

# living BUDDHISM

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*Living Buddhism* is the monthly journal of the SGHUSA, 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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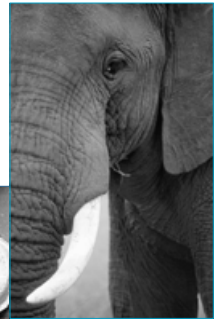
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# FROM OUR READERS

## Residential Schools

In the August issue, we ran an article on Constance Brissenden and Larry Loyie of Canada. In it there is mention of “residential schools” which we mistakenly identified as public schools. Larry, of Cree First Nations descent, went to one of these schools. To clarify what they actually were, Larry has written the following:

It is crucial to clarify what “residential schools” were since both U.S. and Canadian native Indians went to them. They are not public schools, but a horrifying part of native history. Native children were forced to attend residential schools, which were also known as mission schools, Indian schools or Indian industrial schools.

Children were taken from their families to live in these schools, some as young as 3. Even if these schools were near their families, children were not allowed to visit. Some went home for the summer holidays, others were kept year-round in the schools. If families resisted, the parents could be (and sometimes were) put in jail.

The children in these schools received an inferior education, inferior food and harsh and cruel treatment, with instances of sexual, emotional and physical abuse. They were not allowed to speak their native languages and received severe punishment. The students at my school, for example, spent the majority of their time working for the school, digging potatoes, doing laundry, stacking



wood, cleaning, etc.

The idea, both in the U.S. and Canada, was to strip the native person of their culture and assimilate them into European culture. The results have been devastating, a cultural genocide. There was a total breakdown of native family structure resulting in alcoholism, drug-addiction and dysfunctional families. Native people say it will take seven generations to heal these wounds.

I spoke before a United Nations tribunal last year that met here in Vancouver to investigate residential school abuse. The tribunal concluded that residential school abuse was widespread and the direct cause of many of the problems facing native people today.

Some who attended these schools say “it wasn’t that bad” in their schools. To this, I ask: “Did you get the level and quality of education that those in public schools received? Did you go on to advanced education? Can you read and write as well as others? Did your education result in a good career?” To these questions, few native people can answer “yes.”

Thanks for listening,

Larry Loyie  
Vancouver, Canada

## Lotus Sutra

The June issue of *Living Buddhism* was one of the best issues I’ve read in a long time. I especially appreciated the article by Dr. David Chappell on “The Global Significance of the Lotus Sutra.” This is exactly the type of article that I would like to see more of in SGI-USA publications. Chappell expresses an informed opinion and demonstrates that broadmindedness, tolerance and inclusiveness are necessary when addressing matters of Buddhist doctrine. To me, the fact that you chose to print this article suggests that the SGI-USA is emerging from the long, dark night of doctrinaire rigidity that (in my opinion) we unfortunately inherited from Nichiren Shoshu.

Lisa Jones  
West Hollywood, California

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

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# FREEING MOTHER EARTH

grew up in the countryside, swimming and fishing in a clear stream, running with my friends in a grassy field and hillside near my home. Having been surrounded by nature every day of my childhood, I developed a love for it. Today the river in which I swam and fished is too contaminated for either. The field and hillside are now a development surrounded by busy highways. It's clear to me how increasingly important it is to protect our environment.

To make this awareness part of our everyday consciousness, it takes more than newspaper recycling or carpooling, although the impact of such efforts should not be discounted. Responsible treatment of our environment arises from a sound grasp of our relationship with nature. When we root our actions in a deep awareness of our profound relationship with nature, we are motivated to act toward our environment with a sense of appreciation and responsibility.

In his 1997 peace proposal, President Ikeda wrote:

It hardly need be said that environmental problems are not simply political, economic or technological issues that can be eliminated or alleviated by merely establishing wise methods of using valuable resources. I believe a way will be found out of our difficulties if we probe much deeper, questioning and redesigning the relationships of human beings to each other, of human beings to the environment, and of human beings to society as a whole. Now is the time to transform our civilization into one based on values premised on the principle of human dignity in the true sense. It is time for a shift in the fundamental perspective of each and every person in the world.

Neither Shakyamuni nor Nichiren Daishonin talked specifically about protecting the natural environment as a whole. This may well be because they lived in times and places when human populations and technology did not yet pose a significant threat in terms of pollution or depletion of the natural realm. Yet Shakyamuni taught against needlessly killing. And the Daishonin clearly and repeatedly links the condition of the land—which supports the ecosystem and human society—to the inner condition of human beings. In this regard, he wrote: “If the minds of the people are impure, their land is also impure, but if their minds are pure, so is their land. There are not two lands, pure or impure in themselves. The difference lies solely in the good or evil of our minds” (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 4).

More specifically, the Daishonin attributed disruption in the environment, in the external world, to a lack of order in the internal world of human beings. This internal disorder is characterized by the three poisons of greed, anger and foolishness, also expressed as greed, hatred and delusion.

In modern terms, it is easy to see that human greed leads to ever-increasing consumption, placing a strain on natural resources and creating large amounts of pollution. Hatred obviously leads to war, which disrupts not only society but the ecological sphere. The more destructive the weapons used, the worse the environmental impact—the extreme being nuclear weapons capable of creating a nuclear winter that can end life as we know it on the planet. Delusion or foolishness is the function of the mind that prevents us from seeing important connections or the true nature of things—specifically, the oneness or inseparability of ourselves and our environment, our connection to others, and the interdependence of all things.

Certainly, environmental movements around the world are protesting pollution and unrestrained consumption, and advocating regulation and wise use of resources. While these activities are important, they are insufficient on their own for changing the problems that threaten this Earth. Without addressing the fundamental inner cause that exists in the condition of the human heart and mind, no lasting changes will be forthcoming. What is needed is for many people on a broad scale to elevate and refresh their perspective on life and the environment.

To this end, President Ikeda has proposed that the SGI sponsor and support the establishment of an Earth Charter to be developed on a grass-roots level and submitted to the United Nations General Assembly for adop-

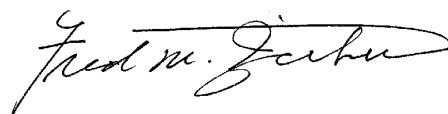
tion. This issue of *Living Buddhism* features an up-to-date draft of the Earth Charter and related articles, including SGI President Ikeda’s foreword to a pamphlet published by the Boston Research Center titled *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*. In re-reading the charter, I strongly sense that it is more than just a proposal to stop pollution and abuse of the environment—it represents a new and fresh perspective on human life and the environment that arises from the growing awareness of ordinary people worldwide.

At a symposium on the Earth Charter held at the SGI-USA’s Florida Nature and Culture Center last October, Dr. Maximo Kalaw, executive director of the Earth Council Institute, stated:

What separates the Earth Charter from so many other legal documents that pass through the United Nations is its popular support. . . . It is the people’s document. Through the voice of the people, it will have power in the United Nations. Further, its principles must be included in corporate policies, community welfare, church movements and taught to youth. . . . The process has to be an act of love—as your chorus sang, “heart to heart”—or it will not succeed.

The key to protecting the environment, as well as to securing peace and establishing a humanistic society, lies in cherishing the human heart. And the principle of oneness of life and the environment assures us that protecting people—nurturing them by inspiring wisdom and self-control—equals protecting the environment. Enabling the human revolution of just a single person will have a profound effect on the future of humanity. This is the purpose of Buddhist dialogue and propagation.

At the same time, protecting the environment amounts to protecting people. In studying his peace proposals and other writings, it is clear that no one is more determined to accomplish these goals than President Ikeda. We can be certain that to grasp and share this determination ourselves will be a great source of victory and joy.



Fred M. Zaitso  
SGI-USA General Director

# 'Gift of an Unlined Robe'

## (1)

The following excerpts from Nichiren Daishonin's "Gift of an Unlined Robe" and accompanying commentary are from SGI President Ikeda's book, *Learning From the Goshō: The Eternal Teachings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 7.

### Background

Nichiren Daishonin wrote the letter "Gift of an Unlined Robe" in August 1275 at Mount Minobu when he was 53. The letter's title was probably added later because the Daishonin explains the blessings one receives from making offerings to a practitioner of the Lotus Sutra.

Little is known about the recipient's identity. Since the Daishonin writes: "even though we have not yet met" (*Goshō Zenshu*, p.1515), the recipient had never personally encountered the Daishonin when he penned this letter. Also in the postscript of the letter, the Daishonin writes: "You should

I have received the unlined robe that you graciously sent. In the past, in a country called Kirokoku, old people were abandoned. In Japan, today, the Lotus Sutra's votary is cast away.

Since the country's appearance, there have been seven reigns of heavenly gods and five generations of earthly gods. It was then that the 100 reigns of human sovereign began. There have been ninety reigns since Emperor Jimmu. And already sixty reigns have passed since Buddhism was introduced to the country during the reign of Emperor Kimmei [the twenty-ninth] more than 700 years ago.

During this time, there have been countless parent-murderers, enemies of the emperor, mountain bandits and pirates. But I have never heard of someone who was hated as much as I, Nichiren, on account of the Lotus Sutra. Some have been hated by the ruler but not by the people, or have been hated by priests but not by lay people, or have been hated by men but not by women, or have been hated by the ignorant but not by the wise.

But I am hated by the people even more than by the ruler, by laymen and laywomen even more than by monks and nuns, by the wise even more than by the ignorant, and by the good even more than by the wicked. My case is thus entirely without precedent. Nor is it likely that anyone in later ages will receive such treatment. As a result, during the more than twenty years from when I was 32 [when he established his teaching] until now, at 54, I have been driven out of temples, I have been expelled from my place of residence, my parents and relatives have been harassed, I have been attacked at night, I have encountered battles, I have been vilified countless times, I have been struck and injured, my disciples have been killed, I have nearly been beheaded, and twice been sent into exile. (*Goshō Zenshu*, p. 1514)

always meet with the wife of Toshiro and read this letter together" (GZ, p. 1515). The Daishonin writes similarly to Nichigen-nyo, the wife of Shijo Kingo, "I hope you will read this letter over and over again together with Toshiro's wife" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 2 [2nd ed.], p. 194). Judging from those passages, "Gift of an Unlined Robe" was most likely addressed to a woman and her husband who were on friendly terms with Shijo Kingo's family in Kamakura, the seat of the shogunate government.

At the beginning of the letter, the Daishonin acknowledges his receipt of an unlined robe from the couple. He then explains that because he is devoted to spreading the Lotus Sutra and thereby actualizing the Buddha's words, he has been hated and abused by those ignorant of Buddhism and has undergone government

The Goshō,<sup>1</sup> the collected writings of Nichiren Daishonin, elucidates the means for all people to attain enlightenment. It is the eternal teaching. The Goshō is a scripture of boundless hope. As long as we continue to study the Goshō and put its teachings into practice, we definitely will never become deadlocked.

Some Goshō, of course, are very doctrinal and complex. But we do not necessarily have to understand all of the Daishonin's writings. The important thing is to have a keen desire to read the Goshō and to expose our lives, even for just a short time each day, to Nichiren Daishonin's spirit.

Having such a seeking mind enables us to securely anchor our lives to the orbit of true happiness, to the path of attaining Buddhahood in this lifetime. And it becomes the engine for advancing kosen-rufu.

*I have received the unlined robe  
that you graciously sent.*

This letter is dated a little more than a year after the Daishonin retired to Mount Minobu. He had received a gift of a robe from a couple, followers of his whom he had not yet met. An unlined robe is a light garment suitable for use in hot weather.

The couple must have been concerned about the difficulty of the Daishonin's life in the mountains. In their gift, we can sense a real human tenderness. Theirs was an offering made with sincerity.

The Daishonin may have used the brief interval before the couple's messenger set out on his return journey to take up his brush and compose a letter of thanks. This is the letter.

While the names of the husband and wife who received this letter are not known, it is surmised that they may have been relations of the Nanjo family, or followers living in Kamakura. Since they had not yet met the Daishonin directly, they probably were not central figures among his followers. From the contents of the letter, however, it is apparent that they were carrying through with steadfast faith.

The nameless people count most. The essence of Buddhism shines in their down-to-earth efforts to make faith manifest in daily life.

The Daishonin replied to the sincerity of this couple with his own sincerity. This letter abundantly conveys his spirit in this regard. Let us always bear this spirit in mind.

The letter is pervaded with the compassion of the Daishonin, who assures them that their sincerity is definitely known to all Buddhas, and that they are certain to attain Buddhahood. Their offering was a robe and yet more than just a robe; in the gift, the Daishonin perceived the heart and very life of his followers.

I know of no other religious figure who wrote such considerate letters of appreciation in response to each offering received. Nearly all of the Daishonin's personal letters to his followers were written in thanks for offerings.

persecution as foretold by the sutra. "If Nichiren had not appeared in the country of Japan, these golden words of the Buddha would have been in vain," the Daishonin declares (GZ, p. 1514). The Daishonin spread the Lotus Sutra just as it urges future practitioners to do, and, as a result, he experienced the hardships also predicted in the sutra, thus proving its validity.

Viewed from this perspective, the gift of an unlined robe for the Daishonin is an offering made to a votary of the Lotus Sutra and thus to the sutra itself and all Buddhas awakened to its truth. The Daishonin, therefore, praises the couple's sincerity and reassures them of their enlightenment. He concludes his letter by saying: "In this life, your sincere offering becomes a prayer for the fulfillment of your every desire and a treasure. At the time of your deaths it...will usher you into the pure land of Eagle Peak" (GZ, p. 1515).

The Daishonin replied from his heart to others' hearts. He replied to sincerity with great sincerity — and with lightning speed. This was also the spirit of Josei Toda, the second Soka Gakkai president. The Soka Gakkai has developed to such an extent because we have maintained this spirit to this day.

Followers reading the Daishonin's letters must have been deeply moved by his warmth. More than a few continued to advance with the Daishonin despite great persecution. That was because of the heart-to-heart bonds that existed between him and each of his followers.

It is the same in the SGI. The SGI is strong not because of its organization but because we are creating invisible bonds of the heart.

### *A Great Spiritual Revolution*

**I**n the past, in a country called Kirokoku, old people were abandoned. In Japan, today, the Lotus Sutra's votary is cast away.

**S**ince the country's appearance, there have been seven reigns of heavenly gods and five generations of earthly gods. It was then that the 100 reigns of human sovereign began. There have been ninety reigns since Emperor Jimmu. And already sixty reigns have passed since Buddhism was introduced to the country during the reign of Emperor Kimmei [the twenty-ninth] more than 700 years ago.

**D**uring this time, there have been countless parent-murderers, enemies of the emperor, mountain bandits and pirates. But I have never heard of someone who was hated as much as I, Nichiren, on account of the Lotus Sutra. Some have been hated by the ruler but not by the people, or have been hated by priests but not by lay people, or have been hated by men but not by women, or have been hated by the ignorant but not by the wise.

**B**ut I am hated by the people even more than by the ruler, by laymen and laywomen even more than by monks and nuns, by the wise even more than by the ignorant, and by the good even more than by the wicked. My case is thus entirely without precedent. Nor is it likely that anyone in later ages will receive such treatment.

In Kirokoku the elderly were discarded to reduce the number of mouths to feed. Buddhist scriptures speak of lands in which it was customary for the elderly to be treated poorly. One sutra relates an episode where a kingdom puts an end to this cruel custom. A minister, in violation of the law of the land, does not turn out his aged father but secretly maintains him. Later, the kingdom is visited by a crisis and no one knows what to do. The land is saved from calamity by the wisdom of the aged father who had been in hiding. Thereupon the ruler changes the laws and makes it so that the elderly are respected.

Nichiren Daishonin says that just as this ancient country had discarded its wise people, Japan has thrown away the votary of the Lotus Sutra. No country is more foolish than one that discards its people of wisdom, who can save it from disaster.

