

not seen for many years until she happened to run into them on the street.

She also writes down the names of those whom she would like to introduce to the Daishonin's Buddhism, and offers prayers each day, thinking about how happy they would become if only they would take faith.

**ENDO:** Nothing is more powerful than compassionate prayer. People cannot fail to listen to someone who has genuine concern for them. Doubtless Mrs. Sekino's friends can sense her strong concern and her prayers for their happiness.

**SUDA:** Mrs. Sekino's method of propagation does not involve a lot of complex doctrine. She believes that even a few words will suffice. And most of the time, her friends readily decide to join. It's not a matter of theory; it comes down to using words that move a person's life.



NANJING MANSION

"The happiness of the people was Zhou Enlai's only concern," recounts President Ikeda, who shared deep friendship with the late Chinese premier (1898-1976).

### The Life Force to Win Over the Environment

**IKEDA:** Sharing Buddhism with others means praying wholeheartedly that they will truly feel your sincerity. Then, regardless of how they respond at the time, they will be left with a deep sense of trust knowing how much you care for their happiness. They will be profoundly moved. That's what's important.

Incidentally, why do well over a billion Chinese people to this day continue to cherish the memory of Zhou Enlai (1898-1976), born one hundred years ago this year (1998)? Many Chinese will tell you that just thinking of Premier Zhou brings tears to their eyes. The reason for this tremendous affection is that Zhou, more than anyone else, devoted himself heart and soul to working for the happiness of the Chinese people. This is the same kind of sincere dedication to the country as was exhibited by Chuko Kung-ming, whose life a poet memorializes with these words: "Though some may argue his success or failure / He was loyal to the very end."<sup>4</sup> The happiness of the



CHRISTIANE G. HOUSER

**A person who upholds the Lotus Sutra “will never experience any bad tastes, / but all that he eats / will become like sweet dew” (LS19, 260).**

people was Zhou Enlai’s only concern. That’s why to this day, more than twenty years after his death (in January 1976), his memory still elicits such feelings of warmth.

**ENDO:** Commenting on the recent visit of the Chinese Central Nationalities Song and Dance Ensemble, which you invited to come to Japan to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Zhou Enlai’s birth, Masao Shimizu, director and president of

the Matsuyama Ballet, wrote:

Premier Zhou Enlai had a special feeling for the arts. That’s because he had a rich sensitivity and a great love for the people. Though a person will eventually disappear from the world, love endures forever in the human heart. This is the source of the fondness of China’s 1.4 billion people for Zhou Enlai.

**SAITO:** In propagating Buddhism, too, it is important to pray until one’s sincere desire for the happiness of the other person is conveyed.

**IKEDA:** When you have a strong spirit of compassion, you are able to understand the worries or difficulties that others are experiencing, just as an excellent physician can immediately diagnose the cause of someone’s illness. This is the benefit of purifying the six sense organs.

**SUDA:** In the forty-some years since she took faith, Mrs. Sekino has completely overcome both illness and poverty. She is fond of saying, “The strongest will win.” With that conviction, to fortify her life force, she makes a point of always chanting sincere daimoku before trying to tell someone about Buddhism.

In her business activities, too, she has reportedly experienced setbacks, such as people defaulting on payment, but she explains that she has developed the strength to continue advancing no matter what happens.

**SAITO:** Isn’t such strength itself the benefit gained by a teacher of the Law?

**IKEDA:** I think you could say that. A strong person is happy. At the same time, strength is relative; it depends on the

relationship between one’s life force and the environment. If your life force is weak and frail, then even minor problems will cause you to fret and become overwhelmed, bringing you to a deadlock. This will only make you miserable.

When we strengthen our life force even a bit, we gain the vitality to resolve problems, such as those at home, for example. Then, we are not set back by such troubles. Once we step out into the community, however, we may find ourselves stymied by problems there. Going further, though we may have developed the life force to address the issues of the peace and prosperity of the country, we may still find ourselves bewildered when it comes to dealing with the sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death.

The Lotus Sutra enables us to tap into the life force of the universe, so that no matter what happens, we are never bound by our difficulties. The Daishonin’s Buddhism is the teaching that gives all people the power to experience incredible energy welling forth in their lives. A person who has solid faith in the Mystic Law, therefore, is the strongest and happiest of all.

Happiness is not reliant solely on the environment. There are people living in luxurious mansions who spend their days in tears. Neither, however, is our happiness entirely independent of our environment. Not a single person could honestly claim to be happy if unable to feed his or her children.

Happiness is determined by the connection between the environment, or outer world, and our life force. A person who is controlled by a negative environment is suffering. On the other hand, a person faced with a difficult situation who can control and influence it is happy.

**ENDO:** So we can say that a person with a strong life force is happy.

**IKEDA:** That’s called purifying the six sense organs, or, in modern terms, doing one’s human revolution. The lives of teachers of the Law—that is to say, of those who exert themselves for kosen-rufu—are purified and strengthened and greatly expanded. This is the benefit accrued by teachers of the Law. At the outset of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, Shakyamuni addresses a bodhisattva called Constant Exertion.

**SAITO:** Yes. In fact, Shakyamuni addresses his teaching in this chapter to this bodhisattva.

**IKEDA:** Regarding this figure, Nichiren Daishonin says:

One should understand that in the Latter Day of the Law, it is the votaries of the Lotus Sutra who act as the

bodhisattva Constant Exertion. The Lotus Sutra itself says of such persons who uphold the sutra, “This is what is meant by diligence.”<sup>5</sup> (GZ, 763)

Specifically, Bodhisattva Constant Exertion indicates Nichiren Daishonin. But in general, we, the Daishonin’s true followers, are also the recipients of this teaching. That’s because we are constantly working to propagate the Law.

**ENDO:** The chapter begins:

At that time the Buddha said to the bodhisattva and mahasattva Constant Exertion: “If good men or good women accept and uphold this Lotus Sutra, if they read it, recite it, explain and preach it, or transcribe it, such persons will obtain eight hundred eye benefits, twelve hundred ear benefits, eight hundred nose benefits, twelve hundred tongue benefits, eight hundred body benefits, and twelve hundred mind benefits. With these benefits they will be able to adorn their six sense organs, making all of them pure.” (LS19, 251)

**SUDA:** It seems that “sense organs” here indicates powers or abilities, as well as the organs invested with these powers.

**SAITO:** For instance, the “eye sense” refers to the ability to see, as well as the physical eye and optic nerve.

**ENDO:** Incidentally, the six sense organs (of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) each have their respective objects (color and form, sound, odor, taste, texture and mental or spiritual phenomena).

Also, the six sense organs are said to be operated by “six consciousnesses” (sight, hearing, smell, taste, touch and consciousness). Collectively, these organs, objects and consciousnesses are termed the “eighteen worlds.”

**SAITO:** The above passage mentions five kinds of practice: accepting and upholding the Lotus Sutra, reading it, reciting it, explaining and preaching it, and transcribing it. These are called the “five practices.” Those who carry out these practices are called “teachers of the Law who carry out the five kinds of practice.” But as we confirmed in our discussion of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter, in Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism the one practice of accepting and upholding the Gohonzon includes the five practices in their entirety.

[In the “The Real Aspect of the Gohonzon,” the Daishonin says, “Embracing the Lotus Sutra and chanting

Nam-myoho-renge-kyo encompass all five practices” (MW-1, 214).]

**IKEDA:** “Accepting and upholding” means practicing faith with selfless dedication. It means wholeheartedly embracing the Gohonzon and thoroughly striving for kosen-rufu. This is “constant exertion.” It is to work for kosen-rufu each day and over the course of one’s life. Through such faith, the six sense organs are purified. Let’s start by considering the benefits of the eye.

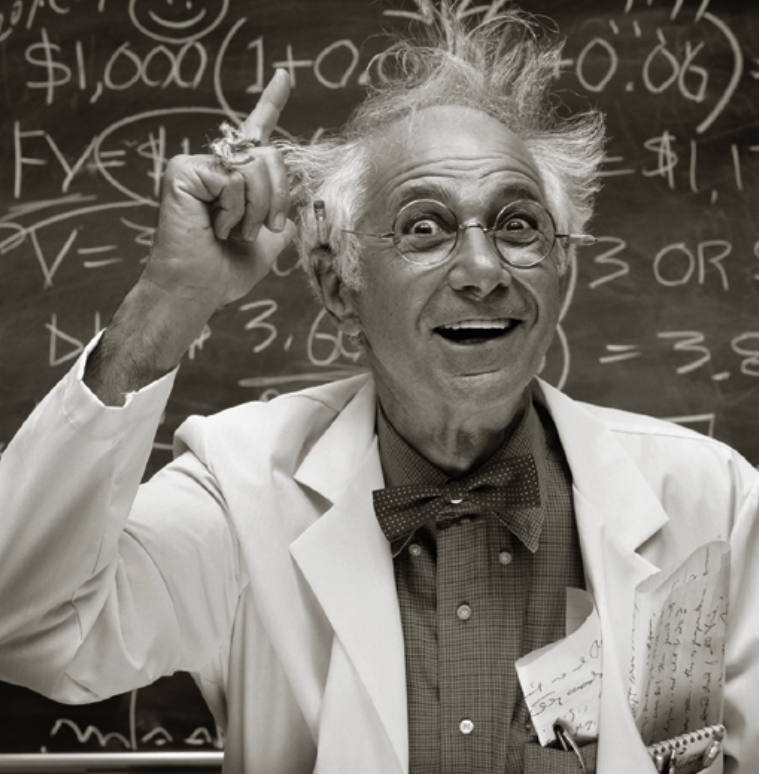
### **Purifying the Eye Enables Us To Discern the Essence of All Things**

**ENDO:** OK. In the sutra, the Buddha says:



**A person who upholds the Lotus Sutra “will view all the three thousand worlds” (LS-19, 252).**

These good men and good women, with the pure physical eyes they received from their parents at birth, will view all that exists in the inner and outer parts of the thousand-millionfold world, its mountains, forests, rivers and seas, down as far as the Avichi hell and up to the Summit of Being. And in the midst they will see all the living beings, and will also see and understand all the causes and conditions created by



**Tap your wisdom within!:** “Through purifying the mind, practitioners . . . may become great scholars or people of unsurpassed insight,” says President Ikeda.

their deeds and the births that await them as a result and recompense for those deeds. (LS19, 251–52)

**IKEDA:** This is basically referring to the “power of insight.” It is not talking about clairvoyance or some mystical superhuman power.