The death in prison of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the Soka Gakkai's founding president, amounted to wartime Japan's having "thrown away the Lotus Sutra's votary." Japan, therefore, was headed for ruin.

As the Daishonin says in this writing, no one has been as hated as he on account of the Lotus Sutra. Although he was fighting for the people's happiness, he was hated even by the people. This might seem unreasonable, but such is the lot of all those who seek to open a new path forward.

"If the Mystic Law is correct," President Toda was once asked, "then why is it so difficult to spread?" He explained:

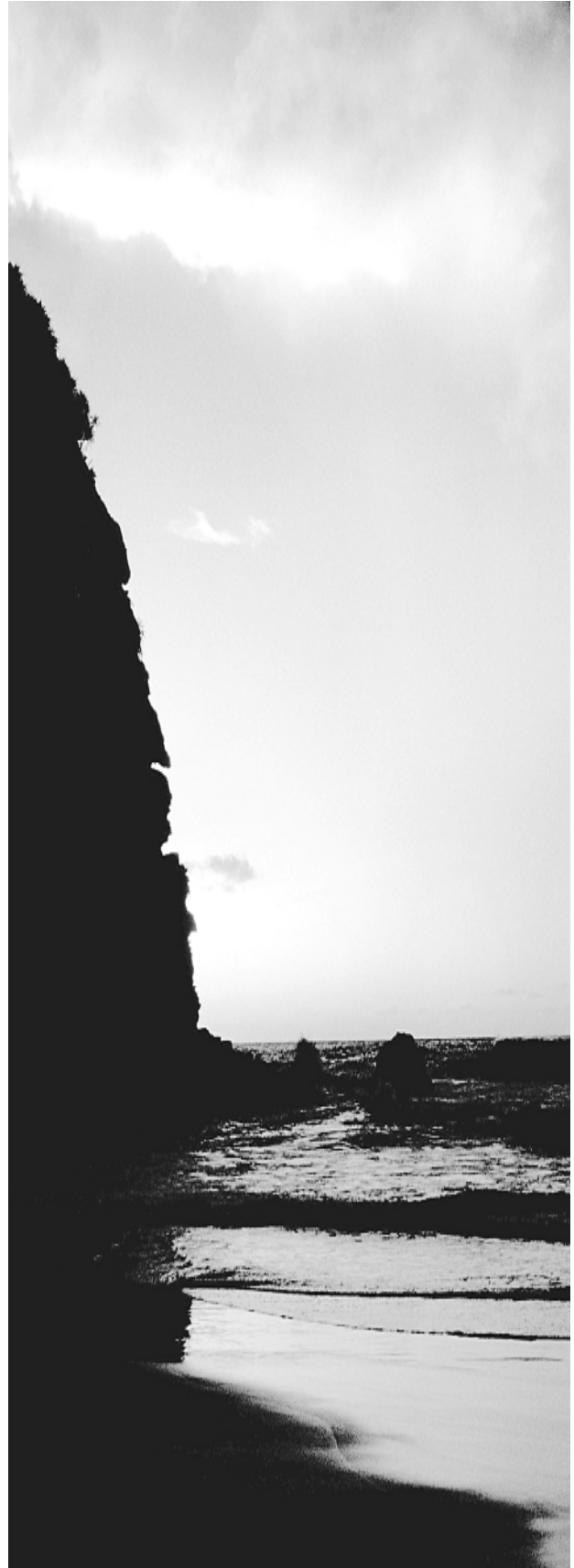
Precisely because it is correct, people have a hard time accepting it. For example, it's correct for children to be dutiful toward their parents. But are you truly so considerate of your parents? It's something in which people rarely succeed. We may not necessarily study hard even though we know that it's important. And people who are broke may go out and squander their paychecks on alcohol even though they know it's the wrong thing to do. Similarly, Nichiren Daishonin teaches that the more correct a teaching, the more enemies it will have.

Not only do people fail to do what is correct, they tend to react emotionally and negatively toward a person of justice. This is human nature.

In particular, arrogant authorities cannot bear to have anyone stand up to them and speak out for justice. That's because they regard themselves as superior to everyone. This is an unchanging principle.

**A**s a result, during the more than twenty years from when I was 32 [when he established his teaching] until now, at 54, I have been driven out of temples, I have been expelled from my place of residence, my parents and relatives have been harassed, I have been attacked at night, I have encountered battles, I have been vilified countless times, I have been struck and injured, my disciples have been killed, I have nearly been beheaded, and twice been sent into exile.

"During these more than twenty years, I have never known even an hour or a moment of peace," the



Daishonin says. He lived this way for us. How merciful! His was a great struggle for spiritual revolution more intense than any battle.

From the time the Daishonin established his teaching at 32, great persecutions rained down upon him. Still, he never retreated a single step.

To elaborate on the persecutions that the Daishonin touches on in this writing, which represent only a portion of the difficulties he underwent: He was driven away from Seicho-ji [the temple where he had received his initial training as a priest, and where he proclaimed the establishment of his teaching]; he was chased away from his birthplace of Awa; his parents and relatives were made to suffer greatly; he was attacked at night while dwelling in a hermitage; he was attacked at Komatsubara; groundless rumors about him were spread; and he was the target of countless insults.

In the Komatsubara Persecution, the Daishonin's left arm was broken and he received a sword wound to his forehead. Also, his disciples were killed. When Hei no Saemon came to arrest him, the Daishonin was struck by Sho-bo (also called Shofu-bo) with a sutra scroll, and in the Tatsunokuchi Persecution he was nearly beheaded. In addition, he was twice exiled, to Izu and to Sado Island.

Yet the Daishonin continued to stand up bravely. "Still I am not discouraged" (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 1, p. 166), he says. "I rejoiced, [having] long expected it to come to this" (MW-1, 175). "It is all just as I expected" (MW-1, 36).

This was all for the people—he underwent everything on our behalf. He sought nothing for himself. Had he desired to lead a peaceful and tranquil life, he could certainly have done so. And he plainly understood that once he stood up he would encounter great persecution. Nevertheless, the Daishonin dared to stand up.

In this letter, where he lists persecutions he had undergone, there is not the least note of bitterness or complaint. Rather, the Daishonin took tremendous pride in having undergone great persecution. In this, we can sense the heartbeat of the indomitable lion king.

We are the Daishonin's disciples. We carry on his great struggle. This is the greatest possible honor. Compared with the great persecutions the Daishonin underwent, to be called a few names hardly amounts to anything.

President Toda wrote of the period during World War II when the militarists were bent on ruthlessly sup-

pressing all dissenting voices:

The surprise and confusion of believers and the perplexity of those affiliated with the head temple were such that it was comical to hear and embarrassing to imagine. President Makiguchi, myself and all the members with us were prohibited from making pilgrimages to the head temple, and far and wide we were vilified as enemies of the nation. Such absurdity, while a reflection of the conditions of the times, was even laughable.

And those put in prison were also pathetic. Some saw their businesses collapse. And their families were hounded by debt collectors or simply unable to provide for themselves for want of a livelihood. The families they left behind were, just as much as the prisoners, at a loss for what to do.

Consequently, the families abandoned faith or began to doubt. This was because they lacked confidence and had only a dim grasp of the Daishonin's teachings. And one by one, those who were imprisoned abandoned their faith, too. They were spineless people. They lacked courage and had weak faith. This was the pitiful plight of those who failed to recognize the Daishonin as the original Buddha.

Even amid such circumstances, Mr. Toda felt deep appreciation toward his mentor, President Makiguchi, to whom in a memorial he would later say, "In your vast and boundless compassion, you allowed me to come with you even to prison." This eloquently sums up their solemn, magnificent relationship as mentor and disciple.

As expressed in even this short Goshō, the Daishonin was at once dauntlessly strong toward arrogant authorities and infinitely kind toward people of sincerity. These are both manifestations of his compassion. This sums up Nichiren Daishonin's sublime humanism.

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1. Goshō: The term Goshō can be used in either the singular or the plural.



# THE EARTH CHARTER—

## CAN WE FREE MOTHER EARTH?

That we can  
destroy the  
planet doesn't  
seem to be in  
question. The  
question in  
many people's  
minds is when.

When the United Nations was created in 1945, the health of the environment was not one of its chief concerns. But since 1972 and the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the environment has emerged as a very big concern.

Since the Stockholm meeting, many groups and coalitions around the world have made valuable contributions toward the development of an Earth Charter, an expression of principles and values needed to help us sustain human life on this planet. But it has been difficult to achieve consensus. After governments failed to reach agreement on a charter at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, the Earth Charter movement picked up steam

when two international NGOs (non-governmental organizations affiliated with the UN)—the Earth Council and Green Cross International—with the support of the Dutch government, joined forces with other groups. Their efforts led to two years of consultation worldwide among international organizations, and in 1997 the formation of an Earth Charter Commission, composed of 23 individuals from every continent. The commission has proposed an Earth Charter Benchmark Draft that it plans to submit to the United Nations General Assembly in 2000.

In his 1997 peace proposal, SGI President Daisaku Ikeda proposed "a grass-roots endeavor that lays down a new set of principles, what can be called an 'Earth



Charter,' that will provide a clear vision for the third millennium." He also proposed that the SGI devote itself to an Earth Charter centering on such organizations as the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century (BRC). In February 1997, Professor Steven Rockefeller, then teaching at Middlebury College in Vermont, presented the Earth Charter Benchmark Draft from the Earth Charter Commission during a BRC conference on "Religion and Ecology". In the Spring, SGI-USA decided to become involved, holding its first Earth Charter meeting in August 1997, at the Florida Nature and Culture Center during a Culture Department conference.

Rockefeller, who is coordinating the drafting of the charter explains:

"The Earth Charter initiative reflects the conviction that a radical change in humanity's attitudes and values is essential

to achieve social, economic, and ecological well-being in the twenty-first century. The Earth Charter project is part of an international movement to clarify humanity's shared values and to develop a new global ethics, ensuring effective human cooperation in an interdependent world."<sup>1</sup>

The SGI-USA has been an ardent supporter of the Earth Charter movement. "I believe that holding dialogues on the Earth Charter is one of the most important contributions our members can make to society," said Al Albergate, SGI-USA Director of Community Relations and our representative on the Earth Charter USA Network. "That's because the Earth Charter reflects the Buddhist view of life and deals with issues affecting everybody, such as peace, ecology, economics, human rights, poverty, justice, equality, diversity, education and democracy. It presents a vision of the world I would like to live in."

To educate people about the Earth Charter and provide input to the international drafting committee, the SGI-USA has held more meetings than any other organization in the United States: twenty-seven meetings or consultations from August 1997 through July 1999, involv-

ing close to 1400 people across the continental US. As a result of these gatherings, the suggestions and comments of hundreds of individuals have been forwarded to the drafting committee for their consideration. The Earth Charter is still in draft form as it circulates throughout the world. The objective of the Earth Charter USA Network is to gain as much exposure as possible for the document through Earth Day, April 2000.

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1. "The Earth Charter An Overview," *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter*, 1997, published by Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, p. 17.

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The following articles include a foreword by the SGI president from *Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter* and "The Earth Charter: A Nichiren Buddhist View" by Yoichi Kawada. Also included is the latest draft of the charter as of April 1999: Be nice to Mother Earth, she's the only one we have!

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# REEXAMINING OUR APPROACH TO THE ENVIRONMENT

*The following article was written by SGI President Daisaku Ikeda as the foreword for Buddhist Perspectives on the Earth Charter, published by the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century, November 1997.*

Since the shocking report *The Limits to Growth* was published [1972] by The Club of Rome,<sup>1</sup> people's interest in environmental issues has continued to increase. However, the magnitude of environmental destruction that has expanded on a global scale today still surpasses efforts to respond to the crisis, starting with the United Nations conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm in 1972.

The threat posed by environmental destruction may not be as obvious as that posed by nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. And yet, in terms of the urgency of the crisis confronting humanity, I would contend that the environment cannot be accorded any lesser prior-



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ity. It is an extremely serious threat, with potentially fatal results to human dignity and the natural environment. We indeed face the dire prospect of "sickness unto death"<sup>2</sup> if we continue to stand by idly.

Underlying the contemporary situation is a civilization that, in several centuries since the industrial revolution, has stimulated and encouraged the limitless expansion of the human appetite for consumption. We have seen the relentless pursuit of the values of afflu-

ence, convenience, comfort, and efficiency during this time. I believe that the first step toward rectifying this state of things requires a fundamental reexamination of the views of and approach to nature, the human being, and the world that until now, sustained modern material civilization. These are the core values that have at once enabled the giant strides of science and technology while at the same time unleashing an infinitude of human desires.

It is important that this process of reflection be conducted in such a way as to bring forth the light of wisdom from each of the cultural and spiritual traditions that human beings have given rise to on earth. For it is from these various sources

of wisdom that we draw forth the direction and energy to transform the course of contemporary civilization and lay the foundations for a true global civilization.

In April, 1996, in a statement issued prior to Earth Day, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) warned that the global environment is in crisis, and that unless there is a major change in direction, there will be little meaning in celebrating Earth Day. There have been numerous statistics released that support this grim assessment, and it is becoming increasingly clear that the global environmental crisis cannot be resolved by the mere continuation of the means and measures that have been used to date. In this respect, we are beset with the overwhelming sense that without a major change in direction, a fundamental reassessment and restructuring of the modes and meaning of civilization itself, we will be unable to avoid a truly catastrophic outcome.

Needless to say, the global environmental crisis is not confined to the political, economic, or scientific and technological dimensions, involving only the wise and appro-



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appropriate allocation and utilization of resources and wealth. It is imperative that we probe such core issues as the relationship between humans and nature, humans and society, as well as between humans and humans, which includes how we perceive nature, our system of values that prescribe our civilization. Humanity is being urged to transform civilization so that it would establish dignity of life in the true sense of the word at the very basis of every possible system of values. I cannot help feeling that a fundamental change in each of our outlooks is being called for at this moment.

It is hoped that the Earth Charter, which is being drafted and moved toward adoption, will provide a

shared ethical basis, common norms of human behavior, that will guide people's efforts to break out of the present crisis. As one who has continued to ponder and work toward the resolution of these problems, I would like to suggest that Eastern thought, in particular Buddhism, is rich in ideas that can provide a philosophical basis for the formulation of such norms.

Central to Buddhist thinking is the concept of "dependent origination," which describes the coexistence and interdependence of humanity, the natural world and indeed the cosmos. This theory posits a symbiotic order in which the microcosm of the individual is unified with the macrocosm of the universe as a single living entity. As such, it overturns the mechanistic understanding of the universe that underlies modern scientific thinking and which positions humans as separate and isolated from the rest of existence. It is, rather, an organic view of the universe. What I wish to stress in particular is that in the Buddhist view, this cosmic interdependence is not static, but is filled with the creative dynamism of life.

In the Buddhist scriptures we find

the following passage that describes this dynamism: “without life, there is no environment; and life is created and supported by its environment.” “Life” (Jp *shoho*) here means the subject or self which carries on its life activities; “environment” (Jp *eho*) the world or environment that surrounds that self. The important point here is the close interrelation between the two, as the self and the environment are two integral expressions of the same ultimate reality or true entity of life; this is not confined to a static relationship of inseparability. Hence, the first and the latter phrases of this expression are not simply placed in a parallel; nor can their order be inverted. The oneness of life and its environment means that even though life is shaped by the environment, and the influence of the environment on life must be reckoned with, it is life, in particular human life, that is the transforming protagonist without which the environment could not exist. The role of the human will is thus central to this dynamic interrelationship.

In recent years, the idea of coexistence, or symbiosis, has gained considerable currency. It is my contention that “symbiosis” in the true

sense is to be found in the delicate and exquisite balance between a strong and responsible will to transformation and a warm and loving embrace of the environment. True symbiosis is found in the dynamic interpenetration of these two aspects.

It is hard to overstate the significance of the Earth Charter, which is being undertaken through the united efforts of concerned people throughout the world from all national and cultural backgrounds. The noble motives and efforts towards drafting and adopting this “people’s treaty” indeed merit our approbation as an important challenge in human history.

I offer my heartfelt prayers for the rewarding and successful civil society consultations involved in the drafting process. For it is by bringing together the wisdom and courage of all people on Earth toward a Charter that truly represents the general will of humankind that we will move from an era of sounding warnings, to one of action based on solidarity. It is the solidarity of humanity united in a common struggle that will bring forth a third millennium that shines with the light of hope. As one who shares

the aspirations and dreams of this undertaking, I wish to express my sincere respect for all whose efforts and involvement have brought this project to its present state of fruition.

I take this opportunity to reiterate my heartfelt appreciation and gratitude to all those involved in this undertaking and pledge myself to continue my own efforts, as one Buddhist, toward the creative resolution of the issues that have inspired it.

—*Daisaku Ikeda*

*Founder, Boston Research Center,  
and President, Soka Gakkai  
International*

1. The Club of Rome: A research center and think tank founded in 1968, comprising scientists, economists and businessmen, and former and current heads of state from five continents who believe that the future of humankind is not pre-determined and that each individual can contribute to the improvement of world societies.
2. “Sickness Unto Death”: From the title of a book by Danish theologian and existentialist philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55).



## THE EARTH CHARTER

Benchmark Draft II,  
April 1999  
Abbreviated Version

### PREAMBLE:

In our diverse yet increasingly interdependent world, it is imperative that we, the people of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations. We are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny.

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The well-being of people and the biosphere depends upon preserving clean air, pure waters, fertile soils, and a rich variety of plants, animals and ecosystems. The global environment with its finite resources is a primary common concern of all humanity. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

The Earth community stands at a defining moment. With science and technology have come great benefits and also great harm. The dominant patterns of production and con-

# The Earth Charter: A Nichiren Buddhist View

By Yoichi Kawada

*Yoichi Kawada has been director of the Institute of Oriental Philosophy in Tokyo, Japan, since 1988. Trained as a physician, Dr. Kawada has written widely on Buddhism and medical science. His recent research, published in the Journal of Oriental Studies, has been on "Buddhism and Bioethics in Present-day Medicine" and "The Era of the Environment and Buddhism." The following article appeared in Soka Gakkai no mezasu mono [What the Soka Gakkai is Aiming Toward], Tokyo: Daisanbunmei-Sha, 1998, pp. 95-116.*

The thirteenth-century Japanese priest Nichiren (1222–82) established a unique interpretation of Buddhism based on the Mahayana tradition, especially the teaching of T'ien-t'ai (538–97). Nichiren's goal was to rescue people from their suffering and to promote both individual happiness and the prosperity of society as a whole. His philosophy is best represented by the "Rissho Ankoku Ron" (On Securing the Peace of the Land Through the Propagation of True Buddhism), his major treatise, presented to the country's ruling authorities in 1260. In this work, Nichiren maintains that by establishing and spreading the correct teaching of Buddhism it becomes possible to create a Buddha Land and a Treasure Land. Put simply, the Buddha Land means a peaceful world of humanity, while the Treasure Land is synonymous with a wholesome, well-balanced ecosystem.

From the standpoint of Nichiren Buddhism, I believe it is possible to

define the Earth Charter as a set of basic principles and behavioral guidelines necessary for the realization of *rissho ankoku* (world peace and human security founded in the establishment and propagation of the true Law) in our time. With that assumption, I would like to comment first on the guiding principles and then on the preamble and concluding paragraphs of the draft charter.

### Guiding Principles of Action

In examining the principles of action, I will approach my discussion in two parts: The first relates to the Treasure Land and the second to the Buddha Land.

#### 1. Treasure Land—Symbiosis With the Earth's Ecosystem

The Buddhist concept expressed by the term *Treasure Land* relates directly to the harmony between

sumption are altering climate, degrading the environment, depleting resources, and causing a massive extinction of species. A dramatic rise in population has increased the pressures on ecological systems and has overburdened social systems. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, corruption, crime and violence, and armed conflict deepen the world's suffering. Fundamental changes in our attitudes, values, and ways of living are necessary.

The choice is ours: to care for Earth and one another or to participate in the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life.

As a global civilization comes into being, we can choose to build a truly democratic world, securing the rule of law and the human rights of all women, men, and children. We can respect the integrity of different cultures. We can treat Earth with respect, rejecting the idea that nature is merely a collection of resources to be used. We can realize that our social, economic, environmental, and spiritual problems are interconnected and cooperate in developing integrated strategies to address them. We can resolve to balance and harmonize individual interests with the common good, freedom with responsibility, diversity with unity, short term objectives with long term goals, economic progress with the flourishing of ecological systems.



Kirk Condules

"The expression 'enlightenment of plants' refers to the Buddhist principle that insentient beings, too, can attain Buddhahood."

human beings and the Earth's ecological system, which is the basic premise of a healthy environment. In Nichiren Buddhism, we also encounter such concepts as "insentient beings and sentient beings," "the enlightenment of plants," and "oneness of life and its environment," all derived from the worldview known as dependent origination or dependent causation.

Generally, sentient and insentient beings are distinguished according to whether they have emotions and consciousness. Plants and inorganic matter such as rock are insentient beings, while humans and animals are sentient beings. The expression "enlightenment of plants" refers to the Buddhist principle that insentient beings, too, can attain Buddhahood. However, sentient and insentient beings are part of a single continuum, and as such are indivisible. In modern biology, this particular distinction is not necessarily meaningful.

In Indian Buddhism, only human beings, by virtue of their wisdom, are believed to be capable of attaining enlightenment and the Buddha nature is reserved exclusively for sen-

tient beings. In China and Japan, on the other hand, grass and trees and other nonliving entities such as mountains and rivers can potentially become enlightened. The East Asian view of nature thus recognizes the sanctity of life in all living beings and in their environment.

Miao-lo (711–82), of the T'ien-t'ai school in China, asserted that in a single flower blooming in a field or a forest filling the air with fragrance, there is the Buddha nature. Very much part of this East Asian tradition, Nichiren held firmly to the view of nature that considers the entire ecosystem to be intrinsically sacred, including the natural landscape.

The reverence for all forms of life expressed by Miao-lo and Nichiren are congruent with the concept of ecology that even nature itself has rights. The idea that even grass and trees can attain enlightenment provides the basis for biospheric egalitarianism.

While Buddhism recognizes the equality of all living beings, it also supports the singularity of humans among all forms of life. What sets people apart from other creatures is

To fulfill these aspirations, we must recognize that human development is not just about having more, but also about being more. The challenges humanity faces can only be met if people everywhere acquire an awareness of global interdependence, identify themselves with the larger world, and decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life will be strengthened if we live with reverence for the sources of our being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in the larger scheme of things.

Having reflected on these considerations, we recognize the urgent need for a shared vision of basic values that will provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. We, therefore, affirm the following principles for sustainable development. We commit ourselves as individuals, organizations, business enterprises, communities, and nations to implement these interrelated principles and to create a global partnership in support of their fulfillment.

#### PRINCIPLES:

Together in hope, we pledge to:

- 1  
Respect Earth and all life.
- 2  
Care for the community of life

their ability to practice the bodhisattva way. Human beings alone can perceive the reality of an interdependent world based on dependent causation. That perception makes it possible for humans to act for the benefit of the ecosystem and to protect other life forms. In short, they are endowed with the capacity to act with mercy and practice nonviolence in their relation not only to other people but to all living beings and their environment.

To be sure, living human beings, like any other biological entities, are sustained by the ecosystem. But humans alone can comprehend the sources of their being and, in gratitude, can act for the benefit of those that support their existence. The bodhisattva way is crystallized in this merciful human action.

To practice the bodhisattva way, first we must appreciate that our very existence is sustained by the interdependent world of nature. Then, with deep gratitude, we must strive to control our desires and adjust our lifestyles.

That means, for one thing, that we should observe the Buddhist precept against needlessly killing animal life. That is to say, we must practice nonviolence and mercy and live in such a way that we can coexist in a healthy ecosystem.

Explaining the precept against killing animal life, the Sutra of the Brahma's Net teaches: "No form of life should be killed on purpose. The bodhisattva must always have compassion and piety and use every means to protect all living entities."

"On purpose" here implies without necessity. We should not destroy or kill animals without good reason. Killing out of wrath, greed or ignorance is absolutely



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"Miao-lo asserted that in a single flower blooming in a field or a forest filling the air with fragrance, there is the Buddha."

forbidden. On the other hand, it is permissible to kill for food to ensure our survival. To save ourselves from starvation, we need to kill animals at times, but it is incumbent upon us to feel gratitude to them for providing sustenance and also to exert ourselves to act as protector of the ecosystem.

Our existence depends on and is sustained by other living beings, so we must learn to live in harmony, without over-indulgence. The Sutra of the Buddha's Last Instruction reads: "The principle of contentment is precisely the way to peace and comfort," and "Those who cannot be content with the way things are, in fact, are poor, even though they may be wealthy."

On theft, the Sutra of the Brahma's Net states, "Do not steal on purpose any of another's prop-

in all its diversity.

3

Strive to build free, just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful societies.

4

Secure Earth's abundance and beauty for present and future generations.

In pursuit of these goals, we will:

5

Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain and renew life.

6

Prevent harm to the environment as the best method of ecological protection and, when knowledge is limited, take the path of caution.

7

Treat all living beings with compassion, and protect them from cruelty and wanton destruction.

8

Adopt patterns of consumption, production, and reproduction that respect and safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.

9

Ensure that economic activities support and promote human development in an

erty, not even a needle or a blade of grass." The same sutra also admonishes, "A bodhisattva must always evoke from the Buddha nature compassion and devotion to help any and every kind of person, to bring about good fortune, and to provide comfort."

Underlying these teachings are the basic ethical principles of Buddhism: that you should never seek your happiness at the expense of someone else's happiness; and you should treat others as you wish them to treat you. In today's world, these principles mean that we as a country or as individuals should never seek our prosperity at the expense of people in less-developed countries. Rather, we must practice

the bodhisattva way through our willingness to share the suffering of the impoverished and by making every effort to help bring them out of their predicament.

"Oneness of life and its environment" (Jpn *esho funi*) is viable only when it is based on compassion, nonviolence and control of earthly desires, as described above. Miao-lo writes: "Both subjective and objective realities are already present in a single mind. How could a single mind be divisible? Even then, the presence of those realities is the truth." Nichiren developed this idea as follows:

The ten directions are "environment" and sentient beings

Nichiren held firmly to the view of nature that considers the entire ecosystem to be intrinsically sacred, including the natural landscape.



Kirk Condyles

equitable and sustainable manner.

10

Eradicate poverty, as an ethical, social, economic, and ecological imperative.

11

Honor and defend the right of all persons, without discrimination, to an environment supportive of their dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being.

12

Advance worldwide the cooperative study of ecological systems, the dissemination and application of knowledge, and the development, adoption, and transfer of clean technologies.

13

Establish access to information, inclusive democratic participation in decision making, and transparency, truthfulness, and accountability in governance.

14

Affirm and promote gender equality as a prerequisite to sustainable development.

15

Make the knowledge, values, and skills needed to build just and sustainable communities an integral part of formal education and lifelong learning for all.

16

Create a culture of peace and cooperation.

are “life.” Environment is like the shadow and life, the body. Without the body there can be no shadow. Similarly, without life, environment cannot exist, even though life is supported by its environment. (*The Major Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, vol. 4, p. 146)

In other words, human beings and the environment influence each other in a series of actions and reactions, beginning with human activities and their formative impact on and subsequent changes to the environment. These in turn create human reactions which adapt to the changing environment. Human beings and their environment are both historical entities that keep changing in biological and cultural ways, as well as in the dimension of life. For precisely that reason, how humans act upon the environment is of crucial importance.

Thus, the concept of oneness of life and its environment highlights our subjective role to protect the ecosystem. While human life (as the subject) and the environment

(as object) are to be understood as one, humans must take the environment into consideration not only for physical survival, but for spiritual and cultural existence as well. For our own sake, human beings must take responsibility for a healthy environment using keen perception, wisdom and compassion. We must mobilize all our resources to restore the Earth’s ecosystem where it has been destroyed or damaged by human acts. For this we will have to apply the best that science and technology have to offer.

## 2. Buddha Land—A Peaceful World of Humanity

What do the Buddhist teachings



“We should not destroy or kill animals without good reason. Killing out of wrath, greed or ignorance is absolutely forbidden.”

As never before in human history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. Fulfillment of this promise requires an inner change—a change of mind and heart. It requires that we take decisive action to adopt, apply, and develop the vision of the Earth Charter. Every individual, family, organization, and government has a critical role to play. Youth are fundamental actors for change. We can, if we will, take advantage of the creative possibilities before us and inaugurate an era of fresh hope.



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"We as a country or as individuals should never seek our prosperity at the expense of people in less-developed countries."

say about how to build a Buddha Land? Essentially, they focus on a human society of bodhisattvas. For purposes of this discussion, the injunction against killing is of particular relevance, for what it actually represents is the right to survival and the right to peace. We have the right to prevent war and to demand arms reduction to make "non-war" a reality.

The Sutra of the Brahma's Net contains a prohibition against possession of any weapons for the purpose of killing: "Do not store any swords, bows, axes, or other instruments of warfare." This passage immediately follows the precept against harboring grudges against others. Together, they provide a Buddhist rationale to build

a world without war.

What this demands of us is not just the abolition of nuclear weapons, but the reduction of conventional weapons to a level where aggression is impossible or at least highly unfeasible. And, if we honor the Buddhist precept that forbids giving, lending or selling harmful instruments to others, we are required not to export weapons. To be faithful to these Buddhist ideals, we must build a system of human security on a global level, a system that needs no recourse to military might or weapons, and consolidate the system by strengthening its moral and spiritual foundations of compassion, control of desires and mutual trust.

In September 1957, Josei Toda,



We must mobilize all our resources to restore the Earth's ecosystem where it has been destroyed or damaged by human acts.

second president of the Soka Gakkai, made a historic declaration urging youth to dedicate themselves to the final and total abolition of nuclear and all other weapons of mass destruction. "Those who would use nuclear weapons are satanic," he proclaimed, "and we must tear out their devilish claws." Behind his categorical rejection of nuclear weapons, of course, were the Buddhist ideals of the sanctity of life and the right of all living beings to exist.

"Devilish claws" refers to the devil innate in human life. According to the Buddhist view of the world, a formidable and powerful devil resides in the Sixth Heaven, which is the highest realm in the world of desire. The Devil of the Sixth Heaven symbolizes lust for power. T'ien-t'ai interpreted this as the internal human condition, developing it into a theory of human desire. At the top of all desires, including desire for power, prestige and wealth, T'ien-t'ai listed the devil—that which delights in controlling

the lives of others and manipulating them freely to do his bidding.

Nichiren put his life at risk to fight against the rulers of his time, who were possessed by the Devil of the Sixth Heaven. Both Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, the founding president of the Soka Gakkai, and his successor, Josei Toda, saw the devil in Japanese militarism during World War II and condemned it for invading the lives and violating the rights of people. Both were imprisoned for their uncompromising opposition to this devilish function.

After the war, Toda spoke out against the devil of nuclear weapons, and he warned that the power that controlled such weapons could end up annihilating the whole human species. His 1957 declaration censuring atomic and hydrogen bombs was a cry from the heart to act, before the Earth's ecosystem was destroyed. And it was much more. It reminded us that human beings have the potential to degenerate into devils—humanity can deteriorate

until we are no longer human.