**SUDA:** The advance of science has made it possible for human beings to see with their own eyes all of the mountains and seas of the world. Since science is also concerned with investigating the laws of life and the universe, we may also view it as part of Buddhism. It is certainly true that, as a result of scientific advances, our eyes and ears have acquired truly tremendous power.

**SAITO:** The issue, however, is whether such power equals happiness. While the tendency of science has been to direct its investigative gaze ever outward, in the absence of a corresponding growth and maturation in the inner realm of life, it will only produce misfortune.

**IKEDA:** The capacity to discern this path to happiness is the benefit of the eye. This does not only apply to oneself. Like a skilled physician, we become able to see what others are seeking, and what we can do to help them break through their difficulties.

President Toda had extremely keen powers of insight. Just by observing a small detail—for example, how someone walked or opened a door—he could immediately fathom what was worrying the person or the nature of his or her situation.

**SAITO:** I understand, President Ikeda, that from the time that you were a young man, people would say that you had X-ray vision.

**IKEDA:** You cannot see someone’s heart. It is Buddhism that enables us to perceive the heart of another and thoroughly understand how it operates. It could be said that Buddhism is the science of the spirit, medicine for the heart.

It is not easy to do, but a Buddhist leader has to be able to deftly perceive the unseen principles or functions of the heart as though with radar.

**SUDA:** I would like to bring up the experience of a young man who was once helping to manage a Gakkai meeting you attended. At the back of the stage area hung a large banner. The young man’s duties required him to remain behind the banner with other staff throughout the entire meeting. He could not see you, President Ikeda and, of course, no one knew that they were behind the banner. But at the end of the meeting, you suddenly remarked, “I would also like to thank those members behind the banner for their efforts.” He later told me that the surprise and emotion he felt at that moment has remained a cherished memory.

**IKEDA:** I’m not a psychic or anything of the sort. It’s just that I have the strong determination never to overlook those who are working behind the scenes and to show them my appreciation.

The Okinawa Training Center has a collection of tropical fish that are rarely seen in an aquarium. Thinking that catching the fish must have been a difficult task, I lost no time sending a message of appreciation.

People might look at a display or something and say, “Isn’t that beautiful,” but rarely do they consider the effort of the person or people who prepared it. And probably there are those who, their hearts inert and cold as stones, won’t be moved enough to say anything.

I always try to see the underlying essence, the invisible roots that lie buried and out of sight.

**ENDO:** I often hear about how when visiting a culture center, before even entering the building, you walk around back to encourage those working behind the scenes—giving people quite a start, I might add.

**IKEDA:** In doing so, I’m not trying to check up on people. When you observe things from an oblique angle, rather than from the front, you can usually clearly grasp the entirety of the situation.

In the case of a magazine, for instance, publishers naturally put effort into the cover and the initial sections.

This is probably true for the staff of *The Daibyakurenge*, too, I would imagine. It is by reading the articles in the back, however, that you can accurately gauge just how much real effort is being put into the publication. It is the “power of vision” that enables us to discern this.

**SUDA:** Often, President Ikeda, you are the first to notice and encourage members who are helping out behind the scenes at some event, perhaps standing behind rows of cars or performing other support activities that often go unnoticed.

**IKEDA:** Let’s not talk only about me! We should each strive to be attentive to the efforts of those around us.

Since I myself have really worked behind the scenes, I understand people’s inconspicuous efforts. It is in the wings, rather than on center stage, that you often find people of real strength and ability. I am always thinking about such people, and each day from morning to evening I do everything I can to encourage them.

**SAITO:** I once heard someone describe you as “having many different sides,” noting your multifarious activities—as a religious leader, a social activist, an author, a photographer, an educator. The person asked me how I would sum up your work in a word. I answered simply that it is the work of encouraging people. I think we could also say that it is the work of fostering capable people.

**ENDO:** Perhaps it is only through such “constant exertion” day in and day out that we can polish our life and “purify the eye.”

**Firm Resolve Brings Out the “Eye of Wisdom”**

**IKEDA:** With regard to “purifying the eye,” in a verse section Shakyamuni says:

If in the midst of the great assembly  
 someone with a fearless mind  
 preaches this Lotus Sutra,  
 listen to the benefits he will receive! (LS19, 252)

When we go out among others and dauntlessly spread the teaching, we receive the benefit of “purifying the eye”; we can develop the “eye of wisdom” without fail. This is another meaning of the “opening of the eyes.” The Daishonin says, “When the skies are clear, the ground is illuminated” (MW-1, 82).

In our daily lives, too, we need to plainly see the best direction in which to proceed. We mustn’t live foolishly. When we exercise our ingenuity and tenaciously exert

ourselves based on faith, never becoming impatient, we can discern the “supreme path” for our life. We also develop insight into the future of our family, our community and society.

Nichiren Daishonin, as the Buddha of the Latter Day of the Law, could see clearly over the three existences of past, present and future. While we are ordinary people, the “eye of wisdom” comes to shine acutely as a result of our practice.

**SUDA:** Just as the Daishonin decreed, you have been steadily working to promote peace and human happiness throughout Asia and the world, President Ikeda. While today your foresight is clear, I understand that initially you faced much resistance because no one could fathom what you were doing.

**SAITO:** I also heard there was a great deal of opposition to your plans to found Soka University, which is today making a great contribution to education and culture, as well as the Min-On Concert Association and the Fuji Art Museum.

**IKEDA:** The holding of culture festivals, the formation of the fife and drum corps, the building of training centers—each of these initiatives was met with widespread opposition!

To help more people understand the wonder of Buddhism, we need to create a universal forum of culture, education and peace. If we use colors to describe the Soka Gakkai organization, I think we could say that in the past it had a gray tint. I have tried to change the organization to give it a colorful hue.

**ENDO:** Your insight is tremendous.

**IKEDA:** Fierce determination is key. When you are firmly resolved, you can open the “eye of wisdom.” The Daishonin says:

If you exert a hundred million eons of effort in a single moment of life, the three enlightened properties of the Buddha will appear within you at each moment. Nam-myoho-renge-kyo means just such diligent practice. (GZ, 790)

Rather than feeling distressed over a lack of capable people in one’s area, for example, the first thing one should do is offer prayer. To secure peace based on the teachings of Buddhism is the Buddha’s will. It is the Buddha’s enterprise and the Buddha’s work. As Nichiren Daishonin promised, Bodhisattvas of the Earth could therefore not fail to be in any given area, no matter how remote.

The problem isn't that there are no capable people; it's simply that we cannot "see" them. The solution is to offer earnest prayer. We also need to be determined to take full responsibility without anyone's help. Such resolve will without a doubt bring forth people able and willing to work in the same cause.

The Soka Gakkai is an organization of utmost sincerity. That is the meaning of faith; it is the way of purifying the six sense organs.

In this society rife with corruption and confusion, faith is the one absolute that will never betray a person of genuine sincerity. Such a person will triumph in the realm of faith. We are infinitely fortunate to have encountered such a wonderful realm.

This is the principle of the "lotus flower in the water." Though its roots are sunk in muddy water, the lotus itself remains pure. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are the lotus. They exhibit the purification of the six sense organs.

The six sense organs are the interface between the small universe of our life and the cosmos. They are the portal connecting the microcosm and the macrocosm. Purifying the six sense organs means completely harmonizing one's life with the universe, tuning in to its rhythm.

Through our practice, we harmonize our life with the rhythm, the wavelength, of the Mystic Law. We are then endowed with the power to advance confidently and without any hindrance, and the freedom to live our lives in sync with the universe. This is what it means to attain

Buddhahood in one's present form, to do one's human revolution, and to purify the six sense organs.

**SAITO:** The sutra in one place speaks of "the eyes received at birth from his parents" (LS19, 252). The important point here is that we can actually change even such physical features.

**IKEDA:** Buddhism is concerned with reality. There's no such thing as Buddhism divorced from reality.

Practicing faith does not mean that your life will be free of the mud of suffering. It means acquiring the life force not to be defeated by suffering. In fact, it's necessary to have lots of struggles. Faith means developing the state of life to be able to enjoy even the challenge of facing and overcoming hardships.

Also, though we might speak of "purifying the eye," there are people who cannot physically see. Through faith in the Mystic Law, they can absolutely open the "eye of the heart." Having perfect vision does not mean a person can perceive the essence of things.

**ENDO:** Helen Keller (1880–1968) is renowned for her "miraculous" victory over the threefold disability of being unable to speak, hear or see. The American author Mark Twain (1835–1910) would often tell her: "Helen, the world is full of unseeing eyes, vacant, staring, soulless eyes."<sup>6</sup>

**IKEDA:** They were friends. In her praise, Twain once remarked that the two most interesting characters of the nineteenth century were Napoleon and Helen Keller.<sup>7</sup> He also noted that while Napoleon had planned to conquer the world by means of force and failed, Helen Keller, while bearing the weight of a threefold disability, succeeded through her abundant spiritual strength in winning the world over.

Helen Keller inspired untold numbers of people with hope and courage. With enormous tenacity, by the sweat of her brow, she grappled her way up the mountain of learning, fell down, and climbed up again. Describing how she felt at the outset of her university studies, she proclaims: "In the wonderland of Mind I should be as free as another."<sup>8</sup>

The realm of the heart and mind is free. She calls it a "wonderland"—a mystical domain. She opened up a world filled with wonderment in her heart. This is freedom, a state of true liberty.

**SUDA:** President Ikeda, I recall that you gave the group in the Soka Gakkai for people with sight loss the name Jizai-kai (Freedom Group).

**IKEDA:** Helen Keller did not know about the Mystic Law. The members of the Freedom Group who embrace



CORBIS/SANDY FEISENTHAL

The cosmic sound of life resounds within each person: A person who upholds the Lotus Sutra "can hear / the sounds of the three thousand worlds" (LS19, 253).

the Mystic Law, cannot fail to open the supreme “eye of wisdom” and achieve boundless happiness. Indeed, this is my ardent hope; that’s why I gave the group this name. The same of course also goes for other physically challenged people.