The bodhisattva practice concerns a lifestyle devoid of over-indulgence. This is a lifestyle that necessitates a revolutionary change in the kind of desires we tolerate and nurture. We are required to turn from the quest for material and physical satisfaction and toward spiritual, emotional fulfillment. As we apply science and technology to utilize natural resources, it is imperative that we take every possible measure to stay in harmony with the ecosystem. More specifically, we must shift the balance in the way our economies work from waste-making to recycling; we must minimize the consumption of resources that are not renewable and maximize dependence on clean, renewable sources of energy like solar and geothermal power.

We can draw on the egalitarianism of the Lotus Sutra's theoretical teaching. In the "Introduction" chapter, there appear numerous tribes and races of people as well as nonhuman creatures, and they are

all treated as equals. The message is unmistakable: equality must encompass all racial and ethnic groups, including, of course, indigenous peoples.

A controversial point in the Buddhist concept of equality is the attainment of Buddhahood by the dragon king's eight-year-old daughter through her transformation into a male. The prevailing idea at the time of the Lotus Sutra was that women could never attain that state. Thus the dragon princess's instant enlightenment without aeons of austere practice shows the power of the Lotus Sutra to enable all people equally to attain Buddhahood in their present form. In the story, her gender changes simply because society at that time could not accept a girl being depicted as attaining Buddhahood without first becoming a male.

Nichiren, however, taught that we should never discriminate on the basis of gender, and that women can attain enlightenment as women, just as men can attain enlightenment as men. This was the first time in Buddhist history that genuine equality of the sexes was expounded.

Let us consider eternity as it is conveyed by the concept of the true, eternal Buddha depicted in the essential teaching, which is the second half of the Lotus Sutra. The first ethical principle we can derive is that future generations must not be sacrificed for the sake of the present. This is a question of intergenerational ethics.

The second principle relates to respect for the spiritual heritage that has been transmitted to us over many generations. The Lotus Sutra describes how, since time immemorial, the eternal Buddha has revealed himself in many different forms to save the people. Our ancestors have built



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If we honor the Buddhist precept that forbids giving, lending or selling harmful instruments to others, we are required not to export weapons.

a great diversity of cultures, religious beliefs and customs in the long course of history. We must treasure these as an invaluable spiritual legacy, and respect and learn from other cultures and customs. Religions, too, are the common reservoir of spirituality for all humankind to share. We must preserve the large number of historic and prehistoric sites, monuments and relics so that posterity can benefit from their spiritual power and historical value.

### Preamble and Concluding Paragraphs

In commenting on the preamble and the concluding paragraphs of the Earth Charter, I would like to focus on global civilization and the United

Nations.

In the essential teaching of the Lotus Sutra, a grand drama is played out in which the true, eternal Buddha reveals himself. Unfolding before us is a Buddhist cosmology which, in modern terms, might be captured in the phrase "creative evolution of the cosmic life." At the apex of this evolutionary process is human life on planet Earth. At the threshold of the twenty-first century, humankind is now developing self-awareness as members of an interdependent community of life, and an identity as one humanity and one Earth family.

That global sense of unity will form the spiritual core of a new global civilization, bringing together the civilizations of East and West, the diverse cultures of different national



Kirk Complies

"We must shift the balance in the way our economies work from waste-making to recycling."

and ethnic groups, into peaceful but dynamic harmony. In Nichiren Buddhist philosophy, global civilization is born out of the harmonious unity of the Buddha Land and the Treasure Land within the framework of the Buddhist cosmology.

The new global civilization will encompass great diversity in cultures, science and technology, races and ethnic groups. It will be nourished and strengthened by the harmony of matter and spirit, of the inner self

and the external world and of human life and the environment, all united into a dynamic whole.

In the political realm, great expectations are placed on the United Nations and the central role it should play in the new global civilization. The world body provides an international forum for consultation and cooperation among sovereign states, local governments and various nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Such a forum fully accords with the spirit of conference that Shakyamuni advocated and can be considered a manifestation of the Buddhist law of dependent causation.

The Lotus Sutra describes great assemblies at Eagle Peak and the Ceremony in the Air, to which Shakyamuni summoned the Buddhas and bodhisattvas and the masses of people. The bodhisattvas and sentient beings who gathered there to hear Shakyamuni expound his teaching evoke an image of the common people. This is the image that prompts us, who follow Nichiren's teachings, to demand that the United Nations adjust to the new era and represent the common people as represented by the NGOs and local activists, in addition to the sovereign states.

It should be clear that I fully support the intent and principles of the Earth Charter. In elucidating even partially the perspective of Nichiren's Buddhist philosophy, I hope I have provided some ethical, moral and practical justification to support the assertions presented in the Benchmark Draft. I have also made several points that were not noted in the draft. I hope that the drafting committee will take them into consideration as they draw up the final version. □

## Topics for Discussion

1

**How can we change our view of nature from something outside ourselves to be exploited into something which we are a part of—an extension of our self? How does the practice and understanding of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism help in this regard?**

2

**In light of the recent shootings, how can we stem violence in society? What attitude underlies the Buddhist precept that forbids giving, lending, or selling harmful instruments to others?**

3

**Makiguchi and Toda saw "the Devil of the Sixth Heaven"—a Buddhist symbol for the destructive nature of power—in Japan's militarism during World War II. After the war, Toda also saw the same devil in nuclear weapons. How does this insidious human condition manifest in today's world? What can we do to stem this "devil" within all of us?**

# ON THE *Lotus Sutra*

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

41

### The Transmission to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth: A Solemn Ceremony of Kosen-rufu

*This is the forty-first installment of an ongoing discussion on the Lotus Sutra among SGI President Ikeda and Soka Gakkai Study Department Chief Katsuji Saito and vice chiefs Takanori Endo and Haruo Suda. It appeared in the June 1998 issue of the Daibyakurenge, the Soka Gakkai study journal.*

*Nichiren Daishonin placed particular importance on the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (twenty-first) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. The focus of this chapter is a ceremony where the Bodhisattvas of the Earth are entrusted with the mission to spread the essence of the Lotus Sutra in the Latter Day of the Law. Participants this time explore the profound significance of this ceremony from the standpoint of the Buddhist understanding of the nature of life.*

As the light of the sun and moon  
can banish all obscurity and gloom,  
so this person as he passes through the world  
can wipe out the darkness of living beings,  
causing immeasurable numbers of bodhisattvas  
in the end to dwell in the single vehicle.  
Therefore a person of wisdom,  
hearing how keen are the benefits to be gained,  
after I have passed into extinction  
should accept and uphold this sutra.  
Such a person assuredly and without doubt  
will attain the Buddha way. (LS21, 276)<sup>1</sup>

## FROM THE RECORD OF THE ORALLY TRANSMITTED TEACHINGS

Myoho-rence-kyo is not the Mystic Law of Shakyamuni, because when the events in this chapter take place, the essence of the sutra has already been transmitted to Bodhisattva Superior Practices [Jpn Jogyo]. Generally speaking, this entrustment of Myoho-rence-kyo to Bodhisattva Superior Practices begins in the “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” [eleventh] chapter, becomes apparent with the “Life Span” [sixteenth] chapter, and comes to an end with the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” and “Entrustment” [twenty-second] chapters. “Thus Come One” refers to the Thus Come One explained in the “Life Span” chapter, and “supernatural powers” to the ten supernatural powers. (*Gosho Zenshu*, p. 770)

**KATSUJI SAITO:** This time we at last begin discussing the “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” (twenty-first) chapter of the Lotus Sutra. This is the climax of the entire sutra. Let’s have a great discussion!

**DAISAKU IKEDA:** Nichiren Daishonin deemed “Supernatural Powers” one of the sutra’s most important chapters, along with the “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) and the “Life Span of the Thus Come One” chapters. That’s because it describes the ceremony in which Shakyamuni entrusts the Bodhisattvas of the Earth with achieving kosen-rufu in the Latter Day of the Law.

**SAITO:** Kosen-rufu is indeed a matter of the greatest importance.

**IKEDA:** For starters, let’s clarify just what the Lotus Sutra is. It is Shakyamuni’s will and testament. It embodies the teaching he most wanted to leave to posterity.

So what was Shakyamuni’s most ardent prayer? It was for all people to become happy. He says, “Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart towards all beings.”<sup>2</sup> He is basically imploring us: “Strive to help all people, all living beings, become happy, just as a mother will put her life on the line to protect her only child!” This is what it means to stand up for kosen-rufu.

Shakyamuni continues:



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“Just as a mother would protect her only child at the risk of her own life, even so, let him cultivate a boundless heart toward all beings.”

May all beings be happy! . . . Whether he stands, walks, sits or lies down, as long as he is awake, he should develop this mindfulness. This they say is the noblest living here.<sup>3</sup>

In our practice of gongyo each morning and evening, we constantly pray for the happiness of all people. We pray for the happiness of all living beings. This is a truly lofty state of life.

Not only do we offer prayer; we also take action to actualize these prayers. That is, we exert ourselves for kosen-rufu. What a noble way to live!

**TAKANORI ENDO:** I believe that through my practice to the Gohonzon and participation in SGI activities, I have gradually come to such a state of life, even if only in some small measure. The fact that there are literally millions of people engaged in this process is wondrous; it is truly awe-inspiring.

**IKEDA:** Only Bodhisattvas of the Earth can carry out this practice of widely spreading the Law. It is in the “Supernatural Powers” chapter that Shakyamuni entrusts the Bodhisattvas of the Earth with achieving kosen-rufu in the Latter Day.

**SAITO:** This is the ceremony of transmission.

**HARUO SUDA:** *Transmission* refers to the Buddha entrusting his disciples with the teaching and instructing them to spread it widely.

**IKEDA:** Without *transmission*, Buddhism would die out with the mentor's generation. No matter how great the teaching, it would have no lasting impact. It could not lead people to happiness.

Even if a teaching encourages compassion toward all living beings, if it cannot actually help those who are suffering, then it is nothing more than theory. Buddhism expounds the Law, and it leads the people to happiness.

After his release from prison, Josei Toda, the second president of the Soka Gakkai, composed the following poem while gazing up at the starry sky, reminiscing about his mentor:

I clutch in my hand the wish-granting jewel.  
My heart cries out, "With this, I will save everyone!"  
My mentor smiles in peace.

Carrying on the spirit of his mentor—first Soka Gakkai president Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, who had died in prison—Mr. Toda stood up alone for *kosen-rufu*. The passing of the baton from President Makiguchi to Mr. Toda occurred while they were in prison. The last time they saw each other was in September 1943 at the Metropolitan Police Department, when Mr. Makiguchi was being taken off to the Tokyo Prison in Sugamo. Given the circumstances, most likely they could not speak freely to each other.

President Toda recalled: "All I could say was 'Sensei, please take care of yourself.' You nodded without uttering a word. But from the way you carried yourself and from the look in your eyes, I sensed your boundless mercy and courage."<sup>4</sup>

**SAITO:** This is a solemn and noble exchange between mentor and disciple. The ceremony on March 16, 1958, where Mr. Toda entrusted you with his vision, President Ikeda, also occurred in the midst of a heroic struggle against the devilish nature of power. That was during the turmoil surrounding the so-called Coal Miners<sup>5</sup> Incident and the Osaka Incident.<sup>6</sup>

**SUDA:** This certainly shows the solemn unity of mentor and disciple as they faced a life-or-death struggle.

**IKEDA:** That is, of course, on a different level from the ceremony of transmission in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter. Still, it can be said that without the mentor-disciple relationship, as exemplified in the history of the Soka Gakkai, Buddhism simply would not exist.

**SAITO:** Yes. Shakyamuni awakened to the Mystic Law and, perceiving the life force of the universe in the depths of his being, he experienced the greatest of all joys. The problem was how he could communicate the Law to humankind. He understood it himself and could share his insight with others while he was alive, but what would happen after his passing? This seems to be the great theme of Buddhism.

Buddhism is through and through a religion for human beings. It does not postulate the existence of a transcendent deity existing apart from people or of a creative deity that single-handedly generated the universe. Without departing from the human being, Buddhism continuously urges people: "Awaken to your own true nature!"

Things like the will of a god never become an issue; everything depends on the will of the individual. Consequently, without the transmission from mentor to disciple, Buddhism would lose its vitality. That's why transmission is so important.

**ENDO:** Without mentor and disciple, the Law would perish.

**IKEDA:** That's true, but while we may speak of the Law "perishing," the Law itself is eternal. It is actually when there is no one who correctly inherits the teaching that the Law perishes.

**SAITO:** That certainly describes the state of affairs in the Nichiren Shoshu priesthood today.

**SUDA:** The mentor-disciple relationship has ceased to exist in the priesthood. As a result, it has lost touch with Buddhism. Even so, it continues to arrogantly pose as a religious authority and is therefore acting as a devilish function, a force that aims to destroy the Law.

**IKEDA:** I imagine that when Shakyamuni thought about the people of future generations, he worried about what he could do to help them. That is why in the end he taught his



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The Bodhisattvas of the Earth, like the sun, illuminate all living beings and remove the gloom of their suffering.

disciples to uphold and take as their mentor the eternal Mystic Law that had enabled him to become a Buddha. We discussed this in connection with the principle of “casting off the transient and revealing the true” (in the 27th installment of this series, March 1998, *Living Buddhism*).

Shakyamuni probably made this statement from time to time during his later years, which was most likely incorporated into the Lotus Sutra.

**ENDO:** Shakyamuni’s mentor is the eternal Mystic Law that is itself the eternal true Buddha. In modern terms, we sometimes refer to this as the “universal life.”

Anyone who practices with this eternal Law as his or her mentor can become a Buddha just as Shakyamuni did. It is the “great beneficial medicine” that enables all living beings to become happy. “Since I am teaching you this, you should take this great beneficial medicine and share it with others”—this is the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and the spirit of the “Life Span” chapter.

**IKEDA:** The focus is solely on the period after Shakyamuni’s passing. It is on the future, and on future kosen-rufu. To lose sight of this one point is to fail to grasp the heart of the Lotus Sutra.

**SAITO:** Transmission is the central theme of not only the “Supernatural Powers” chapter but of the Lotus Sutra in its entirety. This is particularly evident in the description of the Ceremony in the Air. The appearance of an enormous tower in the “Emergence of the Treasure Tower” (eleventh) chapter, the portrayal of countless Bodhisattvas of the Earth dancing forth from within the earth in the “Emerging from the Earth” (fifteenth) chapter, and the discussion of the eternal Buddha in the “Life Span” chapter are all for the sake of transmission.

**SUDA:** In the “Record of the Orally Transmitted Teachings,” the Daishonin says, “This transmission of Myoho-rence-kyo to Bodhisattva Superior Practices begins in the ‘Treasure Tower’ chapter, becomes apparent with the ‘Life Span’ chapter, and comes to an end with the ‘Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One’ and ‘Entrustment’ chapters” (GZ, 770). Unless we understand the meaning of transmission, the Ceremony in the Air, with all of its extraordinary circumstances, becomes little more than a fairy tale.

**Buddhas Who Carry Out the Practice of Bodhisattvas**

**ENDO:** Let’s consider the outline of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter. As the title “Supernatural Powers of the Thus Come One” suggests, this chapter reveals the Buddha’s ten great supernatural or mystic powers, which are so awesome as to move the universe.

It begins with the Bodhisattvas of the Earth making a vow. They pledge to preach the Lotus Sutra far and wide in this *saha* world after Shakyamuni has passed into extinction, as well as in lands where other Buddhas have ceased to exist.

**IKEDA:** They promise to widely propagate the teachings of all Buddhas after they have passed away. In this we find the great and mystic significance of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

To start from the conclusion: In any land, the Bodhisattvas of the Earth shoulder the task of widely propagating the Law from the Buddha to all people. Why is that? It’s because while the Bodhisattvas of the Earth have the same state of life as the Buddha, their conduct is thoroughly that of bodhisattvas. They could therefore be described as “bodhisattva-Buddhas.”