### Purification of the Ears

**SAITO:** Next, we come to the sense of hearing. The sutra explains in no uncertain terms that people who have purified the ears can hear all voices in the world. It says:

They will...purify their ears so they can hear all the different varieties of words and sounds in the thousand-millionfold world, down as far as the Avichi hell, up to the Summit of Being, and in its inner and outer parts. Elephant sounds, horse sounds, ox sounds, carriage sounds, weeping sounds, lamenting sounds, conch sounds, drum sounds, bell sounds, chime sounds, sounds of laughter, sounds of speaking, men’s voices, women’s voices, boys’ voices, girls’ voices, the voice of the Law, the voice that is not the Law, bitter voices, merry voices, voices of common mortals, voices of sages, happy voices, unhappy voices, voices of heavenly beings, dragon voices, yaksha voices, gandharva voices, asura voices, garuda voices, kinnara voices, mahoraga voices, the sound of fire, the sound of water, the sound of wind, voices of hell dwellers, voices of beasts, voices of hungry spirits, monks’ voices, nuns’ voices, voices of voice-hearers, voices of pratyekabuddhas, voices of bodhisattvas and voices of Buddhas. In a word, although the person has not yet gained heavenly ears, with the pure and ordinary ears that he received at birth from his parents he will be able to hear and understand all the voices that exist in the inner and outer parts of the thousand-millionfold world. (LS19, 252–53)

**IKEDA:** This covers all of the Ten Worlds. The world is filled with all kinds of voices, from the groans of beings in the realm of Hell to the compassionate voices of Buddhas leading people to happiness. Those who have gained the “benefit of the ear” can hear all these voices, and clearly distinguish the essence of life that they express. To hear the lion’s roar of the Buddha, the powerful voice that defeats devilish forces, is the supreme happiness.

**ENDO:** In his *Maka Shikan* (Great Concentration and Insight), the Great Teacher T’ien-t’ai of China says regarding the various grades of physicians, “The superior



CORRISTYNDA RICHARDSON

“I always try to see the underlying essence, the invisible roots that lay buried and out of sight,” says President Ikeda.

physician listens to the voice [of the patient], the common physician observes the color, the inferior physician examines the pulse.” He is saying that an outstanding physician can diagnose a person’s illness just by the sound of his voice, even without observing the person’s face or checking physical symptoms.

**IKEDA:** This is from a section of the *Maka Shikan* titled “Observe the Patient.” The Daishonin cites it in his well-known writing on the “six causes of illness” (MW-2 [2nd ed.], 213). Throughout its history, Buddhism has helped people address the four universal sufferings of birth, old age, sickness and death.

Certainly the voice clearly expresses the state or condition of a person’s life. There are warm voices, cold voices, weak voices, spirited voices, voices resonating with profundity, voices ringing with shallowness, voices full of good fortune and benefit, voices reverberating with sincerity and voices revealing duplicity.

If we listen carefully, we will not be deceived. In a sense, the voice expresses even more about a person than what the person says.

**SAITO:** People who excel at giving individual guidance emphasize the importance of careful listening. I think this means, in addition to hearing what the person has to say, compassionately opening one’s ears and one’s heart to the other person’s voice.

**IKEDA:** The “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter says, “Because the faculties of his ears are so keen / he can distinguish and understand all these sounds”



CORBISS OVIEN FRANKEN

**Be a person of fragrant virtue: "The purity of such a person's nose will be such / that throughout this world / he will be able to detect and identify / all manner of odors, fragrant or foul" (LS19, 256).**

(LS19, 255). A teacher of the Law can discern people's states of life from the sounds of their voices.

Keen means sagacious. The first element of the word sagacious (Jpn *somei*) incorporates the character for ear. To have an ear that is acute is to have wisdom. And the second element in the term *somei*, a character meaning "bright," expresses the idea of having eyes that can clearly perceive the reality of things.

As Nichiren Daishonin indicates in the Goshō when he says, "Listen with the ears of Shih K'uang and observe with the eyes of Li Lou" (MW-1, 9),<sup>9</sup> we need to possess sharp ears and clear eyes. We live in an age teeming with information. This letter, which he composed and addressed to a follower named Shiji Shiro just prior to the great persecution of the Izu Exile, can be interpreted as instruction to gather the most accurate information.

It is important to listen. The Chinese character for *holy* or *sacred* incorporates the element for "ear." According to one explanation, the character denotes listening intently to the voice of heaven and praying. The virtue of listening to the voice of heaven, the fundamental voice of the universe, is called sagacity, and one possessing this virtue is called a sage.

Shih K'uang was in fact unable to see. He was a blind musician and a cultural figure. During the Spring and Autumn period (770–403 B.C.E.), when the kingdoms of Chin and Ch'u were at war, Shih K'uang, who served the Chin, discerned the voice of death in the sound of the wind and divined the outcome of the battle, predicting the defeat of Ch'u.

**SAITO:** The ability to recognize the tendency of the times by listening to the voices around us is part of the power gained from purification of the ears.

**IKEDA:** The Daishonin condemned the melancholy drone of the Nembutsu as a death knell for the country

and as beckoning people to take their own lives. [The Daishonin says, "If you chant the Nembutsu a lot, a spirit of self-destruction will arise in your heart" (GZ, 1509).]

It is said that songs follow the times, and the times follow the songs. President Toda used to point out that there was a surge in melancholy music around the time of the Great Kanto Earthquake (in 1923), such as the song that begins, "I am the withered eulalia grass of the dried riverbed...."<sup>10</sup>

**SUDA:** In contrast to this peal of death, *daimoku* is the peal of life. It is the rhythm of hope.

**IKEDA:** When this rhythm of hope enters our ears, the strife-ridden *saha* world becomes the place for us to attain Buddhahood. It becomes a land for attaining the Way through the sense of hearing.

**ENDO:** This suggests that there are other worlds that are not "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of hearing."

**IKEDA:** It seems to me that T'ien-t'ai addresses this in the *Hokke Gengi* (Profound Meaning of the Lotus Sutra), when he says that there are, for example, "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of smell"—places where you can attain the way by means of fragrance.

**SAITO:** Yes, there are "lands of fragrance" where the Buddha's work is carried out by means of scent and teachings consist of fragrances.

**ENDO:** In such a place, I suppose that smell does the Buddha's work, as opposed to the voice doing the Buddha's work!

**SAITO:** Sutras explain that there are also "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of sight," where the teaching consists of lights and colors; "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of touch," where people attain Buddhahood through contact with "heavenly garments"; and "lands for attaining the Way through the sense of taste," where people attain enlightenment through food.

**SUDA:** I imagine that people carrying out Buddhist practice in a "land for attaining the Way through the sense of taste" would all have difficulties in maintaining their weight!

### Letting Others Hear "Singing Voices of Hope"

**IKEDA:** Buddhism is all-encompassing. While recognizing the vast potential inherent to all life, it is also cognizant of the prevalent needs of the world in which we live.

For beings on the earth, the sense of hearing is very important. Of the five sense organs, the ears are the first to

become active at the beginning of our lives and the last to remain active at the end. It is said that a fetus in the mother's womb at about six months has completed the development of its ears and attendant nerves, so that even before the time of birth it already knows the sound of its mother's voice.

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the first Soka Gakkai president, once said: "A child experiences the greatest tranquility while in the mother's womb. If you practice faith at that time [when pregnant], it will bring great fortune to your child." Children in the womb clearly hear the sound of their mothers' voices chanting daimoku. Of course, the unborn child will also hear the sounds of its parents quarreling! It's important to let our children hear the sound of the Mystic Law even before they are born.

And, as I just mentioned, it is said that when we are approaching death, our sense of hearing is the last to go.

**ENDO:** It is certainly true that while we can close our eyes or our mouth voluntarily, our ears are always open.

**IKEDA:** The ears are the "window of life" opening from the small universe of the self onto the greater universe. They are also the "gateway to the spirit" through which direct access to the depths of a person's life may be gained. That is why music has the power to stir deep emotion in people.

**SAITO:** A member of the Soka Gakkai nurses group told me about the experience of a terminal cancer patient, whom I will call Mr. K., who was receiving treatment at the hospital where she worked. Though only in his forties, his condition was deteriorating daily. The nurse told me that she prayed that Mr. K., who was not a member, would lead the best possible existence to the very end of his life; and that he would form a connection with Buddhism in this lifetime.

Having heard that the sense of hearing remains active to the end, she got a tape of Soka Gakkai songs for him as a present. Several days later, Mr. K. died. But she related that his mother told her that just before her son had died he listened to the music with tears in his eyes.

**SUDA:** He must have been very close to unconscious by then.

**SAITO:** But even so, it seems that he could hear the tape. The following day, the nurse received a phone call from Mr. K.'s wife. She told her that she wanted to use the tape that had so moved her husband at his funeral. When the nurse heard this, she recalled your guidance, "It is the heart that moves the heart," She felt confident that Mr. K. and his family had understood her genuine concern.

**IKEDA:** Purifying the heart is the foundation for purifying the six sense organs. It is purification of one's consciousness.

At any rate, since we attain the Way through the sense of hearing, it is vital that we speak, that we use our voices. We need to let people hear voices of kosen-rufu: voices of warm encouragement, voices of justice deftly refuting falsehood, voices of conviction, and joyful voices raised in song. As the Daishonin indicates in urging that we speak out vigorously and wholeheartedly (cf. MW-1, 105), kosen-rufu is a process whereby the single wave of one person's voice expands to produce ten thousand waves.

At the same time, since purifying the sense of hearing is vital, we need to listen attentively to the voices of the people, straining to hear if necessary. If communication is one-sided, then the "sense of hearing" is not at work. In this case, the ears are not purified, but remain clogged.

**ENDO:** There are politicians who cannot hear a thing even when the people are shouting right into their ears!

### **A Person Who Makes Steadfast Effort Has the "Fragrance of Tenacity"**

**SAITO:** With regard to the sense of smell, the Sutra says, for example, "the upholder of the Lotus / by detecting their scent can know all this" (LS19, 257). It explains that practitioners of the Lotus Sutra have the ability to distinguish keenly among all scents.

**SUDA:** It is said that, ordinarily, a human being can distinguish several thousand smells. I understand that a perfume expert can identify as many as ten thousand!

**IKEDA:** The art of fragrance has long played an important



CORBIN NEAL PRESTON

**Find your true voice within: "If this preacher of the Law / wishes to use his wonderful voice / to fill the three thousand worlds / he can do so at will" (LS19, 261).**

role in Japanese culture. People would burn fragrant materials or wood and savor their scents. They would even hold contests in which people would compete to make the best perfume or try to determine from the scent what combination of ingredients had gone into a perfume. In Japanese, the phrase “to smell incense” is also written with characters that literally mean “listening to fragrance.”

**SAITO:** The Lotus Sutra, too, uses the Chinese character for “listen” to indicate the verb to smell.

**IKEDA:** Since the Lotus Sutra is an important cornerstone of Japanese culture, a cultured person in ancient times would naturally have read the sutra repeatedly.

In any event, I think the point here is that each person has a unique fragrance. I’m not talking about perfume or body odor, but a unique fragrance of the heart or fragrance of life. A person who studies, makes effort and strives to grow with single-minded diligence possesses the fragrance of tenacity. Such a person exudes a robust fragrance—like that of a fresh sapling.

On the other hand, people who spend their lives in decadent idleness seem to emit from their entire beings an unpleasant aroma, like that of something rotting. The difference is really striking.

**SUDA:** It is the purification of the sense of smell that enables us to detect this.

### Voices That Invigorate People

**SAITO:** Next we come to the purification of the tongue. This is an area where women doubtless have an edge!

**ENDO:** This is the so-called art of loquaciousness.

**SAITO:** The benefits of the tongue are of two kinds. The first is that whatever a person eats tastes good. The second is the ability to explain Buddhism in such a way as to bring joy to the listener.

**IKEDA:** The first pertains to the mystery of state of life. A person who is healthy and full of vitality will find even simple fare delicious. To a person who is afflicted with grief, however, even the most sumptuous feast will taste like dirt. That’s not to say, mind you, that we should forget about trying to cook nice meals! This merely shows that state of life is a mysterious phenomenon.

Likewise, a person who has purified the sense of sight will find a miracle in even the most mundane scene. And a person who has purified the sense of hearing will hear Mozart in the cacophony of a baby’s cries.

**ENDO:** In viewing your photographs, President Ikeda, I have often found myself astounded that such ordinary scenes could reveal such beauty.

**SUDA:** Wouldn’t it be wonderful to hear symphonic beauty in even the angry accusations of one’s spouse!

**SAITO:** President Toda used to emphasize that having a state of life of absolute happiness means experiencing joy under any circumstances. He would say: “When you achieve absolute happiness, you don’t have any money troubles, and you enjoy good health. Your home is peaceful, your business goes well, your heart is filled with a sense of abundance, and everything you see or hear makes you think, ‘How delightful!’ When the world appears to you in this way, then this world, this strife-ridden saha world, becomes a Buddha land. That is attaining Buddhahood.”<sup>11</sup> He would say that even a quarrel with your spouse, for example, is joyful. And that when you get angry, it is with a feeling of contentment.

**IKEDA:** That description gives me a sense of leisurely looking down on the world from tufts of cotton-like clouds in a brilliant blue sky! To attain such a lofty state of life, we need to wholeheartedly and resolutely exert ourselves in faith with a singleness of purpose like that of a jetliner flying through the sky. That is the teaching of the “Benefits of the Teacher of the Law” chapter.

The “teacher of the Law” is a leader of kosen-rufu, a person who dedicates his or her life to working for peace and human happiness. When we become such a teacher of the Law, we receive the great benefit of absolute happiness.

**ENDO:** Kyoko Terasawa, a group leader in Tokyo’s Taito Ward, is renowned as a champion at promoting subscriptions to the *Seikyo Shimbun* newspaper. The year before last, she earned 1,058 points.<sup>12</sup> And last year she earned 1,612 points. This year, with the target of earning more than a thousand points for the third year running, she is promoting subscriptions even more vigorously than before. Mrs. Terasawa doesn’t have an environment that is particularly conducive to doing so; she is a regular wage-earner who works in a shop in the busy Akihabara area of Tokyo.

**IKEDA:** It is such individuals who sustain the Soka Gakkai. I am profoundly moved by their selfless dedication. They are heroes. They are kings and queens. They deserve everyone’s heartfelt applause and praise. People with strong backgrounds in Buddhist study may be quick to throw out high-sounding words, but they are no match for such members when it comes to practice.

**ENDO:** The eight-story building where Mrs. Terasawa works houses some forty shops and offices. She brightly greets anyone she sees entering or leaving the building, developing friendly relationships with them.

In the process, of course, if there is anything she can do to assist people, for example by helping tidy up, she readily lends a hand. She has tenaciously continued making such efforts to build trust over the years. Many of the people she asks to subscribe to the newspaper do so solely on the basis of her recommendation.

**SUDA:** She must have rock-solid determination to make such steadfast efforts.

**ENDO:** Mrs. Terasawa was raised by her grandfather and has no recollection of her parents. When she was four, she learned that her parents had already died. When she was in the fourth grade, her grandfather died and she was taken in by a nearby family. Unable to receive even the most basic education, her early life was quite difficult, like that of a real-life Oshin.<sup>13</sup>

She went on to work in a variety of jobs—as a maid, in retail, as a waitress. Ten years ago, at the age of fifty-three, she got married. It was then that, at her husband’s introduction, she joined the Soka Gakkai. Meeting her husband and encountering the Mystic Law changed Mrs. Terasawa’s life completely. Up to that time, she had lived a solitary, uneasy existence. But after she started practicing, her worries disappeared, and she began to experience genuine fulfillment—both spiritually and in her day-to-day life.

Her sense of appreciation in developing a “state of life that I could never have imagined” has become the driving force in her practice. And she stood up, determining that she could best contribute to kosen-rufu by promoting subscriptions and expanding the circle of those who understand the Soka Gakkai.

**SAITO:** She certainly could not achieve what she has if she thought of her endeavors as merely means to an end. I wonder if she does something unique to realize such outstanding results.

**ENDO:** She says that once she made this determination, whether sleeping or waking, her thoughts are constantly filled with the *Seikyo Shimbun*. Her sincerity is deeply moving. Mrs. Terasawa carefully cuts out members’ experiences or other sections, like the “Daily Words,” and presents them to people. In the course of reading the paper, she finds herself thinking: “This experience is perfect for that person. I’d really like him to read it.”

She says that she can tell the state of people’s lives just from hearing their voices. For instance, she might think, “This person sounds quite happy, but there is something missing behind that veil of energy.” She is then able to say things that make a difference in the person’s life.

**IKEDA:** This is truly an example of the purification of the sense of hearing. It is the state described by the line of the sutra: “Because the faculties of his ears are so keen / he can distinguish and understand all these sounds” (LS19, 255). This is describing an expert on humanity, a master at dialogue. Also, these are the characteristics of someone who has purified the tongue. The sutra says:

If with these faculties of the tongue he undertakes to expound and preach in the midst of the great assembly, he will produce a deep and wonderful voice capable of penetrating the mind and causing all who hear it to rejoice and delight. (LS19, 260)

Mrs. Terasawa is doubtless reaping the wonderful effects of all her efforts.

### **A Leader Should be Like the Sun**

**SAITO:** The sutra describes the “benefit of the body” as follows: “They will acquire pure bodies, like pure lapis lazuli, such as living beings delight to see” (LS19, 261). In other words, a teacher of the Law acquires a dignified appearance that people are naturally attracted to.

**SUDA:** Pure lapis lazuli is transparent when it has been thoroughly polished. Lapis lazuli, one of the seven kinds of gems,<sup>14</sup> is thought to be beryl or a type of glass.

**IKEDA:** This passage is saying that the person’s life comes to shine like a crystal-clear mirror. Everyone around them feels joyful and refreshed. Such a person, in other words, becomes a sunlike presence.

A leader has to have a bright face and vitality like the rising sun.

**SAITO:** A final “benefit of the body, which is purified” is to discern the true nature of all life in the Ten Worlds as if reflected in a clear mirror.

**IKEDA:** This means the ability to tell someone’s life tendency the moment you meet them. When we live out our life based on the Mystic Law, we can clearly see the state of others’ lives.

Being able to do so is a result of having compassion. We must never be high-handed or arrogant claiming to have the power to see through people. We are all ordinary people. We

are all members of the family of the original Buddha, and the family of the SGI. While we have to see through people with evil intentions, we must also make constant efforts to encourage and protect our fellow members.

## A Relentless Fighting Spirit

**SAITO:** Last, we come to purification of mind. The sutra says that if a person hears just a single verse or phrase, he will understand “infinite and boundless teachings.” Moreover, it says that the person can freely expound the meaning of that one verse or phrase over the course of a month, four months or a year. And that the teaching he expounds “will never be contrary to true reality” (LS19, 263).

**IKEDA:** The content of that person’s speech entirely and perfectly accords with the truth of the universe.

**SAITO:** Yes. The sutra further says: “If they should expound some text of the secular world or speak on matters of government or those relating to wealth and livelihood, they will in all cases conform to the correct Law” (LS19, 263). This is the benefit of purifying the mind.

**SUDA:** It seems to me that this aptly describes your extensive efforts to speak with people and write, President Ikeda.

**IKEDA:** Through purifying the mind, practitioners become wiser. In lifetime after lifetime, they may become great scholars or people of unsurpassed insight.

In short, purifying the six sense organs means transforming one’s entire being into a vehicle of kosen-rufu. It’s not a matter of shrewdness or calculation; when we work selflessly and wholeheartedly for kosen-rufu without begrudging our lives, then our entire being overflows with boundless life force. Wisdom, vitality and compassion all well forth.

Even after people grow old and their eyesight fades, they can still move their hands. So they can write letters. Since they can move their mouths, they can call people on the phone. This is not a matter of pushing oneself unreasonably. The important thing is that our hearts burn with a fighting spirit. Manifesting such faith purifies the six sense organs.

No matter what worries or sufferings we might have, we can change them all into value and benefit. Such great life force is the benefit gained by a teacher of the Law.

In conclusion, those who live out their lives together with the SGI, an organization that is dedicated to actualizing the Buddha’s will and decree, and who single-mindedly work for peace and the happiness of humankind, are on the ultimate path in life.

A person who steadfastly moves forward is certain to win. A person who chants daimoku through everything will absolutely win in the end.

*To be continued*

1. Editor’s note: All quotations from the Lotus Sutra are from: *The Lotus Sutra*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For purposes of convenience, all citations from this work will be given in the text and abbreviated as follows: LS followed by the chapter number and then the page number.

2. February is a traditional month of propagation in the Soka Gakkai. This originated with the February 1952 campaign in Tokyo’s Kamata Chapter, led by President Ikeda, that resulted in an unprecedented number of families joining the Soka Gakkai in a single month. See *The Human Revolution*, vol. 5, “Dashing Forward.”

3. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1981), vol. 1, p. 133.

4. A line from the Japanese poet Bansui Doi’s (1871–1952) poem, “A Star Falls in the Autumn Wind on the Wu-chang Plain,” dedicated to the legendary Chinese minister Chuko Kung-ming (181–234), hero of the epic saga, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

5. LS11, 181.

6. Helen Keller, *Midstream: My Later Life* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1929), p. 49.

7. Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1954), p. 225.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 85.

9. Shih K’uang and Li Lou: Legendary figures in ancient China famed, respectively, for their extraordinary hearing and vision.

10. Lyrics from “Sendo Kouta” (The Ditty of a Boatman), which became popular around the early 1920s.

11. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1984), vol. 4, p. 259.