If the life-state of the bodhisattva is not one with that of the Buddha, he or she cannot correctly propagate the Law. At the same time, in a defiled age, unless bodhisattvas go out into the world and assimilate themselves to society, kosen-rufu cannot be achieved. The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are endowed with these qualities. That’s probably why at the close of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter they are described as passing “through the world.” It is in the world and among the people that they carry out their practice.

**SUDA:** The passage reads:

As the light of the sun and moon  
 can banish all obscurity and gloom,  
 so this person as he passes through the world  
 can wipe out the darkness of living beings,  
 causing immeasurable numbers of bodhisattvas  
 in the end to dwell in the single vehicle.  
 Therefore a person of wisdom,  
 hearing how keen are the benefits to be gained,  
 after I have passed into extinction  
 should accept and uphold this sutra.  
 Such a person assuredly and without doubt  
 will attain the Buddha way. (LS21, 276)

It describes the Bodhisattvas of the Earth as taking action in the world, illuminating all beings and removing



Gregory Nakasoji

“The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are like the lotus flower in the water; they dwell in society, but are not sullied by its evils.”

the gloom of suffering from their lives, just as the light of the sun and moon banishes darkness. It also says that they inspire countless bodhisattvas and ultimately enable them to become Buddhas. In other words, they make *kosen-rufu* a reality.

**IKEDA:** The Bodhisattvas of the Earth are like so many suns. And, as indicated by the description “like the lotus flower in the water” (LS15, 222), they dwell in society, but are not sullied by its evils.

**SAITO:** They are suns and lotus flowers. From this we see the profound meaning that attaches to the Daishonin’s

name *Nichiren*, which literally means “Sun Lotus.”

**IKEDA:** Research has shown that the sun and the white lotus are consistently used as symbols of the Buddha in the Lotus Sutra.

**ENDO:** In a study of the Sanskrit text of the sutra, the Indologist scholar Shuntaro Matsuyama argues that from the “Treasure Tower” chapter on, Shakyamuni is identified with the “white lotus as the embodiment of the true Law,” and also with the “light of the sun.”

**SAITO:** The Daishonin says:

The Lotus Sutra is the sun and the moon and the lotus flower. Therefore, it is called *Myoho-renge-kyo* (the Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Mystic Law). Nichiren is also like the sun and the moon, and also like the lotus flower. (MW-4, 87)

**IKEDA:** This is very profound.

**SUDA:** Continuing with the summary of the chapter, in response to the vows of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, Shakyamuni uses his supernatural powers to reveal various mystic phenomena to Bodhisattva Monjushiri and countless other bodhisattvas. These are termed the “ten supernatural powers.”

### **The Ten Supernatural Powers: Symbols of Kosen-rufu**

**IKEDA:** There might seem to be something fantastic about this display of supernatural powers. But we should bear in mind that they represent functions of life.

**SUDA:** Yes. For the first of these, it says that the Buddha “extended his long broad tongue upward till it reached the Brahma heaven” (LS21, 273). In ancient India, people would stick out their tongues in a gesture to testify to the truth of their words. By extending his tongue, Shakyamuni is indicating that the Lotus Sutra is entirely free of falsehood.

**IKEDA:** The Daishonin says that the tongue being broad indicates that the Mystic Law can save all beings in the Ten Worlds, and the tongue being long indicates that the Law has existed from time without beginning (GZ, 770).

**SAITO:** In regard to the second supernatural power, the sutra says:

From all his pores he [Shakyamuni] emitted immeasurable, countless beams of light that illuminated all the worlds in the ten directions.

The other Buddhas . . . did likewise, extending their long broad tongues and emitting immeasurable beams of light. (LS21, 273)

**IKEDA:** The universe is completely illuminated. It is a magnificent image.

This is the world of kosen-rufu. We shine, too. When we truly burn with a spirit of faith, our entire life radiates—

with character, wisdom and hope. And we can illuminate the lives of others.

**ENDO:** Next, it says that Shakyamuni and the other Buddhas drew their tongues together and, exhibiting the third and fourth supernatural powers, “coughed in unison, and all together snapped their fingers” (LS21, 273). According to Indian custom, people would also snap their fingers to give evidence of the truth of their words.

**SUDA:** These sounds reverberate throughout the universe. As for the fifth power, it says, “The sounds made by these two actions filled all the Buddha worlds in the ten directions, and the earth in all of them quaked and trembled in six different ways” (LS21, 273).

**IKEDA:** The universe trembles with joy. In other words, even the land attains Buddhahood. This is the principle of three thousand realms in a single moment of life; it symbolizes the great drama of kosen-rufu.

**SAITO:** After the land trembled with joy, the sixth supernatural power manifests itself:

The living beings in their midst . . . all saw in this saha world the immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of Buddhas seated on lion seats . . . and also saw Shakyamuni Buddha and Many Treasures Thus Come One seated together on a lion seat in the treasure tower. Moreover, they saw immeasurable, boundless hundreds, thousands, ten thousands, millions of bodhisattvas and mahasattvas and the four kinds of believers who reverently surrounded Shakyamuni Buddha.

When they had seen these things, they were all filled with great joy, having gained what they had never had before. (LS21, 273)

**IKEDA:** The multitude of Buddhas, sitting upon *lion* thrones, stretch out as far as the eye can see. The term lion is written with two Chinese characters; the first stands for *mentor* and the second for *disciple*. This indicates that when mentor and disciple are one, any realm can be transformed into a Land of Eternally Tranquil Light.

**SUDA:** The original meaning of the term used for the place the high priest sits is lion’s chair, suggesting that it is the seat of a practitioner who upholds the path of the oneness of mentor and disciple. One who betrays one’s predecessors has no right to occupy this chair.

**SAITO:** The worlds in the ten directions could be said to refer to the realms where all beings of the Ten Worlds dwell. The seventh supernatural power is displayed when, upon seeing this, these “heavenly beings in the midst of the sky cried out with loud voice” (LS21, 273).

The heavenly beings declare:

There is a land named *saha*, and in it a Buddha named Shakyamuni. Now for the sake of the bodhisattvas and mahasattvas he is preaching a sutra of the Great Vehicle called the Lotus of the Wonderful Law, a Law to instruct the bodhisattvas, one that is guarded and kept in mind by the Buddhas. You must respond with joy from the depths of your heart, and also offer obeisance and alms to Shakyamuni Buddha! (LS21, 273–74)

**ENDO:** The eighth supernatural power then takes place in response to these voices. The sutra says: “The various living beings . . . pressed their palms together, faced the *saha* world, and spoke these words: ‘Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha! Hail, Shakyamuni Buddha!’” (LS21, 274).

**IKEDA:** The Daishonin notes that “Shakyamuni Buddha” here represents the spirit of endurance. This expresses a wonderful doctrine of life.

To live in the *saha* world requires tremendous forbearance; it is a place where one must steadfastly persevere. It is a land inhabited with people of poor capacity, people who cannot accept something true at face value. Instead, they are inclined to persecute those who stand up for justice.

**SUDA:** Japan is a case in point.

**IKEDA:** Those who cast aside self-interest and devote themselves to helping others become happy are slandered and abused. We live in a truly befuddled world.

To withstand such persecution and contempt and still persist in spreading the Mystic Law calls for a spirit of endurance. Even if we should be persecuted time and again, we need to continue struggling with dauntless resolve, repeatedly pushing back the devilish forces. Nichiren Daishonin teaches that doing so is itself the world of Buddhahood and the life state of Shakyamuni Buddha.

The living beings in the worlds in the ten directions revere this world of Buddhahood. That is, they hold in high esteem the spirit of thorough dedication to kosen-rufu. Without doubt, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas throughout the universe applaud us who are now fighting

for kosen-rufu.

**SUDA:** Up until the preaching of the Lotus Sutra, the *saha* world was viewed as an undesirable place filled with people of extreme evil who could only be led to Buddhism with great difficulty. But the Lotus Sutra changed things entirely.

As for the ninth supernatural power, it says:

Then they [the living beings in the worlds in the ten directions] took different kinds of flowers, incense, necklaces, banners and canopies, as well as the ornaments, rare jewels and other wonderful articles that adorned their persons, and all together scattered them far off in the direction of the *saha* world. The objects thus scattered poured in from the ten directions like clouds gathering together. Then they changed into a jeweled curtain that completely covered the area where the Buddhas were. (LS21, 274)

And in regard to the tenth power, it says: “At that time the worlds in the ten directions were opened up so that there was unobstructed passage from one to the other and they were like a single Buddha land” (LS21, 274).

**ENDO:** It was already explained in the “Life Span” chapter that the *saha* world itself has been the True Land of Shakyamuni since the remote past. In this scene, the *saha* world actually becomes the Land of Tranquil Light.

### **Those Who Practice With a Spirit of Endurance Are Buddhas**

**IKEDA:** The Buddha goes to the place where people are suffering the most—to the *saha* world. A real Buddha shares everyone’s sufferings. Anything short of this is not the genuine article.

Is a priest automatically respectable? No, definitely not. Does being a politician or a celebrity make someone great? Certainly not. Nor does having a high position in our organization. Commendable are those who exert themselves alongside the people facing the most hardship.

Members on the forefront of the women’s division who pray for the happiness of all and work tirelessly to spread the Daishonin’s teaching, sometimes even over the chiding and opposition of their husbands and the bad-mouthing of others, are truly great. That spirit to endure is what we mean when we say “Buddha.”

Referring to the principle that the *saha* world itself is the

Land of Eternally Tranquil Light, President Toda once commented, “Buddhism at this point has refuted everything it had expounded.” This is because, contrary to what had previously been taught, this concept reveals that the ideal is not to eventually reach some distant pure land, but to eternally strive for peace and human happiness while living in this world, which is filled with suffering. The Buddha exists nowhere apart from such a spirit of endurance.

That the *saha* world is the Land of Eternally Tranquil Light is stating this revelation from the standpoint of the environment. From the standpoint of the person, it implies that the Buddha is in reality a “bodhisattva-Buddha.” Shakyamuni was a bodhisattva and at the same time a Buddha.

The idea of the bodhisattva is said to originally refer to the way of life that Shakyamuni followed while he was striving for enlightenment. But it is not the case that Shakyamuni was a bodhisattva only during his years of practice. Even after he had attained the Way, Shakyamuni continued to carry out the actions of a bodhisattva to spread the great Law to which he had awakened. While boundlessly rejoicing in the awareness of the eternity of life that filled his being, he took action to spread that Law to others. This is what is meant by a “bodhisattva-Buddha.”

That’s why Mr. Toda said that this revelation turned Buddhism on its head. The essential point is that even after attaining enlightenment, Shakyamuni continued to exist as a human being. The Lotus Sutra thus appeals: “Restore your humanity!”



Fire wheel torture from the Spanish Inquisition. “History has witnessed countless instances of religions whose original intent was to bring happiness to the people, becoming slaves to authority.”

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## The True Buddha Is a Common Mortal

**SAITO:** It occurs to me that the notion that Shakyamuni attained enlightenment for the first time during his present lifetime in India, which is refuted in the “Life Span” chapter, must contain extremely dangerous implications. It suggests that Shakyamuni was an ordinary person “before” and a Buddha “afterwards,” making it difficult to recognize him *as a human being*.

In fact, it is because he earnestly sought the correct path *as a human being* that he awakened to the world of Buddhahood within his own life. And because he became enlightened in this fashion, he followed the supreme way of life *as a human being*. From start to finish, Shakyamuni was human.

**ENDO:** Such a view could easily cause people to think that attaining enlightenment made Shakyamuni some kind of special or superhuman being. While this might not have been a problem for those alive during Shakyamuni’s lifetime who could see his humanity for themselves, I imagine that for people after his passing, the temptation to see him as otherworldly would have been very strong.

**SUDA:** This leads to Shakyamuni’s deification, and the tendency for people to think of themselves as unworthy. Though it may sound like humility, self-deprecation is actually an expression of arrogance, for it suggests that one pretends to know the full potential of human life, while in fact being ignorant of it. It equates to a lack of faith in one’s humanity.

**IKEDA:** To think of oneself as just common is indeed a great mistake. The fresh breeze of the Lotus Sutra dispels such dark clouds of illusion. It does not discriminate against the ordinary person, but says that all people are themselves Buddhas, that the human being is supremely worthy of respect. Nichiren Daishonin gives ultimate expression to this spirit of the Lotus Sutra when he says:

The common mortal is the entity of the three properties, or the true Buddha. The Buddha is the function of the three properties, or a provisional Buddha. Shakyamuni is thought to have possessed the three virtues of sovereign, teacher and parent for the sake of us common mortals, but on the contrary, it is the common mortal who endowed him with the three virtues. . . . Here the “true Buddha” is the common

mortal, whereas “provisional Buddhas” means the Buddha. (MW-1, 90–91)

These words certainly overturn all the assumptions of Buddhism up to that point. The common mortal is the true Buddha, the Daishonin says, and the Buddha is a provisional Buddha, a projected image of the common mortal. He is asserting that the existence of the common mortal is not subordinate to that of the Buddha, but, in fact, the existence of the Buddha is predicated on that of the common mortal.

This is a declaration of extreme significance not only in the history of Buddhism, but in the history of all religion. Religions in general place absolute beings such as gods and Buddhas “above” and human beings “below.” The Daishonin states unequivocally, however, that gods and Buddhas exist because of people, and that they are merely means to enable people to become happy. This is the mammoth declaration of a religion that exists for human beings.

History has witnessed countless instances of religions whose original intent was to bring happiness to the people, becoming slaves to authority. The philosophical roots of such transformation lie in the assumption that gods and Buddhas are superior human beings.

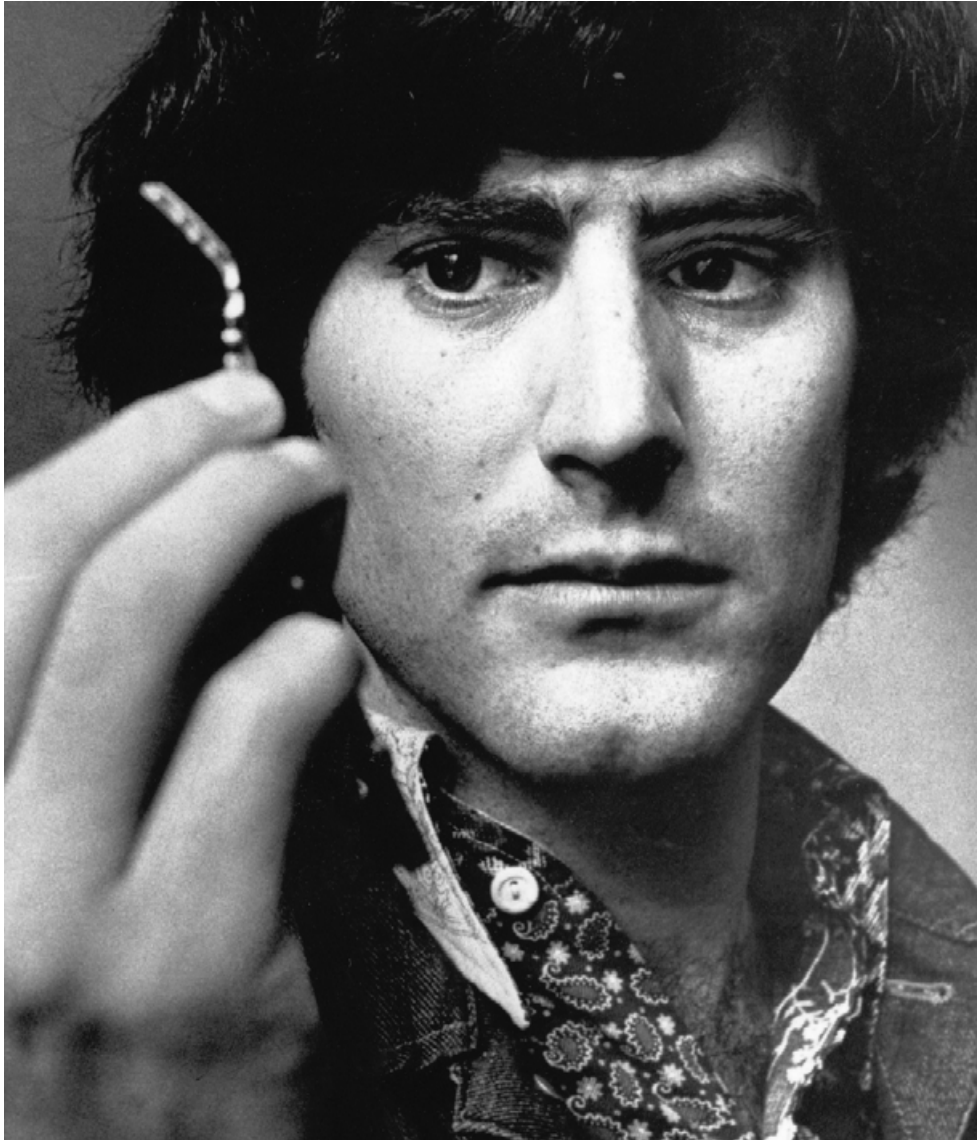
**SUDA:** I suspect the notion that clergy are above other people has the same origin. People are taken in by the illusion that since gods and Buddhas are superior to people, then clergy, who are supposed to be intermediaries between people and those higher beings, must also be better than ordinary believers.