12. One point equals one subscription to the *Seikyo Shimbun* for one month.

13. Oshin: A Japanese fictional character in a serialized TV drama who experiences an unending series of hardships.

14. Seven kinds of gems: gold, silver, lapis lazuli, giant clam shell, coral, pearl and carnelia

# *The Untold History* OF THE FUJI SCHOOL

## The Origins of the Temple Issue (16)

*This installment has been compiled by the SGI-USA Study Department. The last installment in the June issue examined the significance of the SGI's conferral of the Gohonzon by tracing the Fuji School's history in terms of the transcription of the Gohonzon. This installment examines the priesthood's motivation behind the destruction of the Grand Main Temple and what we can learn from it. This concludes the series.*

### CHAPTER 16

## The Destruction of the Grand Main Temple

### (1) THE GRAND MAIN TEMPLE

In his sermon at Taiseki-ji on April 5, 1998, High Priest Nikken revealed his plan to transfer the Dai-Gohonzon from the Grand Main Temple (Sho-Hondo) to the newly renovated Ho'an-den on the head temple grounds.

After attributing Japan's recent earthquake, volcanic eruption and tsunami to "the great slander of Ikeda's Soka Gakkai," Nikken stated that the SGI has become "the organization with which the great Law of Nichiren Shoshu must not be allowed to have any relationship." He then referred to the Grand Main Temple as "the largest thing to which they [SGI members] were related in the past." The high priest justified his decision by saying, "In order to completely refute the great slander of Ikeda and others, it is now most appropriate to transfer the Dai-Gohonzon out of the Grand Main Temple as quickly as possible."

Toward the end of his sermon, Nikken also stated that he would take "measures appropriate to the current circumstances" about the Grand Main Temple, which he described as "useless ruins of gigantic stature." He also hinted at his plan to build a new hall of worship, which he called "Ho'an-do." The demolition of the Grand Main Temple soon began, despite strong voices of protest from SGI members as well as from architectural and academic

communities around the world. By the end of 1998, the once-majestic structure was leveled.

The Grand Main Temple was built in 1972 to house the Dai-Gohonzon. Its construction was supported by approximately 8 million Soka Gakkai members in Japan and overseas who donated over ¥35.5 billion (approximately \$100 million at the exchange rate of the time). At the time of the temple's completion, Nittatsu Hosoi, the 66th high priest, declared the Grand Main Temple to be "a great edifice that shall be the high sanctuary of the Temple of the True Teaching at the time of kosen-rufu."

On October 11, 1972, when the Dai-Gohonzon was transferred from the Ho'an-den to the Grand Main Temple, Nittatsu further clarified the significance of the new building: "I have decided that from now on and for all eternity, we will worship this Gohonzon of the high sanctuary at this Grand Main Temple and pray for the believers' attainment of Buddhahood in their present forms as well as for the fulfillment of their great desires of the present and future existences, thereby designating [the Grand Main Temple] to be the great edifice in which to pray for world peace."

Nichiren Shoshu's doctrines concerning the lineage and infallibility of the high priest state that the pronouncements of a high priest must be upheld and honored as sacred. Yet

In October 1973, 3,000 SGI-USA (then NSA) members gathered at Taiseki-ji to celebrate the completion of the Grand Main Temple with a spectacular culture festival and general meeting. The structure was the crystallization of believers' faith and sincerity and is no more.



GREGORY NAKASUJI

Nikken's transfer of the Dai-Gohonzon out of the Grand Main Temple clearly contradicts the previous high priest's intentions.

This and the building's subsequent demolition also contradict Nikken's past statements in support of his predecessor. For example, on March 26, 1972, Nikken, who was then Nichiren Shoshu Study Department chief, stated, "Naturally, at the time of kosen-rufu, the Grand Main Temple of Taiseki-ji will become the high sanctuary mandated in 'On the Three Great Secret Laws' and the 'Minobu Transfer Document.'"

Nikken abruptly reversed his position immediately after implementing Operation C. He announced his sudden change of stance in sermons on January 6 and 10, 1991, shortly after the priesthood took the first of its punitive measures against the SGI by dismissing Daisaku Ikeda as chief representative of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations. He indicated that the significance of the building as the high sanctuary at the time of kosen-rufu was not a certainty. In retrospect, it is clear that through this reversal, Nikken was laying the groundwork for his demolition of the Sho-hondo, the Grand Main Temple.

In these January 1991 sermons, Nikken claimed that Ikeda arrogantly overstepped his bounds as a lay believer by referring to the Grand Main Temple as the high sanctuary at its groundbreaking ceremony on October 12, 1968. The high priest claimed that no one in Nichiren Shoshu—not even High Priest Nittatsu—had ever referred to the Grand Main Temple as the high sanctuary mentioned in the Daishonin's "On the Three Great Secret Laws." Nikken asserted that Ikeda dared to define the significance of the Grand Main Temple

without the high priest's instruction. He attributed the conflict between the priesthood and the SGI to Ikeda's alleged arrogance and subsequent failure to issue an apology.

But when the text of Nikken's two sermons appeared in the February 1991 issue of the *Dai-Nichiren*, the priesthood's study journal, there were some significant revisions. Added to the texts of his sermons was the statement: "I wish to amend my remarks because I discovered some statements made by High Priest Nittatsu prior to 1968 regarding the significance of the Grand Main Temple, which make reference to 'On the Three Great Secret Laws' and the 'Minobu Transfer Document.'" This correction effectively nullified Nikken's accusations.

Although the SGI, in an open letter to the priesthood, pointed to the lack of grounds for his accusations, Nikken never responded to the SGI or amended his position regarding the significance of the Grand Main Temple. It is now clear that as early as the beginning of 1991, Nikken was attempting to lay a doctrinal basis for the demolition of the Grand Main Temple. (For more information about Nikken's 1991 sermons and the SGI's letter of inquiry, see *Issues Between the Nichiren Shoshu Priesthood and the Soka Gakkai*, vol. 4, published by the Soka Gakkai International in 1992.)

Nikken's removal of the Dai-Gohonzon from the Grand Main Temple and his subsequent demolition of the building have important implications. First, Nikken's sudden decision is symbolic of his autocratic rule within Nichiren Shoshu. Although some reformist priests had warned of the possibility of the Dai-Gohonzon's removal from the Grand Main Temple as early as 1997, the high priest's announcement

## ON THE GRAND MAIN TEMPLE:

*Comments, past and present*

## 1) NITTATSU (66TH HIGH PRIEST):

“When the Daishonin was alive, because everyone who came to Minobu was a believer, everyone there was able to directly worship the Dai-Gohonzon. Therefore, it is proper that today the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary be enshrined in the Grand Main Temple so that people may come there to worship it.” (From the first meeting of the Grand Main Temple Construction Committee, February 16, 1965)

“I, Nittatsu, proclaim that the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of true Buddhism will be enshrined in this Grand Main Temple in the hope that all people of the Latter Day of the Law will believe in it and there find the source of attaining Buddhahood in their present form.” (“Admonition,” September 12, 1965)

“President Ikeda is a great leader of propagation for the achievement of kosen-rufu. Nichiren Daishonin willed that his disciples ‘establish the high sanctuary of the Temple of the True Teaching at [the foot of] Mount Fuji.’ Following this directive of the Daishonin, President Ikeda has pledged to construct the Grand Main Temple where the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary is to be enshrined.” (From a speech at the Soka Gakkai Headquarters leaders meeting, October 17, 1965)

“We shall soon conduct at the head temple of Nichiren Shoshu the groundbreaking ceremony to commence the construction of the Grand Main Temple, which by all rights should be called the actual high sanctuary of true Buddhism.” (From *The Daibyakurenge*, the Soka Gakkai study journal, January 1967)

“The time has now arrived, and with Mr. Daisaku Ikeda, head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations, as the initiator, construction of the Grand Main Temple, which is in fact the high sanctuary of true Buddhism, is now under way.” (From Nittatsu’s words at the annual scroll-airing ceremony at the head temple, April 6, 1969)

and subsequent transfer of the Dai-Gohonzon came as a surprise to most of the more than 700 chief priests of Nichiren Shoshu temples, including those assigned to lodging temples on the head temple grounds.

The notice outlining the high priest’s decision was transmitted by facsimile to branch temples on the night of April 5. It states that the high priest, “reflecting upon the recent great slander committed by Daisaku Ikeda’s Soka Gakkai, gave the profound guidance that it would be in accord with the true intent of the founder Nichiren Daishonin to transfer the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of True Buddhism back to the Ho’an-den from the Grand Main Temple, which was built at the request of Daisaku Ikeda.”

The removal of the Dai-Gohonzon was planned and implemented by Nikken’s close associates and Taisei-ji’s Department of Internal Affairs. Compared to the openness and grandeur of the transfer ceremony held in 1972 upon completion of the Grand Main Temple, the 1998 transfer was conducted by a small group of priests at dusk. At a service held the next day, the high priest explained that the plan had been carried out abruptly due to “circumstances that allowed no prior discussion.” He apologetically added that the details of the decision would be published in the April 10 issue of *The Daibyakuho*, the organ of Nichiren Shoshu’s lay organization. One can easily speculate that the suddenness of the move, and its communication only after the fact, was intended to forestall any opposition from within the ranks of the priesthood or the Hokkeko laity. Once the Dai-Gohonzon was moved, opposing the decision was an exercise in futility. Such tactics underscore the autocratic nature of Nikken’s leadership.

The second important implication of Nikken’s removal of the Dai-Gohonzon and his destruction of the Grand Main Temple is the contradiction of his predecessor’s instruction. According to the current priesthood, all successive high priests have received a mysterious transmission from the Daishonin, so each high priest’s instructions must be revered and followed as if they were the instructions of the Daishonin himself. Nikken’s contradiction of his predecessor’s teaching regarding the Grand Main Temple is of note since it indicates the priesthood’s current dogma regarding the high priest’s infallibility is arbitrary. It is cited only where it is convenient in silencing criticism toward the current high priest. Nikken claims to have received the lineage of the high priest position from the 66th high priest Nittatsu. Yet, by destroying the Grand Main Temple, Nikken clearly went against his predecessor’s instructions. On April 28, 1972, Nittatsu issued an official statement titled “Admonition” to clarify the significance of the Grand Main Temple. It reads: “The Grand Main Temple is the actual high sanctuary of this time.... In other words, the Grand Main Temple is the supreme edifice that shall be the high sanctuary of the Temple of the True Teaching at the time of kosen-rufu.” In his sermon on April 5, 1998, Nikken claimed that the Soka Gakkai “applied pressure” on the priesthood to define the Grand Main Temple as the high sanctuary at the time of its construction. Yet, Nittatsu himself, in the face of similar allegations by anti-Gakkai factions within Nichiren Shoshu, clearly stated: “My true intent does not lie outside my admonitions and sermons.” The demolition of the Grand Main Temple, in this sense, was the demolition of the

“Needless to say, the Grand Main Temple is the sacred hall, where the Dai-Gohonzon of the high sanctuary of true Buddhism will be enshrined, and which will be attended by Bonten, Taishaku and the other gods.... The inscription [on the cornerstone] reads: ‘This Grand Main Temple is the actual great high sanctuary of the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, in which the Dai-Gohonzon bestowed upon all humanity shall be enshrined.’ I must say that this is profoundly significant.” (From the cornerstone-laying ceremony, October 12, 1969)

“At this time, I, Nittatsu, hereby clarify the significance of the Grand Main Temple for everyone within and outside the Nichiren Shoshu community, thereby leaving proof of its significance for future generations. The Grand Main Temple is the actual high sanctuary of true Buddhism of this time, which holds the significance described in the ‘Minobu Transfer Document’ and ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws.’ In other words, the Grand Main Temple is the supreme edifice that shall be the high sanctuary of the Temple of the True Teaching at the time of kosen-rufu.” (“Admonition,” April 28, 1972)

## 2) NIKKEN THEN (BEFORE 1991):

“Some 680 years after the founder Nichiren Daishonin fulfilled the purpose of his advent, the present high priest Nittatsu, and Mr. Ikeda, head of all Nichiren Shoshu lay organizations and leader in the protection of Buddhism, are for the first time about to shed great light upon the Daishonin’s mandate to achieve the kosen-rufu of the True Law and build the actual high sanctuary.” (From *Dai-Nichiren*, November 1967)

“Naturally, at the time of kosen-rufu the Grand Main Temple of Taiseki-ji will become the high sanctuary mandated in ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws’ and the ‘Minobu Transfer Document.’” (From chief priests guidance meeting, March 26, 1972)

“I think the expression in the admonition [Nittatsu’s ‘Admonition’ of April 28, 1972], [the Grand Main temple] which holds the significance described in the ‘Minobu Transfer Document’ and ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws’ is very important. We can interpret this part of the admonition as indicating [High Priest Nittatsu’s] desire that the ‘Grand Main Temple shall be the actual high sanctuary of the Temple of the

priesthood’s own doctrine concerning the authority of the high priest.

Furthermore, Nikken’s decision also constituted a gross deception of the laity. Previously, he had made many statements in support of Nittatsu’s view on the Grand Main Temple. For example, in March 1972, as Nichiren Shoshu Study Department chief, Nikken stated: “Naturally, at the time of kosen-rufu, the Grand Main Temple of Taiseki-ji will become the high sanctuary mandated in ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws’ and the ‘Minobu Transfer Document.’” In the postscript of *On the High Sanctuary* published in December 1974, Nikken states: “It is clear from the admonition of April 28, 1972, that the current Grand Main Temple will become the main hall of the Temple of the True Teaching at that time.” Furthermore, in October 1982, commemorating the tenth anniversary of the completion of the Grand Main Temple, Nikken states as high priest: “The Grand Main Temple is a fundamental place to observe Buddhist teachings and precepts where the people of the world repent and eradicate their sins. It is an edifice that is most suited for the conditions of the present time of world kosen-rufu both in its name and substance.” If Nikken was pressured, as he claims, into adopting the position of Nittatsu and the Soka Gakkai, then, as Study Department chief of the priesthood, he was knowingly misleading eight million believers in supporting their donation of millions of dollars to a construction project whose fundamental significance he did not believe in.

In his April 1998 sermon, Nikken explained that he decided to remove the Dai-Gohonzon “in order to completely refute the grave slanders of

Ikeda and others.” Thus Nichiren Shoshu under Nikken has set forth a doctrinal basis for the destruction of the Grand Main Temple. Because it was built by the Soka Gakkai and Ikeda, whom the priesthood has deemed to be slanderers, it should be torn down. Nikken seems somehow to be implying that the tearing down of temples donated to his school by those he now deems slanderers is an act of refuting slander. Yet many temples in Nichiren Shoshu were once temples of other Buddhists sects. They were built and donated by people with erroneous views of Buddhism. Yet they have never been torn down. In fact, neither Nichiren Daishonin, nor any high priest of the Fuji School before Nikken had ever demolished a building on the grounds that it had been built or donated by slanderers. There is absolutely no doctrinal or historical precedent for such an action.

In addition, if the Grand Main Temple must be destroyed simply because it was built at the request of the SGI president and by the donations of Soka Gakkai members, logic and faithfulness to principle would demand that Nichiren Shoshu also vacate, if not demolish, all other buildings and properties donated by the Gakkai. Approximately eighty percent of Taiseki-ji’s current real estate holdings as well as a number of large structures and numerous lodging temples on the head temple grounds were donated by the Gakkai. Since Ikeda was inaugurated as the third president in 1960, the Soka Gakkai built and donated 320 temples to the priesthood. In addition, the Gakkai has funded the complete or partial renovation of many existing temples. While Nikken claims that the Grand Main Temple had to be destroyed because the SGI has become “the organization with which the great Law of

True Teaching at the time of kosen-rufu. This is so indicated in the admonition.”(At the Fuji Seminary, June 18, 1974)

“It is clear from the admonition of April 28, 1972, that the current Grand Main Temple will become the main hall of the Temple of the True Teaching at that time. We have to say that the high sanctuary mandated by Nichiren Daishonin will thus come to fruition.” (“Postscript” to the second edition of *On the High Sanctuary*, December 1974)

“It is indeed presumptuous of me to try to fathom the high priest’s thoughts, but when I think about why he has decided on building the Grand Main Temple, which will become the main hall of the Temple of the True Teaching at the time of kosen-rufu, it is because the number of Nichiren Shoshu believers amounts to ten million and several hundred thousand.” (“Postscript” to the second edition of *On the High Sanctuary*, December 1974)

### 3) NIKKEN NOW (AFTER 1991):

“Do you believe that the Grand Main Temple truly embodies the high sanctuary mandated in ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws’ and the ‘Minobu Transfer Document’? .... It seems no one thinks so. Can I take it to mean that none of you thinks the Grand Main Temple itself embodies the mandate of Nichiren Daishonin? [The audience replies: ‘Yes.’] You agree with me.” (From the sermon to priests on January 6, 1991)

“Therefore, what High Priest Nittatsu defined and determined was that, in short, the Grand Main Temple does not embody the high sanctuary mandated in ‘On the Three Great Secret Laws’ and the ‘Minobu Transfer Document’ per se.” (From the sermon on January 10, 1991)

“In order to completely refute the great slander of Ikeda and others, it is now most appropriate to transfer the Dai-Gohonzon out of the Grand Main Temple as quickly as possible.” (From the sermon on April 5, 1998)

In the same speech on April 5, 1998, Nikken referred to the Grand Main Temple as “a useless ruin of gigantic stature” and stated that he would take “measures appropriate to the current circumstances,” indicating his plan to demolish the structure.

Nichiren Shoshu must not be allowed to have any relationship,” he clearly fails to apply the same logic or principle to the priesthood’s other buildings and properties donated by the Soka Gakkai. This lack of consistency and self-contradiction can be best understood when we view Nikken’s justification of the destruction as the elimination of slander as a pretext. The purpose of this pretext was to rationalize an act that was actually arbitrary and motivated by emotional resentment.

## (2) THE MEANING OF THE HIGH SANCTUARY

The demolition of the Grand Main Temple, in an ironic reversal of Nikken’s intent to “refute the slander of Ikeda and others,” actually awakened many SGI members to the essential meaning of the high sanctuary in the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

The high sanctuary is one of the Three Great Secret Laws; that is, one of three core elements of Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism. They are the object of devotion of true Buddhism (i.e., the Gohonzon), the invocation of true Buddhism (Nam-myoho-renge-kyo) and the high sanctuary of true Buddhism. These are called “secret” because they had been never revealed before the Daishonin. Needless to say, the Daishonin’s intent was to make those “secrets” to happiness and peace known to all people. While it is easily understandable that both the Gohonzon and Nam-myoho-renge-kyo are viewed as essential to the Daishonin’s Buddhism, the importance of the high sanctuary, which is really a building, needs some explanation.

The term high sanctuary is an interpretation of a Chinese term which, more literally, means “precept platform” or “ordination platform.” This originally meant a place

of religious practice where people accept various ascetic precepts—rules of practice and discipline—which they agree to uphold to achieve their salvation. In the Daishonin’s Buddhism, however, there is no need to keep such austere precepts, because practicing with sincere faith in the Gohonzon is alone equivalent to accepting all the Buddhist precepts. All we need to attain enlightenment is our faith and practice.

For this reason, wherever people practice the Daishonin’s Buddhism with faith in the Gohonzon is generally regarded as the high sanctuary of true Buddhism. But the Daishonin also talks of the high sanctuary with more specificity: “When the sovereign of the nation establishes this Law, the high sanctuary of the Temple of the True Teaching shall be built at Mount Fuji” (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 1600). So, while the high sanctuary is generally where people practice Buddhism with faith, he also envisioned a very specific place where those committed to propagating the Mystic Law would gather.

It must be noted, however, that the Daishonin does not simply ask his future disciples to build a hall of worship. He makes it clear that the high sanctuary be built “when the sovereign of the nation establishes this Law.” In other words, the high sanctuary must be built only as a result of the wide spread of his teaching. “The sovereign of the nation” in our present democratic age essentially means the people. Put simply, the substance of the high sanctuary cannot be limited to a physical structure; it essentially lies in the propagation of the Daishonin’s Buddhism. The true meaning of the high sanctuary is to be found in our faith as well as in our efforts to spread the Daishonin’s Buddhism. In this sense, it may be said that three most important

elements in the Daishonin's Buddhism (i.e., "the Three Great Secret Laws") are the Gohonzon, Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and the wide spread of Buddhism through individual believers' sincere faith. The Daishonin established the first two himself, and he entrusted his future disciples to accomplish the last, which gives meaning to the first two.

Nikken's demolition of the Grand Main Temple, in a sense, helped SGI members remind themselves of the real significance of the high sanctuary and reaffirm their commitment to propagate the Daishonin's Buddhism. As long as SGI members continue to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism, the Three Great Secret Laws remain intact, even though the Grand Main Temple no longer stands. However, if efforts for propagation cease, then the Daishonin's Buddhism becomes incomplete, no matter how magnificent an edifice may be built.