**SAITO:** In that sense, the idea that priests have an intrinsically higher standing than lay people is fundamentally alien to the Daishonin’s Buddhism.

**IKEDA:** That is true, but it’s important to remember that thought and philosophy depend on people. If the mentor–disciple spirit should be forgotten, then even Nichiren Daishonin’s Buddhism could be used to suppress people, instead of existing for their benefit. This is an issue we have become very familiar with.

In any event, I think we can say without a doubt that in proclaiming that the once exalted Buddha is only provisional, the Daishonin has made a landmark declaration in all religious history. What enables him to say this? This is actually the key point of the “Supernatural Powers” chapter.

This may be jumping ahead, but the transmission from



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Uri Geller holds a spoon, which he claims he bent using only the power of his mind. President Ikeda states, "Such things as superhuman abilities that do nothing to promote human happiness ultimately have no significance."

Shakyamuni to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth is a ceremony signifying that the common mortal is a true Buddha.

Nichiren Daishonin explains all teachings, even those like the ten supernatural powers that seem to have little to do with regular people, in terms of human life. From the standpoint of the Buddhist philosophy of life, "Thus Come One" in the chapter's title refers to the life of the universe and therefore indicates the lives of all beings. The Daishonin says, "'Thus Come One' refers to all living beings, as has already been explained in the earlier 'Life Span' chapter" (GZ, 770). And "supernatural powers" means the power of the spirit or of life. In particular, it refers to the great life force of Buddhahood. The life force of the universe that is inherent in the lives of all living beings is called the "supernatural powers of the Thus

Come One." The Bodhisattvas of the Earth carry out the task of kosen-rufu manifesting this great life force.

Kosen-rufu means awakening all people to the supreme life force of the "supernatural powers of the Thus Come One." In other words, it means expanding the ranks of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth, and perpetuating the chain reaction of human revolution, the momentous movement of human happiness. The teaching of the ten supernatural powers is a prophetic revelation of this aspect of kosen-rufu.

**SAITO:** Certainly, the description at the end of the "Supernatural Powers" chapter of the worlds in the ten directions all becoming one and of all beings devoting themselves to the Buddha is a vision of kosen-rufu.



German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) declared that "God is dead."

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**SUDA:** "Great events do not have small omens" (MW-5, 161), the Daishonin says. Nowhere else do we find mention of such "omens" occurring in all worlds in the ten directions.

**ENDO:** The Daishonin clearly indicates this when he says, "The great omens of the Jinriki ['Supernatural Powers'] chapter foretold that the essence of the Lotus Sutra would spread after the Buddha's death when the two thousand years of the Former and Middle Days of the Law had passed and the Latter Day of the Law had begun" (MW-4, 149).

**IKEDA:** We are now making this a reality. It's remarkable—truly mystic. We are leading lives of great excitement.

In general, people associate supernatural powers with psychic or superhuman abilities. But that is not what it means in this context. The Daishonin admonishes, "One should judge the validity of a teaching by its doctrine, not by the superlative perception or occult powers [of its practitioners]" (GZ, 16). To make psychic powers or the like the

standard is to set people with extraordinary abilities apart from regular human beings. This is dangerous.

We must also keep in mind that possessing superhuman powers is no guarantee of happiness. As a matter of fact, those who rely on special ability may neglect their own growth as human beings and actually become miserable as a result.

**ENDO:** I seem to recall that some years ago there was a lot of interest in people who could bend spoons using psychokinetic powers. My friend, after seeing a number of demonstrations on television, remarked: "Just what on earth is it good for? I could see that it might have some value if they could return the spoon to its original shape!"

**SUDA:** It is a human tendency to forget the purpose behind our actions.

**IKEDA:** In any undertaking, we should ask, "Why am I doing this?" The most important reason, of course, is happiness. Such things as superhuman abilities that do nothing to promote human happiness ultimately have no significance.

The Daishonin says, "Apart from the attainment of Buddhahood, there are no 'secrets' and no 'supernatural powers'" (GZ, 753). Attaining Buddhahood, achieving a state of life of absolute and eternal happiness, is the Buddha's supernatural power. For this is itself the supreme power according with the law of life.

**SAITO:** In the "Supernatural Powers" chapter, following the description of the ten supernatural powers, there is at last the transmission of the essence of the Lotus Sutra to the Bodhisattvas of the Earth.

### **Carl Jung: Do Not Become a "Slave" of the State**

**IKEDA:** Let's take up the profound meaning of this transmission next time. If we were to try to cover the entire chapter all at once, it might be too much for our readers to digest.

The main point of the various supernatural powers that we have discussed this time is to alert all people to the dignity of their lives. The "Supernatural Powers" chapter cries out to people in a dynamic voice that reverberates throughout the universe. It is an appeal for kosen-rufu. It calls for the realization of the compassionate prayer of Shakyamuni, the person, for all beings to become happy.

Japan today is facing a dangerous situation where many

feel there is nothing in which to believe. A recent survey found that 72.2 percent of Japan’s citizens feel that things are getting worse. That’s nearly three out of four people; it’s a record high for negative sentiment.

**SAITO:** That survey was conducted by the prime minister’s office. The number of respondents who feel things are improving was a record low (12.6%).

**IKEDA:** On the global scale, too, there is a gaping void in people’s hearts, and it seems that such spiritual desolation is only becoming more widespread. A hundred years ago, the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) declared that “God is dead.” This century has seen other icons occupy the vacant seat of a god in which people have lost faith.

**ENDO:** One of these would be worship of the state, which we discussed in connection with the “Bodhisattva Never Disparaging” (twentieth) chapter.

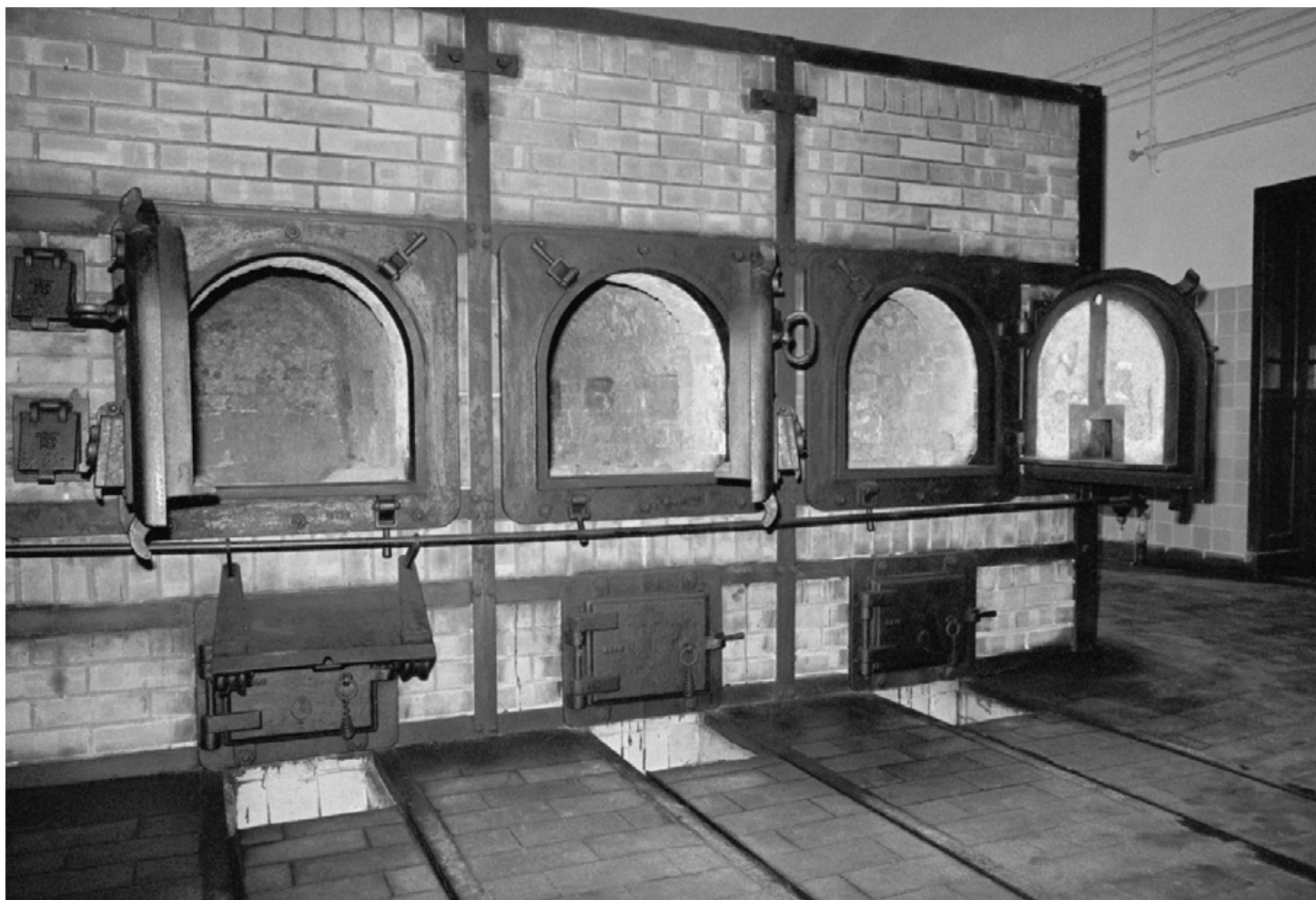
**SUDA:** Faith in science would be another candidate. Worship of wealth is also a kind of faith. And we can plainly see the result of the Japanese belief that money brings happiness or that the path to happiness lies in economic abundance.

**SAITO:** An expert notes that during the chaotic postwar era, money in Japan was seen as a means to ensure a peaceful and secure existence. In other words, people believed that only money could bring peace and security. As a result, he argues, people have developed an inordinately strong attachment to money, which has thus, in a sense, taken on the role of a religion.



CORBIS/Nik Wheeler

“Worship of wealth is a kind of faith.” Many in this century came to believe that the path to happiness lies in economic abundance.



Ovens used in the Holocaust in Buchenwald, Germany. "Not only have we seen the death of spirituality, but worship of the state has brought with it unprecedented cases of 'megadeath.' The twentieth century has been the most murderous century ever."

**IKEDA:** With the "death of God" has come the "death of the human being." This is perhaps the reality of the twentieth century. Not only have we seen the death of spirituality, but worship of the state has brought with it unprecedented cases of 'megadeath.' The twentieth century has been the most murderous century ever.

We must overturn this situation and make the next century an age in which the human being is highly revered. That is the purpose of the kosen-rufu movement. We need to call out to all people to open up the great life force of the "supernatural powers of the Thus Come One" within them. We mustn't allow the iniquity of nationalism to fill the spiritual void in people's hearts today.

**ENDO:** It is said that the sudden rise of Nazi Germany was preceded by a widespread nihilistic sentiment.

**IKEDA:** The famous Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875–1961), in an essay titled "The Undiscovered Self,"

writes: "If the individual . . . should feel that his life has lost its meaning . . . then he is already on the road to State slavery."<sup>7</sup> That's because someone who feels this way lacks the strength to resist the enormous power of nationalism. And once we fail to oppose evil, we are on our way to becoming its slave.

Jung says that for authoritarians who want to fill people with a sense of reverence for the state, the greatest source of trouble is religion that does not compromise with the state.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, he says, the state will "try to cut the ground from under [such] religion."<sup>9</sup>

Because religions that do not kowtow to authority teach "another authority opposed to that of the 'world,'"<sup>10</sup> they are a thorn in the sides of those who would turn people into slaves of the state.

Jung declares without reservation: "The dictator State . . . along with the individual . . . swallows up his religious forces. The State takes the place of God."<sup>11</sup>

**SUDA:** To say that a state "takes the place of God"

certainly sounds like worship of the state.

**ENDO:** The frightening thing is that many people fail to realize that they have been taken in by nationalism. While remaining apathetic, they are herded down this slippery path unawares. And when they finally understand what has happened, it is already too late. This is the fundamental problem.

**IKEDA:** Jung's conclusion is that the sole power to resist the devilish nature of nationalism lies in individual awareness of the dignity of human life, in the sense that "man is a microcosm, a reflection of the great cosmos in miniature."<sup>12</sup>

**SAITO:** That is in complete agreement with the philosophy of the Lotus Sutra.

**IKEDA:** By contrast, Jung lamented that in the modern age, "the insignificance of the individual is rubbed into him so thoroughly that he loses all hope of making himself heard."<sup>13</sup>

**SUDA:** Certainly, there is a spreading sense of helplessness; people feel that nothing they can do will amount to anything. People are also growing isolated from one another, having become uninterested in sharing their thoughts and feelings. There is a lack of solidarity.

**ENDO:** Consequently, people withdraw and grow silent. But this is just what those in power want. This confirms to me how important our movement is.

### Tagore: A Life "Gushing" with Joy

**IKEDA:** While the "Supernatural Power" chapter describes omens of kosen-rufu on a universal scale, human revolution is kosen-rufu in the microcosm of the individual. It means to bring forth great vitality, like the image of the Bodhisattvas of the Earth who emerge bursting through the ground.

While on a different level from the sutras, I would like to cite a few famous remarks by the Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941). When he was around twenty, Tagore one morning had a remarkable experience. Looking out from the veranda, he writes, "All of a sudden a covering seemed to fall away from my eyes, and I found the world bathed in a wonderful radiance, with waves of beauty and joy swelling on every side"<sup>14</sup>

He describes this experience in the famous poem "The

Waterfall Awakens":

Oh, why—I myself do not know—  
has my life now awakened from its slumber  
after the course of many years?

My life has now awakened from its slumber.  
There is much water; the waves rise and swell.  
The longing of life, the passion of life—  
I could not remain closed and hold it back.  
The mountain, rumbling, causes the earth to shake  
and tremble.  
Rocks, rumbling, crash down.  
Foaming waves, roaring, swell  
and roar with fury.<sup>15</sup>

**ENDO:** He says that the world shakes and sways—this is reminiscent of the "Supernatural Powers" chapter.

**IKEDA:** He is describing the powerful quaking of life. While the "Supernatural Powers" chapter certainly speaks of the earth trembling with boundless joy, Tagore here is probably describing a fitful struggle to awaken to and bring out his greater self.

But toward the end of the poem, welling with joy, he sings:

Speaking the thoughts of my heart,  
singing the melody of my heart,  
the more generously I give of my life, the more it  
surges forth.  
It is inexhaustible.  
I have many words to speak, many songs to sing.  
My life overflows: I have an abundance of joy, an  
abundance of dreams.  
Life overflows and in ecstasy.  
What can compare with such joy?  
Such beauty?<sup>16</sup>

**SAITO:** He literally depicts the joy of one who has awakened to the greater self. I sense in this the spirit of India that resonates through the Lotus Sutra.

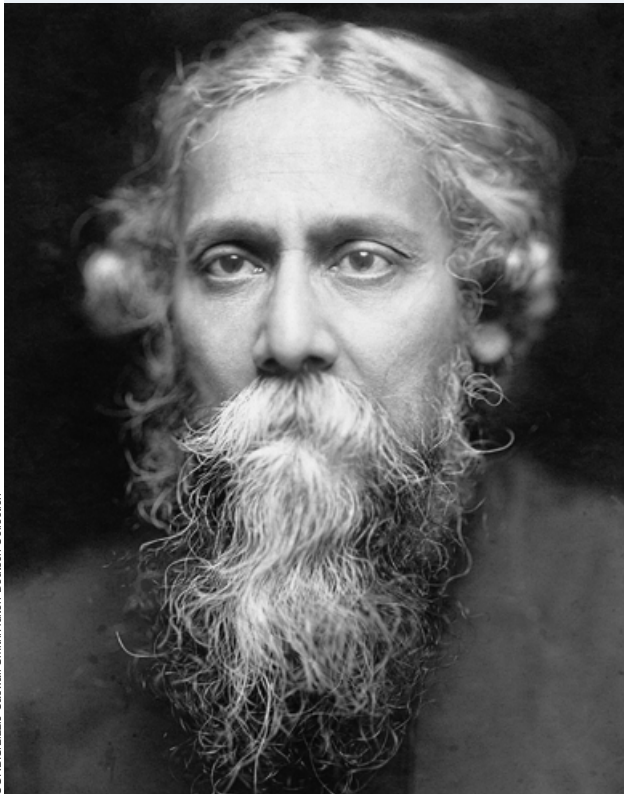
**IKEDA:** Everyone has the ability to achieve an awakening even more profound than Tagore. The substance of such an awakening—of the supernatural powers of the Thus Come One—is Nam-myoho-enge-kyo.

When we chant daimoku to the Gohonzon each morning and evening, we cause a magnificent drama like that described in the "Supernatural Powers" chapter to arise in



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Swiss psychologist Carl Jung (1875-1961) said that for authoritarians who want to fill people with a sense of reverence for the state, the greatest source of trouble is religion which does not compromise with the state.



CORBIS/Lizzie Caswell Smith/Hulton-Deutsch Collection

Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

the microcosm of our lives. When we then cause that drama of change to unfold in society, we are grasping the chapter's true meaning.

To do that, we need courage. We have to take the initiative. When we do so, we change and society changes, too.

Tagore, having awakened to the greater self, bids us to break through our own narrow limitations!

*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. *The Sutta-Nipata*, trans. H. Saddhatissa (London: Curon Press, 1994), p. 16.
3. Ibid.
4. From his remarks at the third memorial for Mr. Makiguchi, marking the second anniversary of the latter's death. *Toda Josei Zenshu* (Collected Writings of Josei Toda) (Tokyo: Seikyo Shimbunsha, 1983), vol. 3, p. 385.
5. Yubari Coal Miners' Union Incident: In 1957, Soka Gakkai members working as coal miners in the town of Yubari, Hokkaido, were barred from joining the workers' union.
6. Osaka Incident: This refers to Mr. Ikeda's arrest in 1957 on trumped-up charges of violating election law. He was later cleared of any wrongdoing.
7. *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, Vol. 10, trans. R.F.C. Hull (Rockville, MD: Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 254.
8. Ibid., p. 257.
9. Ibid., p. 256.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid., p. 259.
12. Ibid., p. 258.
13. Ibid.
14. Rabindranath Tagore, *Reminiscences* (London: Macmillan and Co., Limited, 1961), p. 217.
15. Translated from Japanese: *Togoru Chosakushu* (Collected Works of Tagore), trans. Tatsuo Morimoto (Tokyo: Daisan Bunmeisha, 1990), vol. 1, pp. 501-502. Translation into English of this and the next quote is by SGI Newsletter based on the Japanese source.
16. Ibid., p. 504.

# Building Soka Farms

By Ellis Aferi, Ghana

After my secondary education, I was employed as a village teacher in Ghana. I was expected to live an exemplary life as a Christian, and I even shared my meager salary with the poor. When I discussed my poverty with the local priest, I was told it was caused by witchcraft in my family. I resorted to drinking, thinking that this would at least make me feel better.

Because of my heavy drinking, I lost my job, and then consulted juju-men and so-called spiritualists. I was told that witches had planted a barrel in my stomach, which was why I was drinking so much! They performed ritual after ritual, to no avail. Eventually I left the village to escape the witches. So, in June 1974, I came to the harbor city of Tema to start a new life. Within two weeks I had a job at the Volta Aluminum Company.

On my birthday, June 15, I happened to meet my cousin, who invited me to a Buddhist discussion meeting that night. I accepted this new faith as I believed it could protect me against the “witches” and remove the barrel in my stomach. The chanting I did at the meeting gave me new hope and joy. But the next day, to my shock and dismay, I was informed that I had been dismissed from work. I blamed my cousin for leading me to misfortune with his religion. I went from my workplace to the home of the Buddhist leader I had met the night before and complained bitterly. But he encouraged me, saying, “Unless one changes one’s evil karma now, one will keep coming back to suffer the same misfortune eternally.” He gave me some reading material that put new life and hope into me.

I continued to attend Buddhist meetings and read a lot to convince myself of the practice. After two years I was appointed a local leader and soon got a new job with an attractive salary. I began to see the proof of my practice. I



Mr. Aferi's family proudly display the “Best Farmer” awards.

then met Rose, the lady who was to become my wife. We were married in a Buddhist ceremony in 1979. I resigned from my job, and we set up a soap manufacturing company together.

But in 1986 things took a drastic turn. Our business collapsed and we went bankrupt. We could neither pay our rent nor settle any bills, and my wife was by then expecting a baby. We moved out of Tema to live on land we had previously purchased for farming. It was underdeveloped; no water supply or electricity, no neighbors in sight. During the rains the roof leaked and it was a very difficult time for my wife. It was a struggle to find enough money to eat. But we survived, and the more perilous our situation became, the stronger was our resolve to chant.

In September 1986, after a difficult labor and successful surgery, our son Kofi was born. But a month after his birth, he started crying day and night. He was diagnosed as having a hernia, and he too had to undergo surgery. We had no money for the hospital bills and chanted to the Gohonzon [Buddhist object of worship] day and night for a solution. After the operation there wasn’t even a bed for him and we had to take him home, to return after five days for the wound to be dressed. This was the benefit we had chanted for. On the fifth day the doctor found that the wound had completely healed.

Our Buddhist practice was our only source of hope at this critical time. We had just our two-and-a-half acre plot, and with the carpentry, plumbing and masonry skills I had learned during the construction of the SGI-Ghana Community Center, I built small swine and poultry houses without any knowledge or experience of poultry farming. I plunged into the poultry business with some ten birds while my wife sold bread. This was the

beginning of Soka Farms. I wanted to prove that one could start a farm or business without necessarily relying on the bank or the government for assistance.

The African farmer is the most deprived and impoverished agriculturist on the globe. He still has to use rudimentary implements, rely on rain, has little access to fertilizer and improved seeds and has no credit facilities to enable him to expand his farm to commercial levels. In effect, the African farmer produces mainly to feed himself and his family.

But, with the support and encouragement of my wife and my son Kofi, I resolved to become a successful agriculturist so that my story would inspire youth to take up farming.

I realized that I could achieve nothing without discipline, determination, good management practices, faith and hard work. I had to persevere and overcome all difficulties. And I realized that I could not investigate the areas that interested me, the production of nontraditional agricultural produce such as mushrooms, rabbits, honey, snails and fish, without training or experience. So I asked the advice of agricultural extension officers. One man in particular, Mr. Nukpor, was very supportive. He gave me useful information on scientific ways of production, record-keeping and farm management. I virtually became a student again and was delighted to learn. I also attended seminars and workshops to learn about the latest scientific research.

Earning small amounts of money from the sale of the fowl, eggs and animals, I developed the mushroom project, honey production, rabbit and snail breeding and a fish-farming project. It was very difficult, and progress depended on the slow and painful method of plowing back small profits into the venture and waiting for yield. There was no financial assistance to speed up the pace of development.

After many ups and downs, I am happy to state that with undying faith we have succeeded in raising our life condition, and our family is living harmoniously in our village after 24 years of practice. This is a dream we never imagined could become a reality. Remembering that “Buddhism is win or lose,” and being determined never to



lose, we persevered in our struggle and never gave up until things began to change for the better.

The crown of our determination and hard work came in 1996 when we won the Best Farmer Regional Award, Tema. The farm is well integrated, leaving virtually nothing to waste. The field crops provide residues for the ruminants. The ruminants provide valuable farmyard manure for the field crop and vegetables, and the non ruminants provide fertilizer for the aqua-culture system. The fish provide valuable proteins for the family,

and the bees provide healthful honey, and so on.

and the bees provide healthful honey, and so on.

This award was a wonderful honor for Soka Farms that started as such a tiny backyard venture. Our success story has been featured in a number of newspapers, and farmers, students and youth who want to go into agriculture troop here daily to gather information on aspects of farm management. I am determined to open the doors of my farm to the youth of Ghana so they can learn to adopt a practical and innovative approach to life through training in practical integrated farming systems.

Without the courage derived from my Buddhist faith, I would have given up altogether. I had a family to look after, children and dependents to educate. It was difficult to combine all these with such slow-pace farming. Most of the time I was penniless.

However, guided by the principle of “Never give up under any circumstances,” I forged ahead, chanting for the Buddha’s virtues of courage, wisdom, life force and fortune to enable me to break through all barriers.

I was determined never to lose, in order to demonstrate actual proof of my faith to motivate the youth of SGI-Ghana and show that no matter what, with faith one can change poison into medicine. SGI President Ikeda has asserted continuously that the 21st century is the “Century of Africa.” The issues which our nation, along with all African nations, is encountering are numerous and difficult. Despite this, I am determined to strive even further for the development of African countries, to respond to SGI President Ikeda’s expectations. □

# Waves of Peace and Friendship in the Caribbean—

Valerie Giterson-Pantophlet and  
Cora Christian

## Valerie Giterson-Pantophlet, Saint Martin

Valerie Giterson-Pantophlet is a policy planner of social and economic projects in the Department of Economics and Tourism on the Caribbean island of Saint Martin. This year will mark her twenty-ninth in government service. Over the years she has served as a member of the Island Council as well as a member of the Executive Council, and has received recognition and awards for her efforts to promote education, culture and economic development.

She also plays an active role in SGI-Sint Maarten-Saint Martin (Dutch sector/French sector) as the women's area leader, together with her husband, Humphrey Giterson, the men's area leader, who is also a major in the police force on the Dutch side of the island. After hearing SGI leader Daisaku Ikeda speak in Miami in 1987, Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet felt a strong desire to devote her life to working for world peace, and she encouraged her husband to work alongside her. Together, they are doing their best to propagate Buddhism in the Caribbean and to hold positions of responsibility in society while raising their three children.

In February 1999, the Department of Culture and Education invited a representative of SGI to attend a meeting of religious leaders addressing the problem of youth and aggressive behavior. Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet was proud to represent the SGI.

Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet encountered Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism through a set of unusual circumstances about twenty-five years ago. She recalls, "I went to the US Virgin Islands with the Dodgers baseball team. While there, I developed a skin reaction and went to see a doctor. As I was leaving, the doctor gave me a card with



Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet (left) at a meeting (far right is Mr. Giterson)

the words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo and told me to recite them every morning. At that time I had no idea what those words meant and how they would later influence my life. Ten years later, in 1984, while attending my sister's graduation in the United States, I encountered a group of people who were reciting those very same words. I inquired about their meaning, and later I became an official member of the SGI."

At present there are approximately 300 members of SGI-Sint Maarten-Saint Martin, and most of the islands in the Caribbean now have at least one person who is practicing Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism.

SGI-Sint Maarten-Saint Martin is beginning to play a major role in spreading waves of humanism throughout the Caribbean. With its multicultural makeup of seventy-two different nationalities in a thirty-seven-square-mile area, divided into French and Dutch sectors, the island is in Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet's words, "a Caribbean college of humanism."

She says, "We are going into the twenty-first century where we will be confronted with problems that are of global concern. We need courageous and levelheaded people who are able to make the right decisions. The way most of us perceive the process of democracy is that we are free to do as we please. The other side of it—responsibility—has been left out. It has never been instilled in us. For the next century we need people who no longer have political colors. Instead, they need a strong sense of responsibility to solve the many problems facing the whole world."

Under Ms. Giterson-Pantophlet's leadership, the SGI members in Saint Martin have been doing their best to

take on responsible roles in the community. In the process, the SGI organization has formed strong ties with the Philipsburg Jubilee Library and the University of St. Martin as well as other organizations striving to enhance peace, culture and education. SGI members have also been involved in projects carried out in conjunction with UNESCO and various NGOs.

## Cora Christian, Saint Croix

**D**r. Cora Christian has been practicing medicine on the island of Saint Croix in the Virgin Islands since 1971, one year after she started practicing Buddhism in Philadelphia.

In addition to being employed as a family physician, she is medical director of HOVENSA, formerly Hess Oil of the Virgin Islands, the largest oil refinery in the western hemisphere, as well as medical director and principle clinical coordinator of the Virgin Islands Medical Institute. She also plays an active role in the SGI-USA as the vice territory chief of the Caribbean Headquarters.

Dr. Christian introduced Valerie Giterson-Pantophlet to the practice of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism when she met her at the Dodgers' game Valerie attended on Saint Croix in 1974. She was the doctor who gave her the words Nam-myoho-renge-kyo. Dr. Christian is delighted that Valerie has become such a strong, capable Buddhist leader. She says with pride, "I feel like a mother who is so happy to see her daughter have an even better life than she has. Valerie is a very special person. It was my good fortune to meet her that day and share Nam-myoho-renge-kyo with her."

A pioneer of Buddhism in the Caribbean, Dr. Christian is responsible for helping spread the teachings of Nichiren Daishonin's Buddhism in Saint Thomas and Saint Croix as well as throughout the Caribbean islands. Four years ago, the SGI members on the Virgin Islands expanded their efforts beyond the Caribbean when they began sending periodicals to SGI members in Africa. Dr. Christian had the opportunity to visit and practice with the Kenyan SGI members in the 1980's when she was working with Flying Doctors, an organization that flies doctors to remote villages to treat patients. In 1989 she returned again to Africa to visit Kenya and Togo with her 75-year-old mother, her 81-year-old aunt and 81-year-old friend, her husband, her sister and two children, aged 4 to 6. While in Africa, they attended SGI meetings in Kenya and Togo. As a result, the members there formed a bond with the SGI members on Saint Croix that has strength-



Dr. Cora Christian with her family.

ened over the years with exchanges of letters and correspondence.

Reflecting on her Buddhist practice, Dr. Christian says, "I believe I am a better person and a better physician since I understand more clearly that no matter what our differences, all people share the same feelings, struggles and triumphs. Buddhism allows me to have a sense of freedom and mission and to understand that no matter what, every action can benefit humanity as we overcome obstacles and challenge ourselves. I am constantly striving for self-improvement and the improvement of the society in which I live. I try to do my best."