Thus, Nikken's destruction of the Grand Main Temple, has encouraged SGI members to internalize the meaning of the high sanctuary. And to fully realize the inner implications and significance of any event or phenomena is the proper spirit of Buddhism.

### **(3) EPILOGUE: LEARNING FROM THE PAST**

This present series traced the history of the Fuji School, a denomination of Nichiren Buddhism, founded by Nikko at Taiseki-ji toward the end of the thirteenth century. A review of the school's history helps to shed light on the current condition of Nichiren Shoshu, and the current priesthood's assertions—especially, its dogma concerning the high priest's infallibility.

Like any other religious movement, there are light and dark sides in the Fuji School's seven-century history. The school has seen some exemplary priests who earnestly strove to extol, protect and spread Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism. For example, Nikko, the school's founder, upheld his mentor's intent against the corruption and distortions perpetrated by the five senior priests whom the Daishonin designated to help Nikko lead the Buddhist order after his death. By taking an uncompromising stance toward the five senior priests, Nikko proved the validity of the transmission of Buddhism that he had received from the Daishonin. The legitimacy of Nikko, in other words, rested entirely upon his faith and understanding, which he demonstrated in his practice and efforts of propagation not only when the Daishonin was alive, but also after his death. The transmission of Buddhism from the Daishonin to Nikko, in this sense, serves as a prototype

for present practitioners as to how they may inherit the Daishonin's Buddhism and practice it.

Another exemplary priest in the history of the Fuji School is Nichikan, the twenty-sixth high priest. Like Nikko, Nichikan proved himself as the Daishonin's true disciple by challenging the erroneous teachings that his predecessors had brought into the school. Just as Nikko strictly pointed out the errors of the five senior priests in worshipping Shakyamuni's statue as an object of devotion, Nichikan refuted the same errors committed by his predecessors and reestablished the Gohonzon as the correct and only object of devotion in the Daishonin's Buddhism. Without Nikko and Nichikan, it would be hard to imagine that anyone today could have a correct understanding or practice of the Daishonin's Buddhism. Their legacies serve as a guide to our practice.

Whereas some high priests at Taiseki-ji, such as Nikko and Nichikan, exemplified the Daishonin's Buddhism through their actions and intent, their number is unfortunately few. As we have learned from the Fuji School's recorded history, many high priests distorted the Daishonin's Buddhism while asserting the authority they had inherited. Their actions betrayed the Daishonin's intent. For example, in the fourteenth century, Taiseki-ji was divided into two camps that for more than 70 years fought bitterly over claims to the head temple property. During the seventeenth century, several high priests accepted and promoted erroneous traditions from other Nichiren schools, such as the worship of Shakyamuni's statue. As recently as the twentieth century, high-ranking priests contended for the seat of high priest through a fraudulent election process. As this series has highlighted using the school's own records, such examples of corruption and error among leading priests abound in the history of the Fuji School. But what value is there in reviewing these errors of the past?

First, through understanding the history of the Daishonin's Buddhism, we can view the present condition of the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood in context. The current problems within the priesthood that have resulted in its attacks on the SGI did not begin suddenly 1990 when Nikken hatched his plan to do away with the lay organization. Nikken was able to do what he did because conditions that were conducive to his plan already existed within the priesthood. The majority of priests held that they were inherently superior to lay believers, with many feeling threatened by and jealous toward the large and growing lay Buddhist movement. Viewing the high priest as an absolute authority was a quite familiar concept. For many priests, direct control over believers took priority over the spread of the Daishonin's

Buddhism. Temple services and rituals, such as conducting funerals and the sale of memorial tablets, had long been viewed primarily as sources of income. These conditions made the idea of protecting their authority, and the enterprise that stemmed from that authority, a cause that most priests could support. The perceived threat to that authority in the minds of many priests was a lay organization that was enthusiastically supported and appreciated by the believers. Put another way, the unprecedented development of the SGI stemming from the pure faith and effort of the laity juxtaposed with the priesthood's seven-century-old pattern of authoritarianism and corruption made the current situation a historical certainty. If it weren't Nikken, someone else within the priesthood would have taken advantage of tensions that arose between the two groups. By understanding more about the school's history, we can gain insight into the causes of the current problems, causes that are rooted centuries in the past. With knowledge of the past, we can gain a broader perspective on the present—the reason why things are the way they are, and insight as to what should be done.

A second benefit of learning about the Fuji School's past is our realization that at the core of the priesthood's corruption lie human weaknesses we are all familiar with: arrogance, jealousy and greed. Cloistered behind the veil of clerical authority for centuries, these delusions became deeply rooted in the collective psyche of the priesthood. This is not a unique situation in the history of religion. Any religious movement can become corrupt and degenerate when its leaders cease to be diligent in combating those human frailties within themselves. In order to spread the Daishonin's Buddhism and ensure its transmission to future generations, therefore, we must not repeat the errors of the priesthood. We are not immune to the potential for rigid authoritarianism and dogmatism simply because ours is a lay movement. With an understanding of the past, we can better guide ourselves and our Buddhist movement into the future.

Finally, by tracking the tortuous path of the Fuji School over the past seven centuries, we can better grasp the significance of the SGI and its mission in a broad historical and global context. Following the deaths of Nikko and Nichimoku in 1333, the true vigor and spirit of the Daishonin's Buddhism became dormant for centuries, with a few sporadic periods of revival, such as that of Nichikan's tenure in the early eighteenth century. The Daishonin's teaching gave rise to many different schools of so-called Nichiren Buddhism. But their tenets and practices stray significantly from the Daishonin's original intent. As we have examined in this series, the same is true of the Fuji School. When Makiguchi and Toda founded the Soka Gakkai in

1930, the Daishonin's Buddhism had been existing in form but not in substance; that is, its practitioners had not been dedicated to its spread for the happiness of all people. And until Soka Gakkai members brought the Daishonin's Buddhism to the rest of the world, the Daishonin's promise for the global spread of his teaching had rung hollow. It was the Soka Gakkai, in fact, that revived the Daishonin's Buddhism after almost seven centuries of dormancy. Through the efforts of SGI members, the Daishonin's teaching has taken on concrete meaning in the lives of more than ten million people throughout the world.

It is no coincidence that this unprecedented spread of the Daishonin's Buddhism by lay believers rattled the priesthood's authoritarianism at its core, bringing about a religious oppression of a unprecedented magnitude. Our understanding of what has transpired in the years since the time of Nichiren Daishonin, Nikko and Nichimoku, makes us aware that we are practicing the Daishonin's Buddhism at a most important juncture in its history. That is, our understanding and practice of the Daishonin's teaching will determine its further development or decline from this point on.

We stand at the threshold of an entirely new stage of development. In light of this realization, the so-called temple issue no longer pertains merely to the priesthood's misconduct. It is really about the unprecedented renewal of Nichiren Buddhism—the true renewal of Buddhism and humanism—into the new millennium. As such the term “temple issue” is a bit limiting.

We can make sense of history when we understand how it affects us today, when we understand that the past is part of our present lives. It may be difficult to say what effect the event that took place at Taiseki-ji in 1482, for example, has on our practice today. In this year, the ninth high priest, Nichiu, transferred the office of high priest to a 13-year old boy. Following the appointment, Nikkyo, one of the young high priest's strong supporters, began a series of writings extolling the lineage and authority of the high priest. Nikkyo may be considered one of the key authors of the dogma of the high priest's absolute authority.

Needless to say, understanding the history of the Fuji School does not provide us with everything we need to grasp the circumstances surrounding the issues between the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood and the Soka Gakkai. More than ever, we must return to a thorough study of the basics of the Daishonin's Buddhism and deepen our understanding of what it means to practice his teaching today. Knowing our past, however, helps us realize the importance of taking such action. □

*The end of the series*

# *Recollections*

of My Meetings with Leading World Figures

*Raisa Gorbachev*  
Former Soviet First Lady

By *Daisaku Ikeda*

Whenever I think of Mikhail and Raisa Gorbachev, I am reminded of a story. “Once upon a time, there was a golden castle on top of a glass mountain. A prince and his princess lived there...”

On one occasion, I shared this story with the Gorbachevs. “The prince and the princess looked down and saw the suffering of the people below and they decided to come to their aid. They came out of their golden castle and down their glass mountain into the midst of society’s tempests, into the midst of the people.”

The couple smiled, modestly. Mr. Gorbachev said simply, “We are grateful for those words from a true friend.”

The Gorbachevs could easily have lived their lives in peace and comfort, protected behind the castle walls of state power. When Mr. Gorbachev became the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1985, he had a position of absolute power within the Soviet Union. Who would ever have imagined what he would do with that power? Who would have thought that a man in that position would take action to limit his sweeping authority and open the gateway to democracy and liberty for the Russian people? Especially considering the potential danger that he could be washed away once he opened those floodgates? But Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev turned their backs on safety and security.

Yet, how was that brave decision rewarded?

“President Ikeda,” Mr. Gorbachev once confessed to me, “for several years it was as if my wife and I were walking through a jungle. We have made our way through a forest of doubt, misunderstanding and prejudice.” Both Mr. and Mrs. Gorbachev look a person right in the eye. Mr. Gorbachev’s eyes are always sparkling with energy, and Mrs. Gorbachev’s gaze is earnestly intent. The fate of being revolutionaries was harsher than anything they could have imagined. Together they have walked the dangerous path on the edge between life and death.

While they had the overwhelming support of many citizens, there were conservative forces that sought

desperately to protect their own vested interests as well as individuals intent on exploiting the upheaval to advance personal ambitions. No matter how tired the Gorbachevs were, they could not afford to rest. They had a responsibility to the people. If they collapsed, it would only give their enemies the advantage and a chance to strike. Every time we met, I said to them, “You must survive. Your survival will be your triumph.”

When Mr. Gorbachev stepped down from his presidency, most people treated him very badly. Few showed gratitude for his tremendous achievement in bringing about an end to the Cold War. Lies ran rampant. Attempts were even made to eradicate *perestroika*.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Gorbachev recalls, “In the past I used to think that reality and history were firm, unchanging things that could not be rebutted. Now I know, however, that historians only look at the aspects of history that they choose to, and even simple facts can be twisted out of shape.”

The hardest thing for them to bear was the betrayal of friends and comrades. The very essence of *perestroika*, after all, was trust in others. But no matter how people betray or insult the truly great, they cannot destroy their dignity. In fact, it is only the reputations of the traitors and cowards that are sullied.