To date, four hundred members have received the Gohonzon in the Virgin Islands. After practicing Buddhism, many members develop the fortune to travel abroad to further their education or to get a better job. When asked about the hopes and dreams of the members of Saint Croix, Dr. Christian responds without hesitation, "We truly have only one dream—world peace. We strongly feel, especially since we are a microcosm of the world with many different nationalities living in such close proximity, that we must succeed in creating peace and harmony here and now." □

*Recollections  
of  
My Meetings  
With Leading  
World Figures—*



Valentina  
Tereshkova

—  
*First Woman  
in Space*

By SGI President Ikeda

“You cannot possibly imagine how beautiful it is. Anyone who sees the Earth from outer space, even only once, cannot fail to be assailed by a sense of reverence and love for this planet that is our home,” Russia’s famed cosmonaut, Seagull, said to me in Moscow.

“It is I, Seagull!” Valentina Tereshkova’s lively voice was broadcast from *Vostok 6* to people all around the world. She was the first woman in space, orbiting the Earth in June 1963 at the age of only twenty-six. Using her call sign Seagull (Chaika), she reported: “I see the horizon. A light blue, a beautiful band. This is the Earth. How beautiful it is! All goes well.”<sup>1</sup>

The image of a soaring seagull seemed to fit the young cosmonaut perfectly, and thereafter she came to be known affectionately as “Seagull” by people throughout the world.

Seated facing me with a warm smile of welcome, she retained a modest and unassuming presence. We met at the offices of the Soviet Women’s Committee on Pushkinskaya Street (now Bolshaya Dmitrovka Street) in Moscow in May 1975, during my second visit to the Soviet Union. I sat on one side of an oval table with my wife, Kaneko, and the members of our delegation. On the other side sat Ms. Tereshkova, the chairperson of the committee, along with the vice chairperson and several other members of the administrative staff. Ms. Tereshkova was wearing a green knit top and a brown cardigan. Her eyes, which had gazed upon the Earth from outer space, were the same blue as our planet. They shone with a sincere and friendly light.

I asked her why she had become a cosmonaut, curious to know what had caused her to embark on such an exciting adventure.

“Let me see, . . .” she began in a quiet voice, hands folded on the table. She said that she decided she wanted to go into space after Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin (1934–68) succeeded in the first manned space flight.

The whole world was talking about his epoch-making achievement, nowhere more so than in the Soviet Union. “Man has gone into space for the first time. A Soviet! A Soviet youth!” Everyone at the factory where she worked was filled with excitement and jubilation; they cheered enthusiastically.

On returning home that evening, after a day of rejoicing and celebration, the young Valentina’s life was changed forever by her mother’s casually spoken words: “Now that a man has gone into space, next time it’ll be a woman’s turn.” They struck her with powerful impact. She was so excited by that thought that she couldn’t sleep that night.

“I’m sure there wasn’t a single young person in all of the Soviet Union who wouldn’t have given their right arm to be able to do what Lieutenant Gagarin had done,” she says of that time.

But Valentina was very realistic, concluding that any woman chosen for a space mission would probably have to be an exceptionally brilliant scientist to qualify. As a member of the local air sports club, which she had joined with a group of friends, she had developed a great interest in parachuting. Her mother worried for her safety, but she had fallen in love with the sky.



Valentina Tereshkova was the first woman in space, June 1963. The Russian cosmonaut’s call sign was Seagull.

Ms. Tereshkova was raised by her mother. Her father had gone off to fight in World War II when she was two and been killed in action a short time later. He had been a skilled tractor driver, and she has faint memories of him giving her a ride. One night in the middle of the war, during a blizzard, the news of his death arrived. Her mother’s quiet sobbing remains like a bad dream in her memory. She was only three. She had an older sister, and her mother was pregnant with her brother. Her grandmother, unable to accept her son’s death, never stopped waiting for his return.

What untold pain and suffering has been inflicted on women and

children by the tragedy of war! I, and those of my generation, have witnessed this almost beyond endurance.

A widow at twenty-seven, Ms. Tereshkova’s mother did her best to support and raise her three children. She would leave the house every morning before daybreak to milk cows on a dairy farm in Kolhoz. At times she would sigh and say that their family must have been abandoned by Fortune. She herself had been one of eight children, of which only three survived. Three died of starvation. Another two died in civil wars.

Eventually the family moved to the city. Her mother and her older sister worked together at a textile

mill in Yaroslavl on the banks of the Volga. Her mother was such a hard worker, Ms. Tereshkova said, that she and her siblings never saw her idle or at rest.

At seventeen, Ms. Tereshkova went to work herself in a tire factory. Later she got a job at the same factory as her mother and sister, where she stayed until she was chosen for the Soviet space program.

On her first payday, she bought a flower-print head scarf and some sweets for her mother. When her mother saw the gifts, she burst into tears. After the long winter, the light of spring slowly began to shine on their humble little family.

After Gagarin's historic space flight, anyone in the Soviet Union could volunteer for the space program. "I also volunteered, of course," said Ms. Tereshkova. She had the good fortune to be chosen, but the training was far tougher than she had anticipated. She didn't go into details, but she did say: "The training was very tough, in both kind and quantity. It progressed stage by stage, and each stage was a real challenge to my physical strength." One can sense intuitively just how demanding the training must have been. When she was in the centrifuge, she felt as if her blood had turned to mercury, she once wrote.

She had to study many specialized subjects, including rocket science, intensively. Each day was a battle, but she was not deterred. "I believe," she explained, "that when you have a dream and dedicate all your strength and being to achieve it, you can realize it without fail."

She said she felt that the picture of her mother she kept in her room was cheering her on; her mother's

gaze seemed to say: "I know you can do it!" Whenever she received her salary, she would hurry to the post office to send money home to her mother.

Those around her also encouraged her. It was common in the Soviet Union for men and women to work alongside one another, and she was well liked by everyone for her kindness and consideration.

At our meeting, she exhibited the same deference, making an effort to involve others in the conversation and apologizing for talking only about herself.

The day when she would actually go into space finally arrived! Over the course of three days, she circled the Earth forty-eight times—meaning that she saw a new dawn every one-and-a-half hours. "It was breathtakingly beautiful," she said, "like something out

of a fairy tale." The Earth was surrounded by a circle of soft light that constantly changed color, going through the entire spectrum.

"There is no way I can describe the joy of seeing the Earth," she remarked. "It was blue, and more beautiful than any other planet. Every continent, every ocean, had its own distinct beauty." Africa was yellow, South America was green, and Asia was a deep brown.

As she circled the Earth, she thought of her mother back home. She thought of all the mothers on Earth.

The Earth teemed with life. She could see mountains: All the birds that dwelled there had mothers. She could see forests: All the insects and animals that lived there had mothers. She could see rivers and oceans: All the fish that inhabited them had mothers. And all the people on that



CORBIS/Bettmann

Tereshkova dines in the way of space travelers. After the first man traveled in space, Valentina set her sights on becoming the first woman in space—and succeeded.

planet had mothers, too.

Yes, she realized, every single person on Earth had a mother who had undergone the pain of childbirth to bring them into the world. All of these children were truly precious, born with the Earth's blessing. Life passes from mother to child, from mother to child. Without mothers, none of us would be here. From mother to child, mother to child—if even just a single link in this chain of life were broken in the billions of years that life has existed on this planet, we would not be here today.

Behind each of us, she reflected, is the love of an infinite number of mothers—mothers who wish for nothing more than that we, their children, live good lives. She couldn't help feeling that the Earth is filled with the sound of these mothers' prayers.

The Earth itself is the mother of all life. Gazing upon it from space, Ms. Tereshkova cried: "The Earth is blue and beautiful. It is beautiful!"

And then she thought: "There are all sorts of mothers on our planet, but mine is the best. I want to make sure that there are no more war widows like my mother, and no more children like me, who do not even know their own fathers."

The Earth gives people life; nations take it from them. The Earth nourishes life; nations throw it away. If nations are the product of men squabbling for territory and influence, then the Earth is the realm of mothers. This realm of mothers, who love life, is far greater and grander than the nation-states created by men.

The twenty-first century will be the century of life. It will be the century of women. We must make it an age where the prayers for



Valentina with cosmonaut-husband Andrian Nikolayev and their daughter in 1965.

peace of all mothers since the beginning of history are finally answered.

My friendship with Ms. Tereshkova continues to this day. I met her again in 1987 and 1990. I was glad to see that she still stands tall, strong and youthful, and continues her activities. She has one daughter, Yelena, who is a surgeon today.

In May 1987, I was invited to the Soviet Union by the Presidium of the Union of Soviet Societies for Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, of which Ms. Tereshkova was chairperson. She not only came to greet me at the airport but also accompanied me to various functions over a four-day period. The SGI had brought its "Nuclear Weapons: Threat to Our World" exhibition to

Moscow on that occasion, and Ms. Tereshkova was there very early on the opening day, busy helping with preparations.

I remember Ms. Tereshkova remarking: "Once you've been into space, you appreciate how small and fragile the Earth is. This small, blue, shining planet. We must not allow it to be covered by the black ash of a nuclear war. All of the women of the world must join hands and make peace happen. We are all riding on Spaceship Earth together."

Seagull continues to fly here on Earth in pursuit of her dream of peace. □

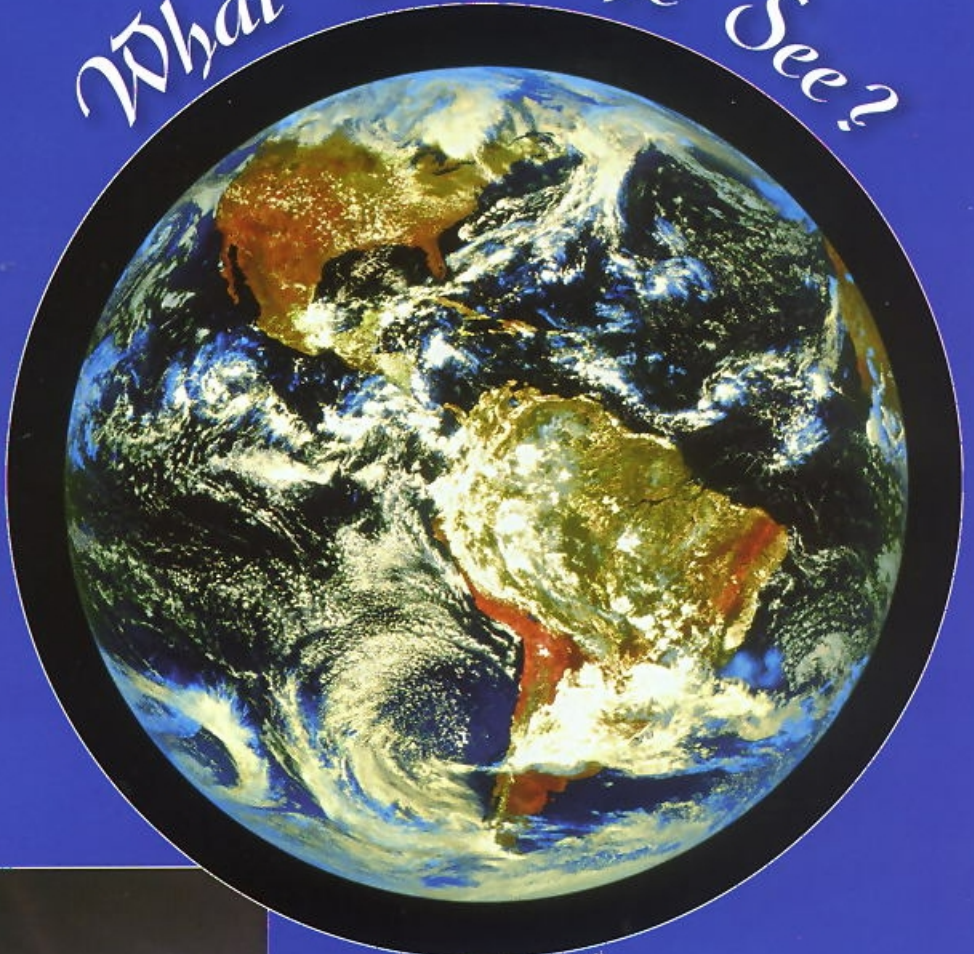
1. *Notable Twentieth-Century Scientists*, ed. Emily J. McMurray (New York: Gale Research Inc., 1995), vol. 4, p. 1993.

# What Did She See?



Valentina Tereshkova: First Woman in Space

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**Above:**

"There is no way I can describe the joy of seeing the Earth. . . . Every continent, every ocean, had its own distinct beauty."

**Bottom left:**

Over the course of three days, Tereshkova saw a new dawn every one-and-a-half hours. "It was breathtakingly beautiful," she said, "like something out of a fairy tale."

**Bottom right:**

"I see the horizon. A light blue, a beautiful band. This is the Earth. How beautiful it is!" The Earth was surrounded by a circle of soft light that constantly changed color, going through the entire spectrum.



CORBIS/NASA/Roger Reasmeyer

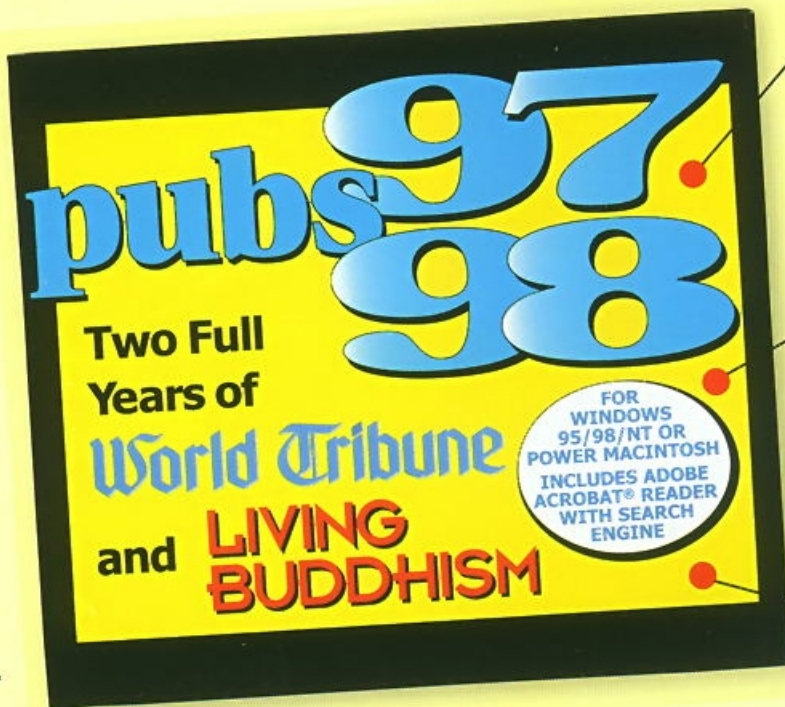


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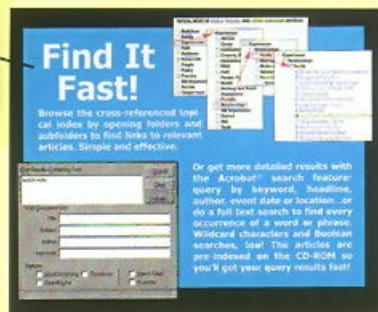
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## THE SGI PLAZA

At the beginning of 1999, the SGI Plaza became the new home for the national staff of SGI-USA, as well as providing space for the North America office of the Soka Gakkai International, in Santa Monica, California.

In the closing days of 1998, the staff had moved out of the World Culture Center, the organization's national headquarters since 1975, and across Wilshire Boulevard to their new offices in the seven-story tower.

On June 2, 1999, Santa Monica mayor Pam O'Connor and approximately 150 other friends from the community helped SGI-USA formally celebrate the opening of the SGI Plaza at a reception. The mayor proclaimed "Daisaku Ikeda and SGI Day in Santa Monica" at the event, which also marked more than three decades that SGI-USA's national offices have called Santa Monica home.