Mr. Gorbachev cared solely for the people. What appalling injustice was meted out to this decent man of character and integrity! Even when he was driven from the presidency, he said, “What happens to me is not important. If people want to behead me, crucify me,

burn me at the stake—that is of little matter. The only thing that matters is whether our reform movement succeeds. That’s all that counts.” Immediately after he stepped down, I wrote to him. “Look to the future. Your life lies before you. Let us work together for the people of the twenty-first and twenty-second centuries!”

Mrs. Gorbachev is an extremely level-headed, self-assured woman who possesses keen intelligence along with an open heart and endearing warmth. The good are always persecuted. How heavy the spiritual burden of standing at her husband’s side and protecting him must have been! How many sleepless nights did she endure? Mrs. Gorbachev said to our interpreter, “Endurance. Life is a series of endurance tests.”

MRS. Gorbachev’s father was a railway worker. She was born in a country town in western Siberia in 1932. The family traveled all over the Soviet Union, moving again and again as her father was transferred from place to place. They rode in freight cars or trolleys. Her maternal grandfather was a farmer, but he was arrested without warning during Stalin’s purges and “disappeared”—executed by a firing squad. Her grandmother was labeled “the wife of an enemy of the people,” and was shunned by her fellow villagers. Eventually, she died of grief and starvation.

From the age of eight, Mrs. Gorbachev’s mother worked day in and day out plowing the fields and spinning thread. She didn’t have the opportunity to learn to read or

write until after she married. That experience made her all the more determined that her children would not endure the tragedy of a lack of education. Mrs. Gorbachev was a good student, winning a gold medal for excellence in all her subjects and entering the philosophy department of Moscow State University. It was there, at that "citadel of learning," that she met Mr. Gorbachev, who was studying in the law department. They married while still students.

They returned to Stavropol, Mr. Gorbachev's hometown, and lived there for twenty-three years. Mrs. Gorbachev worked as a teacher. As a practical sociologist, she also visited all the surrounding villages and acquainted herself with farmers' lives. Donning high rubber boots, she trudged through the mud, going from house to house. She found women who were straining under the burden of heavy labor. She found women who had lost their husbands and loved ones in the war or the purges, women deprived of the chance to marry because so many men had been killed. She encountered chronic shortages of goods and food. She experienced the yawning gap between the picture the government presented and the reality of people's lives.

If *perestroika* can be described as a revolution of everyday common sense, it may be because Mrs. Gorbachev knew the everyday reality of the Russian people far better than any official of the central government. Mr. Gorbachev has said to me, "*Perestroika* is an alliance of government and culture." The Gorbachevs are the perfect symbol of that alliance, he the statesman and she the woman of culture.

What a wonderful relationship the Gorbachevs share! I remember when my wife and I welcomed them to Soka University's Man'yo House [in April 1993]. During our conversation, I remarked admiringly on Mrs. Gorbachev's discernment. She replied with a smile and a teasing glance at her husband, "Why, thank you. Let's just say that if I know anything, I owe it all to him." Without a moment's hesitation, Mr. Gorbachev replied, "You don't need to say that. Everyone already knows!" As we all laughed heartily, he added, "But the truth is, I owe as much to her as she does to me." Their mutual affection filled the room like a gentle spring breeze.

Mrs. Gorbachev became ill when they were placed under house arrest during the attempted coup d'état in August 1991. They were prepared for the worst—that their entire family might be killed. For two years after that Mrs. Gorbachev suffered poor health.

"When a wife isn't well," I said, "the husband suffers, too. He wants to suffer in her place."

"That's so true," replied Mr. Gorbachev.

Mrs. Gorbachev added, "Nothing makes me happier than to have my husband healthy and well."

The first time I met Mr. Gorbachev at the Kremlin in 1990, there was much speculation at home and abroad whether he would visit Japan. I opened the subject by remarking humorously that he and Mrs. Gorbachev had been unable to visit Japan on their honeymoon. "Why don't the two of you come to Japan in spring, when the cherry blossoms are in flower, or in the autumn, to see the maple leaves?" Mr. Gorbachev said that he would like to do so, and he made his first

visit to Japan in the spring of the following year, in April 1991, where he was warmly welcomed by the Japanese people and government alike. After stepping down from the presidency, he continued to visit Japan each spring, in both 1992 and 1993, with Mrs. Gorbachev, just in time to see the cherry blossoms in April.

LAST year [1997], they visited in autumn and saw the beautiful fall leaves in the Kansai region. Though his trip to the United States had to be canceled for scheduling reasons, he was determined to come to Japan. "I must go," he said. "My friends are important to me." And he kept his promise to me. We were reunited at the Osaka Dome, where the World Peace Youth Culture Festival was being held. I asked him if he was tired by the journey. "Of course not!" the sixty-six-year-old Mr. Gorbachev replied. "I'm still in my prime!" He has an invincible spirit, always fighting fiercely to achieve his high ideals, no matter what a buffeting he may take.

As Mrs. Gorbachev watched the young people performing at the Dome, she kept saying "How beautiful! Just beautiful!" Though they were no longer in positions of political power, she and her husband shone. That's the mark of the great. They do not shine because of their positions; no, they make their positions shine with their personal brilliance.

Six years had passed since Mr. Gorbachev stepped down from the presidency. Mrs. Gorbachev said, "We have survived. We have done our best. My husband experienced much suffering and betrayal, but he has continued to fight for the



Daisaku Ikeda describes Raisa Gorbachev as a “self-assured” woman “with an open heart and endearing warmth.” Mrs. Gorbachev, encouraging youth, states: “The person who triumphs in the end is the person who gets up after each fall and pushes onward.”

sake of humankind. I, who have been by his side throughout, can testify that he is not fighting for his own interests. And those who betrayed him have, in the end, reaped the results of their acts.”

As long as there is life, there is hope. Mrs. Gorbachev’s speech at the Kansai Soka Junior and Senior High Schools was very moving. She spoke to the students slowly, giving weight and substance to each word. “You will experience all kinds of hurts in life. Not all of

them will heal. Nor can you always realize all of your dreams. But there is something that you can achieve. There is a dream that you can make a reality.

“Therefore, the person who triumphs in the end is the person who gets up after each fall and pushes onward. The ability to keep on fighting is a matter of the spirit. Death does not come to the person who is tired; it comes to the person who has stopped moving forward.”

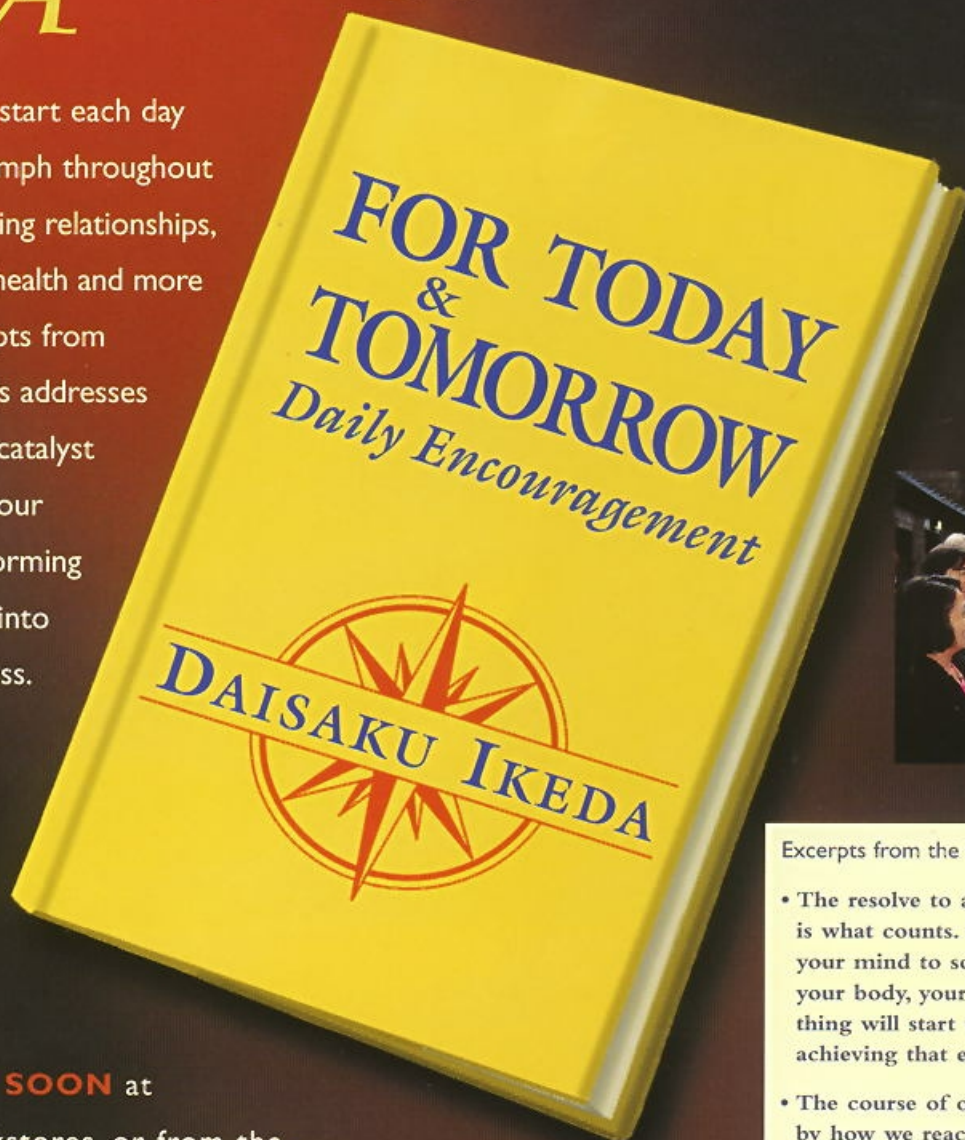
In her words, I heard a paean to a victor in life. The title of Mrs. Gorbachev’s autobiography is *I Hope*. □

1. *perestroika*: The restructuring or reform of the Soviet economic and political system, first proposed at the 26th Party Congress in 1979 and actively promoted under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985.

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## The Seattle Culture Center

"Now, Seattle has increased its fortune! Here, where peace and freedom shall endure!" These were the words of SGI President Ikeda on the opening of the Seattle Culture Center, September 29, 1991, as he spoke to SGI-USA members in the Northwest via a live telecast while visiting Los Angeles. The culture center had been designed and built as a center of activities for members in five states. The huge meeting hall can seat 1,051 people. The opening ceremonies continued on October 5 and 6 with a series of large gatherings.